Treasures from First Corinthians
Volume 2

By Dr. Rod Mattoon
Thank You

Lincoln Land Baptist Church

It is a joy to be able to present to you this second volume of 1 Corinthians. This book of the Bible is a critical book, dealing with vital issues that are relevant for us today. In fact, the book of 1 Corinthians is probably one of the most important books in the New Testament. These messages were preached on Sundays in the summer months of 2012.

Once again, I want to thank my church for their vision in letting me put these studies into print to help Christians grow in the Lord and to help preachers and teachers in their message preparation.

Lincoln Land Baptist Church is an Independent, Fundamental Baptist Church in Springfield, Illinois. This church has had a rich heritage of pastors that have fed the church on evangelistic, expository Bible preaching since it was begun in August of 1965. Dr. Mattoon has been the pastor of the church since March of 1991.

We hope this 43rd book in the Treasure Series will enlighten, encourage, energize and enrich you. May it also provide practical insights and wisdom for your needs.
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* Without apology, we believe in the inspiration, infallibility, and the inerrancy of the Scriptures in the original manuscripts.
Chapter 1

The Quest for Answers about Questionable Activities

1 Corinthians 8:1-13

Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth. 2 And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know. 3 But if any man love God, the same is known of him. 4 As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one. 5 For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) 6 But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.

7 Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled. 8 But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse. 9 But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak. 10 For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols? 11 And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ
died? 12 But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. 13 Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.

The Bible plays a vital role in the life of the Christian that wants to make his or her life count for Christ. It provides for us a standard or blueprint for living, instructing us how to live, what to do, and what activities or attitudes to avoid in our daily living. If you want to be an effective ambassador of the Lord Jesus Christ that is maturing and growing spiritually, then obedience to God’s Word is crucial.

Many Christians want God’s blessings on their lives. They want God to use them to reach others for Christ. It is the desire of their hearts to please and honor the Lord and not do anything that would cause them to be a hindrance to the salvation or spiritual growth of another person. There are times, however, that questions may arise about certain activities that the Bible does not specifically address. Such activities are in what some call the “gray areas.” Participation in such activities are fine for some Christians because they find nothing wrong with them, but to others, they are considered sinful. This was the situation that Paul was facing in the church at Corinth and he addresses this problem in this section of the epistle.

The issue in Corinth was about eating meat that had been dedicated to idols. Mature Christians saw nothing wrong with this at all, but those who were new Christians and had been saved out of a life of worshiping these idols wanted nothing to do with this meat. They did not want to have a part of anything that was connected to their old lifestyles and would not eat this meat. Paul provides for us principles about dealing with questionable practices and activities.

We do know that we as Christians have been set free from the bondage of sin. Christians are not under the ceremonial laws of the Old Testament. We are saved by grace and have liberty in Christ, who was the final sacrifice for the sins of man.

* John 8:31-32... Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; 32 And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.
* 2 Corinthians 3:17- Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.
Galatians 5:1- Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

We have liberty in Christ, but our liberty does not give us the freedom to live in sin.

* Romans 6:15- What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.

Our freedom from sin’s power is to enable us to serve Jesus Christ, to reach the lost with the gospel, and to help them live godly lives. It will be difficult for you to help someone conquer sinful habits in his or her life if you are living in sin yourself and spiritually defeated. Your freedom in Christ should help you to help others and to be the right kind of example.

* 1 Peter 2:15-16.... For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: 16- As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.

Let’s dig into this chapter and go on a quest for answers about questionable activities. Let’s find out how to deal with this issue and how it relates to the Lord and our relationships with others.

I. The Canker of Cockiness and Charity’s Strength  8:1

Paul begins this portion of the epistle by addressing the question about food that has been sacrificed to idols. What was this all about and why was it an issue in the church at Corinth?

Idolatry was rampant in Corinth and deeply ingrained in the culture of the people. People ate meals in pagan temples or places associated with idols. They worshiped a variety of false gods. If they sought love, they prayed to Athena. If they needed healing, they would pray to Apollo. If they were in a war, they would seek Athena. If a woman wanted a child, she prayed to Hera. For protection at sea, they would cry out to Poseidon. The king of all the gods was Zeus. All of these different pagan gods were worshiped and animal sacrifices were made to them.

If a banquet, party, feast, celebration, or wedding was held, sacrifices were made to an idol of one of these idols. This was very important to the people who wanted to honor their gods, but also to protect themselves. They believed that the air was filled with demonic
spirits that were trying to get inside of their bodies. They felt that the easiest way for a demon to do this was to attach itself to food, and when the person ate that food, the demon would enter the body. To keep this from happening, they believed they would be protected if that food was dedicated to their god who would cleanse the food of evil spirits.

When this meat was offered to a pagan idol, the presiding priest would divide the portion of meat three ways. One portion was burned. The second portion of meat was consumed by those offering the meat as a sacrifice. The third portion was given to the priest who could use it to sustain himself or if he had more meat than he could eat, he could sell the meat in the markets for a reasonable profit. This meat was highly sought in the market because it was cheaper, it was believed to be cleansed of evil spirits, and blessed by their pagan gods. It was purchased by citizens and used for their meals in their private homes.

The problem that surfaced in the church was the fact that some Christians believed that this meat was contaminated because it was offered to a pagan god on a pagan altar. They felt that eating this meat would be an act of worship to that particular god. These believers did not want to have anything to do with meat linked to a pagan idol. Many of them had come out of this kind of background.

This food brought back memories of their old lifestyles. They also were concerned that people might conclude that they were reverting back to pagan worship if they partook of this meat. Their testimony was important to them. They were confused why other Christians did not feel the same way they felt. So this problem created tension in the church.

With this background, Paul begins to lay the foundation to address this issue and provide a solution to the problem by stressing the importance of having a balance between knowledge and love. The apostle stated they all had knowledge, most likely referring to the knowledge that there is only one God and the fact that idols are powerless and worthless.

This kind of knowledge would free the conscience of those who were mature believers who understood this truth. They knew that food dedicated to idols was not contaminated. These false gods did not exist and eating any meat dedicated to them would not harm them at all. They could eat with their friends without any problems whatsoever. Others, however, did not understand this truth. Their consciences bothered them concerning this matter. They were troubled about eating the offered meat
and any other believer that ate it.

This is where knowledge has to be balanced with love. The knowledge of a person can be of great help to those who need help and teaching. Sometimes, however, knowledge of the truth can be a hindrance instead of a help, especially when that knowledge creates an attitude of pride or “puffs up” a person. Paul said, “Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth.”

Knowledge that is tempered with love is usually a characteristic of someone with maturity and spiritual growth. Yet, there are many believers that have knowledge of God’s Word, and think they are mature Christians, but they struggle with arrogance, selfishness, and a lack love for others, demonstrating a lack of maturity in their lives. The Corinthians had an abundance of spiritual knowledge.

* 1 Corinthians 1:5-That in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge;

These folks were proud of their achievements, but they were not using their knowledge to help those who were spiritually weaker. Paul wanted these more mature believers to strengthen the spiritually weaker ones with the knowledge God had given to them.

The pride from knowledge creates a problem when it leads to bitterness or irritation. When a person becomes “puffed up,” his pride makes it difficult to help or teach others about finding answers to questionable activities or teaching them truth. The pride can make it difficult for a person to be teachable, but it can make matters difficult for the one doing the teaching, too.

If the mature Christian who has grown in knowledge, becomes bitter, impatient, or irritated with those who are immature, then teaching and growth are hindered. On the other hand, if the teacher has love and patience, in most cases, he can help weaker Christians to learn the truth if there is a sincere desire to learn. Love goes a long way in teaching knowledge to others.

If you are a pastor, you have to love and be patient with the people you are trying to help. If you don’t love them, you will become impatient, irritable, irritated, and indifferent toward them when they don’t listen to what you say or do exactly opposite of what the Bible teaches. It will drive you crazy if you are not careful.

Paul made it clear that knowledge or truth must always be balanced with love. Genuine love counters the effects of arrogance.
Chapter 1...The Quest for Answers...8:1-13

* Ephesians 4:15- But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:

* 1 Corinthians 13:4b... charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up.

When the truths of God are presented without love and concern for the student, then the teacher and those truths can come across as caustic or harsh. Through my years, I have heard preachers who are down right hateful or extremely harsh in their preaching of the Word. They made the same mistakes I made when I started preaching in 1972. There is nothing spiritual about being harsh or hateful when you preach. Let me add that you don’t have to be a sissy either when you preach.

The knowledge of truth can also cause a person to get a swelled-up head instead of a swelled-up heart. A person with genuine understanding and maturity understands the fact that he does NOT know everything. Someone put it this way, “Knowledge is the process of passing from the unconscious state of ignorance to the conscious state of ignorance.” When someone is ignorant, they do not know that they do not know it all. On the other hand, the person who has gained knowledge and maturity knows that he does NOT know it all. The older he gets he realizes what little he knows and that there is so much to learn. A person with true knowledge does not know everything and he knows it.

Knowledge that leads to pride causes a person to focus upon himself instead of the needs of others. That is why knowledge of God’s truths are to be tempered with love, and love is to be tempered with knowledge or truth. Love without truth or knowledge leads to compromise, hypocrisy, or error. For example, folks that claim that God is love and would not send anyone to Hell are sadly mistaken. They emphasize love at the expense of truth. God loves sinners, but He is also holy and will not tolerate sin. You must be born again!

Love must be controlled by the knowledge of God’s truth. They walk hand in hand. The one needs the other, especially if we are going to live godly lives, grow in wisdom, and walk with God.

* Philippians 1:9-11... And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; 10 That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; 11 Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

Knowledge of God’s truth is vital if we are to be victorious Christians. Our beliefs affect our behavior. This is why the knowledge
of Bible truth is so important. We need to know what to believe and that what we believe is true. The lack of knowing the truth is what leads to choices that defeat or destroy us.

* Hosea 4:6a- My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee....

II. The Claim to Know It All  8:2-3

And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know. 3 But if any man love God, the same is known of him.

Pride can get you into trouble and it was creating trouble in the Corinth church. Some of the Corinthians were proud of their knowledge of spiritual things, yet, their pride was hurting their ministry with others. Paul points out that if a person thinks he knows all the answers, he really does not know very much at all. He knows nothing! Our society is filled with people that claim to know it all, but in reality they know nothing.

* He Knows Nothing

* If a man claims to know about Creation, stating that man evolved from amoebas or apes, he knows nothing.
* If a man claims to know about the Creator, that there is no God or there are many different gods, he knows nothing. The fool hath said in his heart there is no God.
* If a man claims to know about Christ, but denies that He is the Son of God, he knows nothing.
* If a man claims to know about the Consequences of our actions, that a person can live any way he pleases and he will not receive any punishment or judgment, he knows nothing. Solomon said, “A foolish woman is clamorous: she is simple, and knoweth nothing (Proverbs 9:13).”
* If a man claims that the Cause or purpose of life is to live for now, eat, drink, and be merry, he knows nothing. Revelation 3:17 states, “Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:”
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* If a man claims to know about death or the Cessation of life, stating that death ends it all, there is no eternity, no Heaven, no Hell, he knows nothing.
* If a man claims to know about the Canon of Scripture, stating the Bible is full of fables, lies, and worthless stories, he knows nothing. Paul said, “If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; 4 He is proud, knowing nothing.... (1 Timothy 6:3-4a).”

Knowledge of the truth should cause us to not be arrogant. It should cause us to adore the Lord and fall in love with Him more and more each day. It is one thing to know the truths of the Bible, but it is more important to know God Himself. God wants us to have a heart knowledge of Him, not just a head knowledge. Not only does He want us to grow in our knowledge of Him, but He wants us to grow in grace and our love for Him. Jesus told us that the person who loves God will obey His Word and is known by God. Does the Lord know you? Are you obeying His Word?

* John 14:21- He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

The love that a person has for the Lord will be reflected in his love for other people. It will be an indication of his relationship with the Lord. The Corinthians had knowledge but lacked in their love for others. This was evident by their constant fighting in the church. They were focused upon themselves instead of Christ. John addressed this problem in his epistle.

* 1 John 4:20-21... If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? 21 And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.
III. The Certainty of God’s Oneness and the Cause of Our Lives  8:4-6

As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one.  5 For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,)  6 But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.

Paul continues to address the issue about food dedicated to idols. He confirms the fact that idols are not gods at all. Idols are nothing, even though these idols are believed to be gods and worshiped by people. There is only ONE God, from whom are all things. That means that Buddha, Allah, Hindu gods, or even virgin Mary are not to be worshiped at all. The Lord Jesus Christ is the source of all life. The universe itself is held in His hands. It is His because He made it.  

* Colossians 1:17- And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

God made us and the purpose of our lives is to exist or live for Him. He deserves our admiration, appreciation, dedication, consecration, veneration, and submission. David Livingstone, the pioneer missionary to Africa, walked over 29,000 miles. His wife died early in their ministry and he faced stiff opposition from his Scottish brethren. He ministered half blind, yet, that did not stop him. He existed to serve the Lord. He penned in his diary these words, “Send me anywhere, only go with me. Lay any burden on me, only sustain me. Sever me from any tie but the tie that binds me to Your service and to Your heart.” May we have that dedication, too.

IV. The Conscience and Concepts about Idols  8:7-8

Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled.  8 But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse.

Not all believers have gained the truth or knowledge about this
matter concerning idols and the food that is dedicated to them. They believe that eating the meat that has been sacrificed to the pagan god is a form of worship to that god. Eating that meat goes against their weak or sensitive conscience. A conscience that is weak considers wrong an act that is not wrong or is unclear about whether that act is wrong or not. There is doubt and confusion.

The reason the consciences of some Christians are weak is because they have not had time to grow in their knowledge of the Word of God. They may have been recently saved. Others do not grow spiritually because they just don’t want to grow. That’s pretty sad. They remain in a state of spiritual infancy because they won’t study the Bible and go to church faithfully.

* 1 Corinthians 3:1-2... And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. 2 I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able.

* Hebrews 5:11-14... Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing. 12 For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. 13 For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. 14 But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

The study of God’s Word will go a long way in helping you to discern if something is right or wrong when there is doubt. Make it a part of your life daily. If you attend a Bible preaching and teaching church, you miss out on a great deal of knowledge, counsel, and wisdom when you are absent from the services.

* 1 Peter 2:2- As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:

Paul makes it clear that food is not going to gain God’s approval. Offering food will not bring us closer to the Lord. We will not gain anything by refusing to eat this food or by eating it, except a few pounds.
V. Cautions about Your Liberty in Christ 8:9-13

But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak. 10 For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols; 11 And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? 12 But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. 13 Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.

Even though we know that pagan gods do not exist and food sacrificed to them will not harm us or help us, Paul offers a caution here about our liberty in Christ. He tells us to be on guard against causing a weaker brother or sister in Christ to spiritually stumble and be ruined by our actions.

Some are ruined by reverting back to their old lifestyles. They conclude if these Christians think it is OK to worship pagan gods by eating meat dedicated to them, then it is Ok for me to worship them, too. Others are offended or turned off toward Christians because they consider them to be wrong when they eat food dedicated to pagan gods. When we offend these weaker Christians, we sin against the Lord. Paul’s solution was to not participate in activities that would offend weaker believers. He would not eat any meat dedicated to idols.

There are many issues today where Christians are divided including social drinking, smoking, gambling, card playing, going to movies, etc. Some find nothing wrong with these activities while others do. By applying biblical principles, you can follow a checklist that will help you make a decision on what is the right thing to do when you are in doubt.

* Bible Principles that Should Govern our Actions

1. The Principle of Exaltation
   Will the Lord be glorified and exalted in what I do? Would I be ashamed if Jesus did this activity with me?
   * 1 Corinthians 10:31- Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

2. The Principle of Excess
   Is the particular activity or action really necessary or is it something that is not important at all? Is it a hindrance that we should give up?
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* Hebrews 12:1 - Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

3. The Principle of Edification
   Will the activity help me to grow spiritually or will it hurt my walk with God and other believers?
   * 1 Corinthians 10:23 - All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.

4. The Principle of Example
   Do my actions set a good example for others to follow, especially for those who are new Christians or spiritually immature? If others followed my actions or choices, would they grow spiritually?
   * 1 Timothy 4:12 - Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

5. The Principle of Expediency
   Paul told us in 1 Corinthians 10:23 that not all things are expedient or helpful. Are my actions useful or helping other people? Paul said in 8:13 he would not eat the meat that honored idols anymore since it offended his brothers in Christ. It was not helpful.

6. The Principle of Evangelism
   Is my Christian testimony going to be damaged by my choices or will it be helped? Will people who do not know the Lord as their Savior be drawn to Christ or will they be repulsed?
   * Colossians 4:5 - Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. These guidelines will help you in your quest for answers about questionable activities.
Chapter 2
The Importance of Investing in Full-time Servants of Christ

1 Corinthians 9:1-14

Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord? 2 If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord. 3 Mine answer to them that do examine me is this, 4 Have we not power to eat and to drink? 5 Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas? 6 Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working? 7 Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock? 8 Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also? 9 For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? 10 Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. 11 If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? 12 If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ. 13 Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? 14 Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.
In chapter eight of this epistle, Paul dealt with the issue of Christian liberty. The issue that was addressed was eating meat that was dedicated to pagan idols. Paul and those who were mature in Christ knew that these gods did not exist and the food was not contaminated at all by being sacrificed to pagan gods. There were some folks in the church, however, that did not feel the same way. They did not want to have anything to do with this meat since it was associated with a pagan god. Their conscience would not let them indulge in the consumption of the food.

Even though the mature believers in the church had liberty to eat the meat, Paul told them to refrain from doing so if it was going to cause a weaker brother in Christ to stumble spiritually. In chapter nine he continued this train of thought with a personal illustration of this principle.

Paul lists in this chapter the rights or privileges that were his to claim, as an apostle and servant of the Lord. These rights involved financial support for his labor for Christ. Even though he could claim them, he chose not to do this in Corinth and other churches because he did not want anything to hinder his ministry in reaching people for Christ. He felt that in this area, his support might become a stumbling block. He willingly denied himself in Corinth of what he had a right to claim.

We do know, however, he gladly received financial support from other churches when he was serving the Lord in other cities. He would not take support from churches he was starting while he was still in that church. He would take the support after he left. For example, the Macedonian churches helped Paul while he was in Corinth.

As we go through these verses, Paul provides for us the reasons why it is important to financially support and invest in full-time servants of the Lord and their families. He gives biblical grounds why it is scriptural to financially support pastors, missionaries, evangelists, Christian school teachers, or others involved in full-time ministry for the Lord Jesus Christ. Let’s begin by looking at verses one and two.
1. The Credentials of Paul  9:1-2

Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord? 2 If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord.

Believe it or not, there were some that doubted the apostleship of probably the greatest Christian that ever lived in history, the Apostle Paul. That only affirms, however, the blindness of some people and Satan’s effectiveness in blinding them. People were blind to the deity of Christ when He lived on earth and some people were blind to the apostleship of Paul. They had greatness living before them and did not realize it.

Some doubted Paul’s credentials, so he took that bull by the horns right away confirming his apostleship with four questions that had an obvious answer of “Yes.” The apostles were a very select group of men that met certain qualifications. The word “apostle” means “a messenger, one sent forth with orders.” There are no apostles today, in spite of what some preachers claim about themselves, because they do not meet the scriptural qualifications. Listed here are three.

1. **Sight of the Risen Lord:** An apostle had to be an eye-witness of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Paul said, “Have I not seen the Lord?”

   * 2 Timothy 1:12b...for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.

   Notice that Paul did not say, “I know WHAT I have believed.” He said, “I know WHOM I have believed.” He had a personal relationship with Christ, meeting the Lord on the Damascus road and speaking to Paul in two visions.

   * Acts 9:3-5... And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: 4 And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? 5 And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

   * Acts 18:9-10... Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: 10 For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city.
* Acts 22:17-18... And it came to pass, that, when I was come again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance; 18 And saw him saying unto me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me.

* 1 Corinthians 15:8- And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.

* Acts 2:32-This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.

* Acts 3:15-And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses.

* Acts 4:33- And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.

2. Signs and Wonders Were Performed by Them:

Paul pronounced blindness on Elymas the sorcerer.

* Acts 13:11- And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand.

* 2 Corinthians 12:12- Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.

3. A Successful Ministry: The Corinthian believers were the result of Paul’s work in the Lord. God used the apostles to not only perform miracles, but to execute judgment when needed, to reach people for Christ, and to write the Word of God in the gospels and the epistles.

The Corinth church was the “seal” of his apostleship. What does he mean by this? A seal was for the purpose of authentication. It was very important in Paul’s time. When items like grain were shipped to a different destination, a seal was placed on the cargo to authenticate its contents and that the contents had not been tampered.

In legal matters, a will required seven seals or else it was not considered legally valid. Without all of those seals intact, the document was rendered useless. The seals guaranteed the genuineness of the will. The Corinth Christians authenticated Paul’s ministry and that his apostleship was genuine. He was what he claimed to be.
II. Concepts for the Provisions of God’s Servants  9:3-6
Mine answer to them that do examine me is this,  4 Have we not power to eat and to drink?  5 Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?  6 Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working?

P
aul was being carefully scrutinized by those who doubted him. The word "examine" is from the word anakrino {an-ak-ree'-no} which means “to investigate, scrutinize, to sift, or to judge.” One meaning of the word is “examination by torture” which is a common practice in all ages.

Evidently Paul's critics were not sparing him any pain in examining him. He was being grilled. Paul answered his critics. The word “answered” is the word apologia {ap-ol-og-ee'-ah} which means “a verbal defense.” He defended his credentials as an apostle. He then proceeded to address the issue of provisions for his needs and defended his right to be compensated for his work.

Paul asks, “Don’t we have the right to financial support?” This is the meaning behind the phrase, “Have we not power to eat and drink?” The word “power” meant “the authority or the right to do something or enjoy something.” If Paul’s apostleship was in question, these folks might have been hesitant to support him financially. Paul had the right to financial support, but he chose not to accept it here from these people while he was among them. He did accept support from churches in other towns and from people like Lydia.

* Acts 16:15- And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.

* Philippians 4:14-18... Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction. 15 Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. 16 For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. 17 Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. 18 But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God.

* 2 Corinthians 11:8- I robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service.
The apostle’s choice to support himself was not a precedent for other servants of the Lord. Others could not do what he chose to do here. Paul also did not want to rob the churches of an opportunity to be a blessing to God’s servants. He was very careful to assert his right to receive adequate compensation for his ministry and also to decline that compensation if that is what he wanted to do. It was his choice.

The fact that he chose to support himself caused some to question his apostleship because his job as a tentmaker was a lowly job that was usually filled by those who were slaves. Paul made it clear he was not a slave. He was free.

Paul also asserted his right to have a sister or believing wife and to bring her with him if he chose to do so. He said in verse 5, “Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?” The other apostles were married and brought their wives with them as they served the Lord. The expenses for the wife were also taken care of by the churches.

Many Catholics don’t realize that Peter was married. Peter was not single. If he was not single, why should Catholic priests and nuns be expected to be single?

* Matthew 8:14-15...And when Jesus was come into Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother laid, and sick of a fever. 15 And he touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose, and ministered unto them.
* Mark 1:30- But Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever, and anon they tell him of her.
* Luke 4:38- And he arose out of the synagogue, and entered into Simon's house. And Simon's wife's mother was taken with a great fever; and they besought him for her.

Since the other apostles enjoyed a family and financial support, why should Paul or Barnabas not enjoy that privilege, too? That was the point Paul was making. He or Barnabas should not be excluded.

III. Clarifying Illustrations Concerning Compensation 9:7-11

Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock? 8 Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also? 9 For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? 10 Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth
should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. 11 If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?

In this portion, Paul illustrates the propriety of compensating God’s servants for their work by using the examples of a soldier, a sower of a vineyard, a shepherd, and the Scriptures.

1. The Soldier
* No soldier has to provide his own rations or serves at his own expense.
* Soldiers do not fight during the day and then work at a civilian job at night in order to eat, buy clothes, and have a place to stay. They are provided food, clothing, arms, lodging, and whatever else is needed to live and fight effectively.
* In the same manner, why should the soldier of Christ have to do so?

2. The Sower of a Vineyard
* The person that plants a vineyard shares in the fruits of that vineyard.
* He is compensated for his labor.
* Why should the man, who plants the seed of the Word in churches, not be compensated?
* 2 Timothy 2:6- The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits.

3. The Shepherd
* The shepherd of the flock gets his food from the flock.
* Why should the pastor not receive compensation from his flock?
* It is the customary, rightful, and expected thing that all of these occupations be compensated for their labors. Why should it not be true for God's workers as well?

4. The Scriptures
* Even the ox is not muzzled, so that it can eat the grain while he threshes it.
* Deuteronomy 25:4- Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn.

Paul said, “If God made sure that the oxen should be cared for, don’t you think His servants should have the same consideration?” Beloved, Paul makes it clear that God’s servants are not to be muzzled. Since Paul sowed spiritual blessings among them, then it should not be unreasonable for him to reap material benefits from them.

Listen, there is nothing honorable in starving a pastor and his family. How is God glorified in that? How is that a good testimony for
that church? It is NOT!!! Paul made it clear that God’s servants should be taken care of financially so they can care for their families. Just because they are preachers doesn’t mean their work is not important or they are not working hard at all. On the contrary, preparing three or four new messages every single week and then preaching them is not easy at all. Study is hard work!!!

The men in our church that preach once a month in the adult Sunday school class will tell you the work involved in preparing one message a month. Try preparing three new messages every week and you will really know how much time it takes. Each message I prepare has an average of eight to ten hours of research, study, and preparation. It takes time to research, to understand the text, to properly interpret the text, to make the text understandable and practical where you can put it into practice, and to try to make it interesting. The message you just heard on Christmas morning, the Virgin Birth and the New Birth, that one message had 25 hours of work spread over a two-month period.

* 1 Timothy 5:17-18.... Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. 18 For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward.

The word “honour” is from the word time (tee-may’) which not only means “honor or respect, it also refers to the honorarium, the price of labor, or compensation for work.” Any pastor is worthy of double compensation. It is our goal as a church family to always try to be generous with any missionary or evangelist that comes into our church to preach. We pay their travel and motel expenses, provide meals, and give them ALL of the love offering that is given to them from our people. We do not skim the love offering of the guest speaker. If $700 or $7000 comes in for the speaker, he gets in full what is given to him. We don’t cheat God’s man.

As a church family, we want to be an encouragement and blessing to the guest preacher and to help with his needs. Hundreds of times, missionaries and evangelists have told us how our gift met a huge need in their lives. It was like a breath of fresh air that eased a suffocating financial burden that was on them. Because we are generous, God is generous with our church family. We reap great blessings we have sown. He has been good to our church.

*Luke 6:38- Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your
bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.

Beloved, when a church cares for its pastor, then the pastor can concentrate on spending time in the Word of God so he can preach practical, powerful, relevant, informative, understandable, and challenging messages from the Bible to His people. That’s the goal. He also has time to care for the needs of the ministry. Everybody wins in that situation. When a church neglects its pastor and family, then the pastor becomes drained, discouraged, and distracted by his family’s needs and their discouragement. The church suffers greatly because of this.

We are facing a crisis in American churches today according to the Fuller Institute, George Barna, and Pastoral Care, Inc. Their research reveals that pastors are quitting in droves in our nation at a rate of 1700 per month. That means that 20,400 pastors are leaving the ministry for good, every single year. That is huge when you consider there are only 300,000 non-Catholic churches in the country. Why are they quitting? A number of reasons were discovered by the research.

* Reasons for the Exodus of Pastors

1. Their families are suffering.
   * 90% of the pastors report working between 55 to 75 hours per week. No time for family or rest.
   * 80% believe pastoral ministry has negatively affected their families. Many pastor's children do not attend church when they grow up and leave the home because of what a church has done to their parents. When people, who claim to be Christians, attack their father or mother, then the children become bitter toward Christians and church. They do not want to have anything to do with church. That is a tragedy.
   * 33% state that being in the ministry is an outright hazard to their families.

2. Their finances are suffering.
   * 75% are living at near-poverty levels.
   * Many have to work a secular job and also have to try to pastor a church. They burn the candle at both ends. Eventually they burn out emotionally, physically, and spiritually.

3. Their feelings are suffering.
   * 70% of pastors constantly fight depression.
   * 75% report a significant, stress-related crisis, at least once in their ministry that was over-whelming to their lives.
* 70% say they have a lower self-image now than when they first started.
* The profession of "Pastor" is near the bottom of a survey of the most-respected professions, just above "car salesman."

**4. Their friendships are suffering.**
* 70% state they do not have anyone they would consider as a close friend.

What are some of the consequences of this crisis.
* Churches are closing at a rate of about 4,000 a year.
* Many denominations report an "empty pulpit crisis." They cannot find preachers willing to be their pastor. Is it any wonder why, when we read these statistics?

Listen, if you plan to go into full-time ministry someday, realize it is not all glitz, glory, glamor, and a job where you can goof-off and play golf all the time. You better make sure that God has called you to the task or else you won't last very long.

**IV. The Concern about Hindrances to the Ministry  9:12**

*If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ.*

Other servants of the Lord were being supported by the Corinth church, so Paul asked them if he shouldn’t have even a greater right, greater authority, or greater liberty to be supported. The answer to his question is “Yes.” Paul continues, however, and states that he did without this support. He suffered all things.

The word "suffer" is from the word *stego* {steg'-o} which means “to bear or to pass over in silence.” Paul used the present tense, indicating that throughout his ministry he continued to bear uncomplainingly whatever was necessary to fulfill his work. His customary way of life was self-denial.

Why? He did not want to hinder the gospel. This word “hinder” is from the word *egkope* {eng-kop-ay'} which means “breaking up or cutting into a road to prevent someone’s advance.” It was especially used to describe the hindrance of an enemy. Paul did not want the gospel hindered or slowed in any way. This is why he personally denied himself of what belonged or was rightly due to him.
V. The Conclusion about Compensation   9:13-14

Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar?   14 Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.

Just as the priests in the Jewish temple were compensated for their work, Paul concluded that those who preach the gospel should be compensated and benefit from their labors in serving Jesus Christ. Investing in God’s servants is a good investment, in spite of their weaknesses, faults, and imperfections. Remember the King that they are serving.
Chapter 3
The Sentiments of a Sold-out Saint
1 Corinthians 9:15-23

But I have used none of these things: neither have I written these things, that it should be so done unto me: for it were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void. 16 For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel! 17 For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me. 18 What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel. 19 For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. 20 And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; 21 To them that are without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. 22 To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. 23 And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you.

It was in 1873, in Dublin, that D. L. Moody heard British evangelist Henry Varley utter those life changing words: "The world has yet to see what God can do with, for, through, and in a man who is fully and wholly consecrated to Him." It was after an all-night prayer meeting in Dublin, at the home of Henry Bewley. Varley did not even remember making the statement when Moody reminded him of it a year later.

"As I crossed the wide Atlantic," Moody said, "the boards of the deck... were engraved with them, and when I reached Chicago, the very paving stones seemed marked with them." The result: Moody decided he
was involved in too many ministries to be effective and therefore began to concentrate on evangelism. The statement by Henry Varley branded the heart of Moody who was determined to be sold-out totally for Christ.

When Henry Crowell was nine, his father died from tuberculosis, and when he was seventeen, Henry himself contracted the disease. He appeared to be dying as he attended D.L. Moody's campaign in Cleveland, Ohio. He listened carefully as Moody thundered out a common phrase: "The world has yet to see what God can do through a man fully dedicated to him." What Moody had learned and lived, he was passing on to others.

When Henry Crowell heard Moody’s challenge, he determined to be God's man, too. He said, "To be sure, I would never preach like Moody, but I could make money and support the labors of men like Moody. I resolved, "Oh God, if you preserve my life and allow me to make money to be used in your service, I will keep my name out of it so you will have the glory."

Henry grew stronger and began honing his business instincts, shrewdly investing his family's wealth. He started companies, purchased properties, and introduced innovations to the marketplace. When a mill owned by nearby Quakers became available, Henry purchased it and began dreaming of modern cereal products for American homes. Thus, the Quaker Oats Company was born.

The money rolled in and it rolled out with 65-70% of the income going into Christian ministries that would reach people for Christ and disciple them. Millions of dollars flowed to churches, schools, and missions. Henry worked tirelessly for the new Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, Illinois. Under his vision, Moody Bible escaped financial ruin and became a powerful training center. Henry also helped to start Moody Press, Moody Magazine, and Moody radio ministries.

At the age of 89 he was still dreaming before he went home to be with his Lord. Henry did not let Satan degenerate his determination and his dedication. He too, was a man that was sold out to the Lord.

In this portion of the epistle, Paul expresses the sentiments of a man who is sold out to the Lord Jesus Christ. The sentiments he expresses are a challenge for all of us to follow the same path and to have the same attitudes. As we go through these verses, we ought to be asking, “How dedicated am I to Christ? What am I willing to do for Him? More important, “What am I willing to BE?” Let’s begin by looking at verse fifteen.
I. The Intentions of Paul and the Importance of His Integrity 9:15

* But I have used none of these things: neither have I written these things, that it should be so done unto me: for it were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void.

In the initial verses of chapter nine, Paul stated the importance of investing in the lives of God’s full-time servants. He explained his right to be supported by the churches for his labor, yet, he also chose not to claim this privilege in Corinth because he did not want to do anything that might hinder the gospel. He did not receive support from the churches he served when he actually ministered among them. Instead, he burned the candle at both ends and supported himself, usually in tent-making. He did not want to be a burden to anyone and he did not want anyone to accuse him of preaching to them just for the money.

* 1 Thessalonians 2:9- For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God.
* 2 Thessalonians 3:8- Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you:
* Acts 20:33-34.... I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. 34 Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me.

Let me add that Paul did accept love offerings from churches when he was not serving among them. He accepted support from the distant Macedonian churches when he was in Thessalonica.

* Philippians 4:14-19... Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction. 15 Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. 16 For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. 17 Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. 18 But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God. 19 But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.
Why did Paul not accept money from churches where he ministered? One of the problems of that day was that of itinerant preachers and teachers that went from city to city to fleece the people of their funds. This became a hindrance to those who were without Christ. Unbelievers believed that these preachers were only interested in money, instead of them. Paul refused his financial support because he did not want it to be used by Satan to be an obstacle in reaching someone for Christ. His sentiment as a “sold-out” man for God was his willingness or sentiment to sacrifice for Christ in order to reach the lost. He was willing to endure hardship and do without support in order to gain souls.

As the epistle continued, he added here these words which emphasize his intention, “Neither have I written these things, that it should be so done unto me.” Paul was not writing this to suggest that he changed his mind and wanted to gain financial support now. He was NOT hinting they should support him. In fact, he added, he would rather die than to lose his ability to explain to the lost that he did not charge anything for preaching the gospel to them.

His integrity was important to him because it helped to give him credibility with those who were unsaved. He wanted this obstacle of money to never rear up its ugly head in his ministry. This was evidently a big excuse people used against preachers and he wanted to make sure they could not accuse him of greed or that his motives were not pure.

This is one of the key reasons we do not harp on money at our church. The only time money is mentioned is when it is time to take the offering. I say something like, “It’s time to take the offering. If you have not had an opportunity to give this week, we invite you to do so now. Let’s pray.” That takes about ten seconds. That’s it. I don’t spend ten minutes begging for money and I will NOT ever do that.

If God’s people love the Lord, they will give. If God’s people want to have a church, they will give. If they don’t, then the church will close its doors and fold. It is simple as that. If God’s people are hard-hearted and robbing God of tithes and offerings, the church doors need to close. Their worship is a sham and their claim to love God is a joke.

The other times we speak about money is when the issue comes up in the text when we preach verse-by-verse through a book we are preaching through each Sunday morning, Sunday night, or Wednesday night. If the passage talks about giving or tithing, we address the issue and move onward. We don’t dwell on money, we don’t beg for money, and we don’t pressure people to give. If there is a need, we tell about the
need and tell people to pray about it and do what God says to them. They are not pressured or put on guilt trips. We don’t do pledge drives, fundraisers, garage sales, poker tournaments, or bingo games to raise money to support the ministry of this church. We don’t draft your credit card or debit card so you can give to the church that way or to make sure we get your money. The bank asked us if we wanted to do that and we quickly said, “NO! We are not interested in that.”

Beloved, we leave the money issue to God and the hearts of His people. When God has your heart, He has your purse and check book. Giving will be a joy and it will be done with a generous heart. It will not be a drudgery. When God has your heart, He will also have your time and you will be faithful in coming to church. The sentiments of a “sold-out saint” are sacrifice and the surrender of your finances to the Lord.

* Matthew 6:19-20... Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: 20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

Are you a sold-out saint? What will you sacrifice for Him? What will you surrender to Him? How will you show....

* your abdication to His will,
* your appreciation for His care,
* your adoration for His love,
* your admiration for His purity,
* your affirmation of your faith in Him,
* your approbation and application of His Word,
* and your aspiration to follow Him wherever He leads?

II. The Importance and Imperative in Preaching the Gospel 9:16-17

For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel! 17 For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me.

A “sold out” saint has the sentiment of willingness to sacrifice for the Lord. Secondly, he or she has a sentiment of selflessness. Paul made it clear he had no reason to brag or boast because
he preached the gospel. He gloried in the gospel, but not FOR the gospel. God gave to him His Word. The content of the gospel was from the Lord, not Paul.

Some folks enter the ministry to gain glory and praise, but that was not the case at all for Paul. His attitude was a humble, self-less attitude. If you are to be sold-out for the Lord, then purpose that whatever you do, it should be to bring honor to the Lord Jesus Christ, whether you are a preacher, a teacher, a police officer, a secretary, a football player, etc. Glorify God with your life!

* 1 Corinthians 10:31- Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

* Matthew 5:16- Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Paul explains why he has no reason to glory in preaching the gospel. He shares the third sentiment of a sold-out saint. The sentiment to be steadfast and submitted to the Lord. The apostle said, “For necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!”

I am presently studying the book, “The Complete Roman Army” by Adrian Goldsworthy. Adrian brings out the fact that the Roman legion attacked their enemies with three levels in their lines. The soldiers on the front of the attack were 1200 men who were younger, and in their late teens and early twenties.

The second tier of 1200 men were men in their 20's and 30's, in the prime of their lives. They would shout at the enemy to instill fear and back up the front-line soldiers. These men were followed by a third tier of 600 men who were the oldest and more experienced soldiers. They would give direction and support the front attackers. One thing about those soldiers on the front line, they had no where to go but forward. They could not retreat because of the wall of soldiers behind them that were marching forward. The front line men were compelled to fight. They had no choice but to engage the enemy.

This is the way Paul felt when it came to preaching the gospel. He said, “Necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!” The word “necessity” comes from the Greek word anagke {an-ang-kay} which means “compulsion or necessity that is either imposed by circumstances or by duty.”

Paul felt compelled to preach God’s Word. It was his duty given to him by Christ Himself. It was vital and necessary that he submit to the Lord and be steadfast in fulfilling God’s purpose for his life. Those are
the sentiments of a sold-out saint.  

*Galatians 1:15-16a... But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, 16 To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen....*

The call of God to preach was a burning fire in his heart. Jeremiah spoke of that fire.  

*Jeremiah 23:29- Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?  
*Jeremiah 20:9- Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay.*

Paul felt that preaching the gospel was vital. He felt that from all sides.  

1. He was *pressed from above*, the calling of God Himself.  
2. He was *pushed from behind*, from those following his steps and his example to be faithful.  
3. The *peril from below*, the fact that sinners were dying and going to Hell, moved him with a sense of urgency.  
4. The *press for that which was ahead*, the salvation of souls and the prize of the high calling of God in Christ, motivated him to be sold-out to the Lord.  

Like a slave serving his master, Paul served his Lord faithfully. He felt compelled to preach the Word, but this does not mean he dreaded doing this.  

*Romans 11:13- For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office:*

Paul expressed the seriousness of his duty and the importance of being steadfast in fulfilling that duty when he said, “Woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel!” Preaching the Word was important and imperative. The word “woe” here is a powerful word indicating pain. It is an exclamation of grief.  

I have met many young men through the years that have been called to preach by the Lord. They told me they were called to preach and knew it. Yet, they admitted they fought the Lord and would not surrender to His call, or they preached, but then decided to give up. The sentiments of at least 90% of them that I have talked with were they regretted not preaching or they regretted quitting. They were not happy at all and their lives were tinged with regret. My counsel to them was, “If you have
fallen down or been knocked down, go ahead and get back up one step at a time. Get back into the battle.” Paul addressed this issue in 1 Corinthians 15.

* 1 Corinthians 15:58-Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

Paul gladly preached the gospel, but he did not do it voluntarily. The phrase “against my will” does not indicate he was unwilling to obey the Lord’s calling, but that his will had no part in the call itself. God was the one that called him to the task. It was not his idea to serve Christ, so consequently, he did not feel he should receive a reward, but a dispensation of the gospel that was committed to him. What does that mean?

This word “dispensation” is from the word oikonomia {oy-kon-om-ee'-ah} which means “a stewardship, an oversight, the management of affairs.” Paul was entrusted with the responsibility of preaching the gospel. He was under obligation to preach it, for which he neither deserved nor expected any kind of reward at all.

God has entrusted to all God-called preachers, the responsibility of caring for God’s Word that has been entrusted to them by the Lord. Failure to responsibly, seriously, soberly, and accurately preach the truths of God’s Word will lead to the Lord’s chastisement. Pray for your pastor or any preacher because his accountability to the Lord is greater than those who do not preach. In fact, James offered a warning to preachers and teachers of the Word.

* James 3:1-My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.

Beloved, all believers are entrusted with the care of the gospel. We are all to be sharing it with the lost. The sold-out saint is serious about sharing the gospel and being submitted to God’s will and purpose for his life. Let me ask, “Are you a sold-out saint?”

* Do you have the sentiment of sacrifice?
* Do you have the sentiment of selflessness?
* Do you have the sentiment to be steadfast and submitted to the Lord?

We have examined two areas so far.

1. The Intentions of Paul and the Importance of His Integrity
2. The Importance and Imperative in Preaching the Gospel.
3. Next....An Inquiry about Rewards
III. An Inquiry about Rewards  9:18
What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may
make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in
the gospel.

Paul felt compelled to preach the gospel. So what was his
reward? He answered the question. His reward was the fact
that he preached the gospel free of charge. He did not demand he be paid
for his ministry, even though it was his right or his “power.” He chose
to make that decision. His reward was the people that were saved because
a huge obstacle was removed by his decision about his financial support.
He enjoyed the blessing of seeing the Word of God work in the lives of
those people that sat under his preaching.

* 2 Corinthians 7:3-4.... I speak not this to condemn you: for I have said
before, that ye are in our hearts to die and live with you.  4 Great is my
boldness of speech toward you, great is my glorying of you: I am filled
with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation.

He also enjoyed the reward of proving to these people that he loved
them and was willing to make sacrifices in order to get them saved. The
joy and satisfaction he received blessed him greatly. He knew that the
Lord would also take care of this issue of “rewards” when he stood
before Christ one day. He expressed that sentiment before he was
executed.

* 2 Timothy 4:7-8.... I have fought a good fight, I have finished my
course, I have kept the faith:  8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a
crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give
me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his
appearing.

Paul expressed the fourth sentiment of a sold-out saint in this verse.
It was the sentiment of satisfaction in living for the Lord. Do you find
satisfaction in your relationship with Jesus Christ? The Lord promised
us satisfaction in Him and David attested to that truth.

* John 6:35- And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that
cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never
thirst.

* Psalm 63:1-5....O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul
thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land,
where no water is;  2 To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen
thee in the sanctuary.  3 Because thy lovingkindness is better than life,
my lips shall praise thee. 4 Thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name. 5 My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips.

IV. The Inclination and Intensity of Paul to Win the Lost
9:19-23
For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. 20 And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; 21 To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. 22 To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. 23 And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you.

The Oakland, California, police force recently unveiled its first "low-rider" police car. The vehicle has the standard logo, lights, and siren, but also includes chrome wheels, hydraulic lifts, and a 500-watt sound system. The car was put on the force to help officers build better relationships with inner-city kids. Paul applied the same principle in reaching people for Christ. That principle is listed here.

A fifth sentiment of a sold-out saint is the sentiment of being a servant and stretching yourself to reach others. Paul willingly served others in order to try to reach them for Christ. He was a free man, but became a servant to all to win them.

To the Jewish person, Paul became a Jew. He catered to Jewish concerns without compromising any doctrine or teachings of the gospel. He probably celebrated Jewish feasts, honored restrictions, and abstained from food that would be offensive to the Jews. He went to the synagogues when he went to towns in order to try to reach his own people first, if possible. All this was done to try to reach the Jewish people. He wanted to take Timothy with him into the cities and instructed Timothy to be circumcised in order to remove an obstacle to the Jewish people.

* Acts 16:3- Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek.
Paul served the Gentiles too, in order to reach them. He did not indulge in their sin, but he found common ground in matters that appealed to them in order to win them to Christ. There are women and men today very gifted in building bridges to people in order to reach them. If the lost person is a florist, they will talk about flowers. If they are farmers, they will talk about farming. If they love sewing, the soul winner will talk about sewing. If they love sports, they will talk about sports to win the lost. This is what Paul did.

Paul became weak to reach the weak. The weak were those who were feeble. He became weak in order to reach them. The weak may also have been those who were spiritually immature and needed a patient instructor.

Paul was stretchable. He became all things to all men that he might win them. He did this all for the sake of the gospel. This is the last sentiment we will note of the sold-out saint, the sentiment of the sake of the gospel. In other words, you will do what you can for the sake of reaching people for Christ. It may require financial sacrifice? It may involve spending some of your precious time to reach someone for the Lord? It may involve working in a difficult situation. All of these things are done for the sake of the gospel.

Great Christians in history were willing to do whatever it took to be sold out to God and win people to Christ.

* George Whitefield, famous English evangelist, said, "O Lord, give me souls, or take my soul."

* Henry Martyn, missionary, cried as he knelt on India's coral strands, "Here let me burn out for God."

* David Brainerd, missionary to North American Indians, declared, "Lord, to Thee I dedicate myself. Oh, accept of me be Thine forever. Lord, I desire nothing else; I desire nothing more."

* Dwight L. Moody implored, "Use me, then, my Saviour, for whatever purpose and in whatever way Thou mayest require. Here is my poor heart, an empty vessel; fill it with Thy Grace."

* Martin Luther prayed on the night preceding his appearance before the Diet of Worms: "Do Thou, my God, stand by me against all the world's wisdom and reason. Oh, do it! Thou must do it. Stand by me, Thou true, eternal God!"

* "Praying Hyde," a missionary in India, pleaded, "Father, give me these souls, or I die."
Chapter 3...The Sentiments of a Sold-out Saint...9:15-23

Let me ask again, “Are you a sold out saint?”

* Do you have the sentiment of sacrifice?
* Do you have the sentiment of selflessness?
* Do you have the sentiment to be steadfast and submitted to the Lord?
* Do you have the sentiment of satisfaction in living for the Lord?
* Do you have the sentiment of being a servant and stretching yourself to reach people for Christ?
* Do you have the sentiment of the sake of the gospel?

Polycarp, the pastor at Smyrna, was a man that was a sold-out saint. He desired one hour of prayer before his execution and he prayed fervently. In fact, his guards repented for taking him into custody. The Proconsul demanded that he deny Jesus Christ. This was his reply, "Eighty-six years I have served Him. Never once has He wronged me. How shall I blaspheme my king who saved me?" At the stake, the flames encircled Polycarp like an arch without touching him. The executioner then pierced him with a sword. He would rather die than to deny his Lord. May we be just as devoted and sold out for Christ. May we all have the sentiments of a sold-out saint.
Chapter 4
The Challenge to be a Champion for Christ

1 Corinthians 9:24-27

Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. 25 And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. 26 I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: 27 But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

If you ever have been involved in sports, you know that there is a price to pay if you are going to be a champion. Winning is not easy. It requires lots of training and lots of practice. I went to Normal Community High School in Normal, Illinois. We were known as the Ironmen. I played football my first two years in school. Our football team practiced in the hot summer sun and after school almost every night during football season. My position that I started at was defensive corner back. I loved it because you got to tackle people as hard as you wanted. Busting heads is fun, it really is, unless you tackle someone named Rocky who is 6' 2", weighs 260 pounds and is running toward you when you tackle him. Guys like this cause you to see stars.

We were ruthless in those football practice sessions. We hit just as hard in training as we did in the game because we all competed for positions on the team. Bloody jerseys were a common sight. One guy fractured his neck on the first day of practice. It’s a miracle we did not kill one another. The result of hard training left us with an undefeated record for two years. Our defense allowed an average of only 6 points a game for those two years. We were champions. The Dallas Cowboys’
defense could learn a thing or two from our team.

The whole purpose in getting involved in a sport is to not only have fun, but to win whatever you are doing. It has been a pleasure for me to win track events in my youth. I have blue ribbons and gold medals for my efforts, but also have many 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th place ribbons. I did not always win, but I always tried to win. If I am competing at anything, I want to win. If I play Monopoly, I want to win. If I play the Candy Land game, I want to win. If I play Bingo at the church New Year’s party, I want to win!

Paul issued the same challenge here in this portion of his epistle. Just as we want to win the earthly games we play, Paul challenged us to have that same attitude in our spiritual battles and race for Christ. He challenged all Christians to be champions for Jesus Christ and be victorious as they lived their lives each day. He talked about the attitudes, attributes, and actions of a champion. Let’s see what he had to say.

I. Our Race 9:24

Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.

In the challenge to be a champion for Christ, Paul used the sport of running to make his point. Sports was very important in the Greek culture in his day, just as it is today. The athletic competitions were celebrated with great splendor and fanfare. Most of us are familiar with the ancient Olympic games that were held every four years. There were, however, a total of four important competitions.

* The Delphic or Pythian Games: These were held every four years at Delphi at the foot of Mount Parnassus. Athletes from distant countries came to compete for a wreath of apple leaves.

* The Isthmian or Corinthian Games: Athletes competed for a wreath of pine.

* The Nemean Games: They were celebrated every three years. The athletes competed for a crown of parsley.

* The Olympic Games: These games were held in Olympia and were considered the most popular. The Greeks believed that Hercules started these games. They were held every four years. In fact, a period of four years is known as an Olympiad. The champions won a wreath of olive leaves.
The timing of these events was spaced out where an important competition was being held every year. Athletes ran, leaped, threw the discuss and javelins, boxed, and wrestled. Whatever the prize was, it was conferred on the successful champion on the last day of the games with great solemnity, pomp, congratulation, and rejoicing.

Paul focuses our attention on running a race to illustrate the life of the Christian. Beloved, when you think about it, our life is a race. The writer of Hebrews spoke of our race. We are not the spectators, watching everything happen. We are the competitors. We are competing against our own flesh, our own stubborn will, and against Satanic opposition. We are to conquer these things.

* Hebrews 12:1- Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

Time flies so swiftly for us all. When I was young, it seemed to go so slow. I was always thinking, I can’t wait until the summer when school is out and I can play. It seemed like it took forever for summer to come. It’s not that way anymore. When you are young and spunky, your life’s race seems slow, but when you get older and achy, your race gets faster.

James, Job, and David all spoke about the swiftness of our lives.

* James 4:14-Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.
* Job 7:6- My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and are spent without hope.
* Job 14:1- Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble.
* Psalm 39:5a- Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee...
* Psalm 89:47a Remember how short my time is...
* Psalm 102:3- For my days are consumed like smoke, and my bones are burned as an hearth.

Our life is a race. Paul tells us to run the race to win. God has a purpose for us to win, to be victorious. Running implies forward movement, not setting still. Running implies fervency. It implies being in shape. The direction for our Christian life is to go forward and grow. We are not to be apathetic and lazy, but fervent in spirit, serving the
Lord. We are to keep ourselves in spiritual shape by nourishing ourselves in God’s Word. Paul was a champion for Christ because he ran his race for Christ with everything he had in his being.

*Philippians 2:16- Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.*

*Philippians 3:14- I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*

God has a course, a path for us to run. He has a purpose for our lives. Our purpose is to fulfill the will of God and be victorious Christians that are champions for Christ. When you do what God wants you to do, you are a champion. When you are obedient to His Word, you are a champion for Christ. When you use your abilities for the honor and glory of God, you are champion.

Paul tells us to run to win, no matter what your age is right now. If you’re a teenager, run to win. If you are a young adult, run to win. If you are in your 40's or 50's, run to win. If you are in those silver senior years, it’s not time to sit down and take it easy. Oh, no, no, no! Run to win.

Your greatest years in serving Christ and influencing others to follow Him can be your senior years. My godly grandparents had a HUGE impact and influence on my life. They loved God and they knew how to get a hold of the Lord in prayer. You may not feel good, you may feel like a flop or failure, and you may have fallen spiritually, but Paul’s challenge to you is get back in the race and run to win. Be a champion for Christ! Make your life, the only one you have, count for Christ!! Don’t waste it!

Eric Liddell was the son of James Liddell, Scottish missionary to China. While in a boarding school in Great Britain, Eric excelled in his studies and sports. He was involved in Christian activities and was faithful in Bible studies and church attendance. When he went to the university, he joined the track team and won an abundance of medals and trophies for his great running speed. He was considered a national treasure of Scotland and his career was followed all the way to the 1924 Olympics where he ran his race for Christ spiritually and physically.

His fame and faith opened doors of opportunity to tell others about the Savior. This faith was tested at the Paris Olympics when his favorite race, the 100 meter sprint was scheduled for Sunday. Eric had a conviction about not competing on Sunday for it was the Lord's day (It still is). In spite of pressure and criticism, he did not run this race, but instead, entered a race that was on a different day, the 400 meter race,
and the world watched and wondered at this unusual young man.

In the dressing room just before the race, the team masseur gave him a note which said, "In the Old Book it says 'He that honors me I will honor.' Wishing you the best of success always." He smiled and made up his mind that, win or lose, he would honor God and that he did. Eric won the gold medal in the 400 meter race and set a world record, honoring God and being honored by the Lord who gave him the ability to run as swift as a stallion. Honor God beloved, and He will honor you and your faithfulness to Him.

II. The Rigors of Training   9:25a

And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things....

Being a champion requires training and training can be grueling. The phrase “striveth for the mastery” is from the Greek word agonizomai {ag-o-nid'-zom-ahee}. It forms our English word “agony.” The word means “to contend, to struggle with dangers and difficulties.”

If you are trying to live your life for Jesus Christ, you know that the Christian life is not a playground, but a battlefield. Christians face many struggles, many dangers, and many difficulties because of their dedication to Jesus Christ. In fact, world-wide there is an average of 160,000 Christians that are martyred for Christ every single year. Live for Christ, and yes, Satan and his followers will oppose you. God’s challenge to us is, “Strive for the mastery.”

As Christians, we are to contend for Christ. We are to struggle to be victorious over our vices, triumphant over our tribulations, conquering our cowardness, and successful in having a servant’s attitude toward the Lord and other people. Jude challenged us to contend for the faith. *Jude 1:3-Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.*

Being a champion for Christ requires that we be “temperate in all things.” This word “temperate” is from the word egkrateuomai {eng-kra-teu'-om-ahee} which means “to be self-controlled.” It was used to describe athletes, who in preparing themselves for the games, abstained from unwholesome food, wine, and sexual indulgence. The athlete has to get his body trim, his weight under control. He has to build up his
muscles, his lungs, his reflexes, and his endurance. He restricts his diet. He denies himself. He starts a program of strenuous physical exercise.

If you are going to be a champion for Christ, then self control is vital for spiritual victory and growth in the Lord. Paul continued the same train of thought of self control in verse 27. Let’s look at it.

* 1 Corinthians 9:27a- But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection...

The words “keep under” is from the Greek word *hupopiazos* {hoop-o-pee-ad'-zo} which means “to beat black and blue, to smite so as to cause bruises and livid spots.” The word was used to describe a boxer who buffs his body, handles it roughly, and wears it out.” This word was also used to describe that part of the face that is under his eyes. So it meant “to give yourself a black eye.”

Paul kept himself under control and this word indicates this was not an easy task. He was in a battle with himself constantly. Boy, that sounds familiar. You and I have the same conflict. Notice Paul’s words in Romans chapter seven.

* Romans 7:14-20.... For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. 15 For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. 16 If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. 17 Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. 18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. 19 For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. 20 Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

In speaking about the importance of self-control, Paul spoke about bringing his body into subjection. The word “subjection” is an intense word that he uses when describing the way he handled himself. It is from the word *doulagogeo* {doo-lag-ogue-eh'-o} which means “to lead away into slavery; to make a slave and to treat as a slave with severity, sternness, and rigid discipline.”

To keep himself under control, Paul was extremely stern with himself. You have to be this way if you are going to keep the brama bull of your flesh under control. Our flesh kicks, twists, and snorts when we exert self-discipline. It does not like to be controlled, but that is what is needed if you are going to be a champion for Christ.
This brings us to a good question, “What is necessary for the Christian to have self-discipline?”

* Principles of Self Discipline

1. Self discipline may involve Surrendering Special Treasures in your life.

* Exodus 33:5-6—... For the Lord had said unto Moses, Say unto the children of Israel, Ye are a stiffnecked people: I will come up into the midst of thee in a moment, and consume thee: therefore now put off thy ornaments from thee, that I may know what to do unto thee. [6] And the children of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments by the mount Horeb.

* Mark 10:21—Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me.

Not long ago at a high school, three military recruiters showed up to address some high school seniors. Graduation was only a few months away, and the military men were there for the obvious—to articulate to these graduating young men and women some of the options that military service would provide them. The meeting was to last forty-five minutes. Each recruiter—representing Army, Navy, and Marine Corps, was to have fifteen minutes. Well, the Army and Navy recruiters got carried away.

When it came time for the Marine to speak, he had two minutes. So he walked up with two minutes to make his pitch. He stood utterly silent for a full sixty seconds—half of his time. Then he said this: "I doubt whether there are two or three of you in this room who could even cut it in the Marine Corps. I want to see those two or three immediately in the dining hall when we are dismissed." He turned smartly and sat down.

When he arrived in the dining hall, those students interested in the Marines were a mob. They acted without delay. He appealed to the heroic dimension in every heart and challenged them with difficulty, sacrifice, and a difficult standard. Jesus made the same challenge when He said, "Take up your cross and follow me."

A great hindrance to 100% total commitment to the Lord are the treasures of the believer. I am talking about those things or those people that are so important, that they keep us from being or doing what God wants us to do. These things may be money, a material possession, a position, even a person such as a boyfriend, girlfriend, husband, or wife.
There is nothing wrong in treasuring things as long as they are the right treasures and they don't have a prominent position above our relationship with Christ. God's challenge to us is to replace our earthly treasures with eternal ones that will never be destroyed.

* Matthew 6:20—But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

Our relationship with the Lord is to be our greatest treasure. That is the attitude of a champion for Christ. The Lord is to be number one in our hearts. If there is something or someone that has prominence above Him, He will want us to surrender that treasure. If it can be removed or demoted, then do it. If a husband or wife is hindering your dedication to the Lord, then some serious discussions need to take place with your spouse and some difficult choices about your time and priorities need to be made.

This is why the Christian should not marry an unbeliever or a carnal, backslidden Christian. Can two walk together unless they agree? If your spouse is a hindrance, don't divorce her or him. There are many other options available. Christlike consistency, loving care, kindness, and intimacy in the marriage go a long way with any husband or wife. When your love and kindness are linked to following Christ, your spouse 99% of the time will want you to follow the Lord if you cherish and adore him or her. This is what Peter was trying to get across to the wives of unbelieving husbands.

* 1 Peter 3:1-2,7... Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; [2] While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear....[7] Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered. The word "conversation" deals with the lifestyle, the behavior, attitude, and actions of the person.

2. **Self discipline involves Sacrificing to Serve the needs of Others.**

* 1 Kings 17:13—And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son.

* Ruth 2:11—And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been shewed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother in law since the death
of thine husband: and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and
the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest
not heretofore.

Elijah asked the widow to deny herself and son and give their last
portion of food to God's man. She did and the Lord blessed her in a huge
way. Ruth chose to deny herself in order to meet the needs of Naomi. In
so doing, the Lord put her on the path of Boaz who became her husband.
Ruth and Boaz were part of the family tree of King David and the Lord
Jesus Christ. The willingness of the widow and Ruth to deny themselves
put them in a position where they could be used of God to be a blessing.
God has honored both of them by having their decisions recorded in
Scripture for us to read several thousand years later.

3. Self discipline involves Shunning the exaltation of Self.
   * Proverbs 25:6—Put not forth thyself in the presence of the king, and
     stand not in the place of great men:

     People get themselves into trouble when they start bragging or
exalting themselves. They do this many times because of the insecurity
they feel in their own life about themselves. By promoting themselves
among others or claiming to be great, they diminish what they have
accomplished. Solomon warned us to let others brag on us. If you have
done something that is worthy of praise, someone will note it. If not, the
Lord will reward you.
   * Proverbs 27:2—Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth;
     a stranger, and not thine own lips.

     Self exaltation is a by-product of comparing your life with the
accomplishments of others. Paul warned us that comparing yourself with
others is not a smart thing to do. Why? If we compare ourselves and find
that we are weaker or less successful than others, we can become
discouraged. We can also become so focused on “out-doing” someone
else that we pursue that which is unimportant and is not going to satisfy
us. If we feel that we are greater than others, we can become proud,
unteachable, or content with mediocrity in our Christian growth and
dedication. Paul made it clear that the opinions that really matter are the
Lord's opinions of our lives.
   * 2 Corinthians 10:12—For we dare not make ourselves of the number,
or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they
measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among
themselves, are not wise.
When people commend themselves, it doesn't count for much. The important thing is for the Lord to commend them either now by His blessings or in eternity. His opinion is really what matters, for He is our judge. It is the champion for Christ that considers God's opinion of his life to be the most important one.

When Ptolemy, outstanding astronomer and mathematician of the second century, decided to build the Pharos Lighthouse of Alexandria, Egypt, he chose Sostratus to design that mammoth lighthouse which later became one of the Seven Wonders of the World. Ptolemy insisted that he should be exalted and that the structure should bear his inscription as a personal memorial.

However, Sostratus didn't think the king should get all the credit. He therefore put the title of Ptolemy on the front of the lighthouse in a thick plaster which would be eye catching at first, but years later would eventually be worn away by the sea, sun, wind, and rain.

Secretly, Sostratus had cut his own name in the granite underneath the plaster. For decades the sea dashed against the inscription of Ptolemy's name and gradually eroded it. Though it lasted the lifetime of that earthly monarch, it finally was obliterated, leaving the name "Sostratus" standing in bold relief!

In like manner, worldly fame often disappears before the relentless waves of time. In the same thought, those folks whose names are buried, who humble themselves, will eventually be known and honored. May our priority be to be champions for Christ and enjoy the commendation of the Lord.

4. Self discipline involves Striving to keep oneself pure.

* Daniel 1:8—But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.

* Galatians 5:24—And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

One of the blessings of keeping yourself pure is a clear conscience. That is a priority of a champion for Christ. Some of the curses of involving yourself in sinful living and immorality are the depression and guilt that shadow your behavior. A popular belief among doctors and
social scientists has been that many teens begin drug use and sexual activity to deal with depression. However, a study published in the October, 2005 edition of the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* reverses those beliefs.

Health policy researcher Denise Dion-Hallfors comments: "Findings from the study show depression came after substance and sexual activity, not the other way around." The data was gathered from a national survey of 13,491 adolescents. A large group of these teens, about 25 percent, were called "abstainers." They never had sex, smoked, drank alcohol, or had taken drugs. Only 4 percent of these teens experienced depression.

The study also reported that girls among the 75 percent who had taken drugs and experimented with sex were 2-3 times more likely to experience depression than abstaining girls.

Boys who engaged in binge drinking were 4 to 5 times more likely to experience depression than boys in the abstaining group. Boys smoking marijuana were over three times more likely to be depressed than those who abstained. The Bible warns of the consequences of sinful living.

* Proverbs 13:15—Good understanding giveth favour: but the way of transgressors is hard.

The word "hard" is from the Hebrew word *ethan* {ay-thawn’}. This word means "ever-flowing, constant, permanent." The ideas of "hard, harsh, enduring rut, or rugged" are derived from this word. The reason the sinner’s way is rough and uneasy is because the consequences of his choices are unpleasant to himself and unacceptable to other people, especially when they are affected by his lifestyle.

Those who live in wickedness do find they get into an enduring rut that leads to a difficult, bumpy path, especially when they are addicted to something destructive. Their way is "constant or ever-flowing" because some sinful choices that people make have consequences that they have to live with for the rest of their lives. These consequences may involve a pregnancy, harm to the body or someone else, or imprisonment. The consequences can lead to severe depression and stress.

Rafiq Abdul Mortland clearly needed to choose another career. The 38-year-old found that what he was doing put him under pressure, not to mention that the work was illegal. Mortland committed a string of robberies in Hennepin County, Minnesota. After capture, he received a sentence of eight to ten years in prison for holding up eight local businesses. During his crime spree, Mortland received the nickname "The
Rolaids Robber." This came about after Mortland repeatedly asked store clerks for antacid tablets while the felony was in progress. What was his explanation? Mortland said he needed the antacid because of the stress that came from committing crimes. Beloved, the way of the transgressor is hard!

* Jeremiah 2:19—Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of hosts.

Your sinfulness will bring its own punishment and chastisement. When you get away from God, it will lead to your shame and discipline. Indulging in the sweetness of sin will lead to bitterness and a sour life.

We have seen so far that self discipline involves several elements.

* Surrendering Special Treasures in your Life.
* Sacrificing to Serve the Needs of Others.
* Shunning the Exaltation of Self.
* Striving to Keep Oneself Pure.
* Next, Subtracting Hindrances from our Lives.

5. **Self discipline involves Subtracting Hindrances from our lives.**

* Matthew 18:8—Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire.

Self discipline involves removing stumbling blocks that cause us to sin. This does not mean to cut off a part of the body; it means that any relationship, practice, or activity that leads to sin should be stopped. We are to remove the hindrances from our lives. The writer of Hebrews referred to them as "weights." Champions for Christ remove the weights in their lives that hinder them from winning their race for Christ and being the best they can be for God.

* Hebrews 12:1—Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

* 1 Peter 2:1—Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings,

* Colossians 3:8—But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.
6. **Self discipline involves Shunning Behavior that causes a brother to stumble into sin.**

* Romans 14:21—It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumleth, or is offended, or is made weak.

Self discipline involves removing from our lives that which can cause another to fall into sin or spiritually weaken them. What you may be doing is not wrong, but it may be offensive to someone else or detrimental to a new Christian.

7. **Self discipline may involve Shelving your Security and comfort zone to do what God wants you to do.**

* Matthew 4:20—And they straightway left their nets, and followed him.
* Matthew 4:22—And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him.

The disciples left their security and comfort zone of fishing to follow the Lord Jesus Christ. Many a Christian today, has left their comfort zone to serve the Lord in the ministry and God has blessed their decision and denial of self. They may have left their home to serve the Lord on the mission field or a very lucrative job to serve the Lord as a preacher. Disciplining yourself may involve putting your security and comfort zone on the back burner and truly living your life by faith. God promises His blessing when we make this sacrifice for Him.

* Matthew 19:29—And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.

8. **Self discipline involves Seeing your Success or accomplishments as lost or unimportant.**

* Hebrews 11:24-25... By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; [25] Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;
* Philippians 3:7-8... But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. [8] Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,
If anyone had a reason to be proud, it would be Paul. In spite of his success and accomplishments, he counted them as worthless or broken in comparison to the value of walking with God. His accolades were discarded like garbage or dung so that he could know the Lord more. Nothing was more important than his relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. What a challenge to us all!

Paul reveals an important truth in spiritual growth. Many folks achieve victories for Christ, only to rest in those victories and not progress or go forward. They say, "In the past, I did this or that. It's time for someone else to serve." Living in the past brings ruin and waste in the present which brings emptiness and shame in the future.

Beloved, make each day count for the Lord. Whatever happened yesterday is now in the past. Today is a new day with new challenges and new opportunities to glorify God. Don't waste them. What we do for Christ and our relationship with Him is what really matters. Howard Rutledge found this out the hard way.

Howard Rutledge, a United States Air Force pilot, was shot down over North Vietnam during the early stages of the war. He spent several miserable years in the hands of his captors before being released at the war's conclusion. In his book, *In the Presence of Mine Enemies*, he reflects upon the resources from which he drew in those arduous days when life seemed so intolerable in a Vietnam prison. Here is what he said:

During those longer periods of enforced reflection it became so much easier to separate the important from the trivial, the worthwhile from the waste. For example, in the past, I usually worked or played hard on Sundays, and had no time for church. For years Phyllis (his wife) had encouraged me to join the family at church. She never nagged or scolded—she just kept hoping, but I was too busy, too preoccupied, to spend one or two short hours a week thinking about the really important things.

Now the sights and sounds and smells of death were all around me. My hunger for spiritual food soon out-did my hunger for a steak. Now I wanted to know about that part of me that will never die. Now I wanted to talk about God and Christ and the church. But in Heartbreak (the name POWs gave their prison camp), there was no pastor, no Sunday School teacher, no Bible, no hymn book, no community of believers to guide and sustain me. I had completely neglected the spiritual dimension of my life. It took prison to show me how empty life is without God.
Beloved, have you learned this truth? How important is your relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ? Have you made up your mind to live for Him? If you are going to be a champion for Christ, a close walk with God is vital.

When Israel was at the foot of Mt. Sinai, God spoke to His people and gave them the Ten Commandments. They became fearful of the Lord and wanted Moses to become their mediator. In so doing, they did not establish a relationship with God. Not long after they received God’s commandments, they worshiped a golden calf and desired to return to Egypt when they presumed that Moses was dead. Why did this waywardness happen so fast? The answer is they did not have a close relationship with the Lord.

This is what we all need if we are going to be champions for Christ. May the Lord help us all to have self discipline and be champions for Him.

We have studied two areas in this portion of chapter nine thus far.

* Our Race
* The Rigors of Training
* Next.... The Reason for Competing

III. The Reason for Competing 9:25b

*Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.*

Athletes competed for earthly crowns. As Christians, we exert self control to obtain an incorruptible crown from the Lord. Eternal life is something that is given to us when we put our faith in Christ, our crowns, however, are things that we earn by our faithfulness and dedication to the Lord. We will not be equal when it comes to these crowns. Some Christians will get more crowns than others because they were champions for Christ. They ran their race well for the Lord and didn’t waste their lives. Paul, James, John, and Peter all talked about crowns for the believers.

* 2 Timothy 4:8- Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.
* James 1:12- Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.
Ch. 4...The Challenge to be Champions for Christ....9:24-27

* 1 Peter 5:4- And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

* Revelation 2:10- Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

* Revelation 3:11- Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

IV. Running with a Purpose  9:26

_I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air:_

If you are going to be a champion for Christ, then you need to keep your focus on God’s purpose for your life. Champions make wise use of their time. They take advantage of the good opportunities that come their way. Champions are focused on their tasks, fervent in their trials, firm in their training, and fierce in their tournaments. They are people with a purpose.

Paul expressed this sentiment here. Paul did not run for the Lord aimlessly or without any purpose. That is what he was saying here. He was not a time-waster. He was not like a boxer who did shadow-boxing, swinging at the air and wasting his energy. He used his strength for a purpose. Paul was a champion for Christ because he had spiritual goals.

* 2 Timothy 4:7- I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:

* Philippians 3:14- I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Paul indicates his intensity to reach his goal for Christ in verse 14, "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." The word "press" is the Greek word _dioko_ which means "to intently, earnestly seek or pursue." It is in the present tense which indicates a continuous effort. Paul pressed after the church or persecuted Christians, now he pressed, he earnestly, continually pursued toward the mark of God's high calling.

The Lord has a way of changing our goals, doesn't He? There are two extremes of pressing: 1) I must do it all, 2) God must do it all. God wants us to be dependent upon Him for the things we cannot do for ourselves. We are to do our best and leave the rest up to God. That is.
what a champion for Christ does.

The apostle pressed "toward the mark." The word "toward" is the word kata which means "down." Paul was saying, "I continually bear down on the mark." This word "mark" is a very interesting word. It comes from the Greek word skopos (skop-os') and forms our English word "scope." The word means "the distant mark looked at, the goal or end one has in view." This meaning can be seen as Paul talks about our race for Christ.

The word "mark" or "skopos" has another meaning which would add another dimension to this verse. Skopos can also refer to "one that watches, one that looks after things, of gods and kings, a guardian, a protector, a scout or lookout-man, a guard or watchman." The mark that Paul was pressing toward could also be a reference to the Lord Himself. Paul was looking forward to seeing and being with Christ. This is a mark of any champion for Christ.

In a small church yard at the foot of a Swiss mountain, the body of a young English climber was buried. On the tombstone under his name and date were these words, "He Died Climbing." When you die one day, will you be climbing for Christ when that time comes? God help us all to be pressing for the prize. May we run our race for Christ faithfully and be champions for Him.

V. The Remorse of Disqualification 9:27

But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

The reason Paul controlled and disciplined himself was to avoid behavior that would disqualify him from ministry. This is the idea behind the word "castaway." This word is from the Greek word adokimos (ad-ok'-ee-mos) which means "not standing the test, not approved." It was used of metals and coins that were examined and not found to be of the genuine weight because they had been shaved on the edges. People would shave the edges of their coins and melt down the shavings to form their own coins. The tampered coins were disqualified from circulation and use because they were not genuine or accurate.

Paul denied the desires of his flesh to keep himself in check. He did not want to do anything stupid that would hinder his service for Jesus Christ and put him out of circulation in serving the Lord. He wanted God to use him and was careful to practice what he preached because he
wanted his listeners to know that he was genuine and his message was genuine. That is the attitude of a champion for Christ.

The word “castaway” brings us to some important questions, “What causes a believer to be disqualified in his service or his race for Christ? Why would a Christian not be fit for service?”

* Reasons for Disqualification

1. The person is not qualified at all.
   
The Bible says we must be born again. If you are going to do the work of the Lord, then you must know the Lord of the work.

2. Not abiding in Jesus Christ.
   
   It is difficult to serve the Lord when your heart is far from Him. D.L. Moody said, "God uses the man that is close to Him."

   * John 15:4—Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

   * Matthew 15:8—This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.

3. Deficiency in spiritual maturity.
   
   * 1 Corinthians 3:1-3—And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto babes in Christ. [2] I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. [3] For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?

4. The lack of training or preparation to serve.
   
   God commands us to be prepared and to do our best to serve Him.

   * 2 Timothy 2:15—Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

   * 1 Peter 3:15—But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:

   Lord Joseph Duveen, American head of the art firm that bore his name, planned in 1915 to send one of his experts to England to examine some ancient pottery. He booked passage on the ship *Lusitania*. Then the German Embassy issued a warning that the ocean liner might be torpedoed. Duveen wanted to call off the trip. "I can't take the risk of you being killed," he said to his young employee. "Don't worry," said the man, "I'm a strong swimmer, and when I read what was happening in the
Atlantic, I began hardening myself by spending time every day in a tub of ice water. At first I could sit only a few minutes, but this morning, I stayed in that tub nearly two hours."

Naturally, Duveen laughed. It sounded preposterous, but his expert sailed, and the Lusitania was torpedoed. The young man was rescued after nearly five hours in the chilly ocean, still in excellent condition.

Just as this young man, so Christians should condition themselves by practicing devotional discipline, behavioral discipline, and discipline in doing good. This is what Paul did in his own life. He disciplined and prepared himself to do what was right.

5. Poor spiritual or physical health can hinder your service.

* 1 Corinthians 11:28-30...But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. [29] For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. [30] For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.

6. Being spiritually unclean disqualifies a person from service.

* Psalm 66:18—If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me:

* Isaiah 59:2—But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.

7. A lack of interest in serving the Lord.

* 2 Timothy 4:10—For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia.

* Revelation 2:4—Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

* 1 Timothy 5:15—For some are already turned aside after Satan.

If you do something because no one else will do it, it's a job. If you are doing something to serve the Lord, it's a ministry. If you do just enough to get by, it's a job. If you do a task to the best of your ability, it's a ministry. If you quit a task because someone criticized you, it was a job. If you continue to serve, though opposed, it's a ministry. If you give up because no one praised you, it was a job. If you do the work because it needs to be done, it's a ministry. It's hard to get excited about a job. It is almost impossible not to get excited about a ministry.

Average churches are filled with many people, doing many jobs. Great churches are filled with many people who are involved in ministry. If your concern is just success, it's a job. If your concern is faithfulness
to God, it's a ministry. People may say, "Well done," when you do your job. The Lord will say, "Well done," when you complete your ministry. Run your race and be a champion for Christ.

8. **People do not serve when they are not present for service.**

* Hebrews 10:25—Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

Dawson Trotman said, "Don't be so busy in the kingdom that you don't have time for the King." Many folks today are so busy, that the Lord is crowded out of their schedules. Many opportunities of service are lost because Christians are not faithful in church.

9. **Spiritual handicaps hinder people from serving.**

* 2 Timothy 2:4—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.

Are there weights or entanglements in your life that are keeping you from serving Christ? God wants us to make up our minds and serve Him.

There are three types of Christians who respond to the call of service:

1. **Rowboat Christians**—they have to be pushed wherever they go.
2. **Sailboat Christians**—they always go with the wind.
3. **Steamboat Christians**—they make up their minds where they ought to go and go there regardless of wind or weather.

*Avoiding Spiritual Disqualification*

How do we avoid spiritual disqualification? How do we prevent the disruption of our race for Christ?

1. **A Single Master**

   Have one master, and make sure your master is the Lord. Yield to His Spirit each day.

   * Matthew 6:24—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 mammon.

2. **Superior Love for Christ**

   Have a greater love for the Lord than this world.

   * 1 John 2:15—Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

3. **Spiritual Goals**

   * Philippians 3:14—I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.
4. Shun any Sin or Hindrances to Spiritual Growth

Hebrews 12:1—Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.

5. The Scriptures need to be Obeyed

* 1 Peter 2:2- As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:

6. Self Denial needs to be Exercised

* 1 Corinthians 9:27-But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

If you are going to be a champion for Christ, then "self must be conquered and kept in check." The conflict between your will and God's will is a constant battle that you will face continually. If it is your desire to be used of God, then you need to learn to deny yourself. To deny oneself not only means in every moment of life to say "No" to self, but also "Yes" to God. To deny oneself means to dethrone self and to enthrone the Lord Jesus Christ as the master of your life.

The word "Kamikaze" is the Japanese word for "divine wind." Divine was the wind in the year 1281. Never was a typhoon more God-sent, if one were Japanese. The typhoon crushed the invasion fleet mounted by the ambitious Mongol emperor Kublai Khan (Marco Poli Kublai) in the wake of his conquest of China's Sung dynasty.

To take the wind out of the sails of the United States naval juggernauts, the retreating Japanese organized their own kamikaze in World War II...a suicide air force. Japanese pilots slammed their bomb-laden planes and themselves into American ships in the Pacific Ocean. Twelve hundred pilots killed themselves taking out thirty-four U.S. ships.

Today, we need "Christian Kamikazes" who will take the faith anywhere the "divine wind" blows regardless of the cost. It was Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a pastor who was imprisoned by Adolph Hitler who said, "When Christ calls a man, He bids him come and die." This is what eventually happened to him as he died for Christ in Germany.

* Matthew 16:24—Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

When Jesus used this picture of His followers taking up their crosses to follow Him, the disciples knew what He meant. Crucifixion was a
common Roman method of execution, and condemned criminals had to carry their crosses through the streets to the execution site. Following Jesus, therefore, meant sacrifice, true commitment, the risk of death, and no turning back. Taking up the cross meant that death was imminent for the cross-bearer.

We are to live our lives for Christ each day as if it were our last. You never know, do you? Let me ask, "If this was your last day to live, what did you do with your life? Did you make it count for the Lord or have you wasted and thrown away your opportunities to serve Him?"

*James 4:14—Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.

May we all accept Paul’s challenge to be a champion for Christ. As preachers, may we be champions in the pulpit and conduct our church services in such a way that if Christ was sitting our pews, He would be blessed and enjoy our messages because He was honored and glorified and His Word was unashamedly proclaimed. Be a champion for Christ!
Chapter 5
Lessons from the Past Help Us Live in the Present
1 Corinthians 10:1-13

Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; 2 And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; 3 And did all eat the same spiritual meat; 4 And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. 5 But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. 6 Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. 7 Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. 8 Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. 9 Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. 10 Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. 11 Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. 12 Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. 13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

Are you teachable? That is an important question because the answer will determine whether you will benefit from the wisdom of others and the truths from the past. Being teachable is an important element in growing spiritually. How are you going to grow in
Ch. 5...Lessons from the Past Help us Live in the Present

the Lord if you are not willing to learn from what is written in God’s Word? As they say in Texas, “It ain’t gonna happen.”

A big reason why many Christians today do not give the Bible the time of day is because they are unteachable. They consider the Bible to be irrelevant to their lives, irritating to their lifestyles, infringing on their rights, not important in making decisions, and inconsequential in obeying its truths. This is why many believers are greedy, gloomy, grumpy, and groan through life. They are spiritually empty because they have not realized that God’s lessons from the past help us to live in the present.

The past that God has recorded for us in His wonderful Word helps us to live right now. The Bible is a living book because it is His message. What was written in the past is as relevant today as it was when it was written.

If you want to understand where you came from, then don’t go to a science book used in the public school because you won’t get the right answer. Go to the first chapter of the Bible. If you want to understand why people are so mean and wicked, the Bible gives us the answer and tells us where and when our sinfulness started. If you want boundaries for what is right and wrong, go to His Word. If you want to understand what is going on in the world right now, why certain events are taking place, especially in the Middle East, and what is going to happen in the future, then go to the Bible.

God’s Word is an eternal book, revealing truths about the past, the present, and the future because it truly is God’s Word. It will change your life if you are teachable, take time to read it, and put its truths into practice. His Word will teach you lessons from that past that will help you to live in the present.

I. A Reminder of Past Provisions 10:1-4a
Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; 2 And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; 3 And did all eat the same spiritual meat; 4 And did all drink the same spiritual drink....

In teaching the Corinthian Christians about past lessons that will help them live in the present, Paul focused his attention to the nation of Israel in the wilderness. He did not want them to be ignorant
about what God had done for His people, so He taught them how God cared for them.

Paul brought up the events that took place when Israel left Egypt. He spoke about God’s protection and provision with the pillar of cloud and fire, and God’s power in parting the waters of the Red Sea so they could cross it. He stated that they were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and sea. What does this mean?

What Paul was saying was by following Moses and his leadership through the Red Sea and under the pillar of fire and cloud, they were immersed and totally involved in his mission to reach the promised land. They identified with Moses as God’s appointed leader over them.

In Moses, God provided a leader and direction through His man. God provided direction by providing a path for them to follow. God provided protection and direction by His presence in the Shekinah cloud. The word “shekinah” means “that which dwells.” It was a physical manifestation of the presence of God. When we look at that cloud, we find God working in the same manner today through the person of the Holy Spirit.

First of all, the pillar of cloud was not given to Israel until they had been delivered from Egypt. There was the slaying of the lamb, then the giving of the cloud. In the New Testament, the cross came first, then the resurrection, and then Pentecost when the Holy Spirit in His fulness of power was given to the church.

Secondly, the pillar of cloud was a gracious gift to Israel. No one asked for a guide. It was God's provision of His grace and mercy. The apostles did not request a Comforter either, but the Spirit of God was given to the church after the ascension of Christ.

* John 14:16-And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever. The word “Comforter” is from the word Parakletos which means "one called along side of us to help."

Thirdly, the pillar was to guide Israel through their wilderness journey.

* Exodus 13:21- And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night: 22 He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.

The Holy Spirit guides the Christian through life if that believer will let Him.
* John 16:13a—Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth...
* Psalm 32:8—I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.

**Fourthly, the pillar gave light and direction.** Israel was thoroughly furnished day or night. During the day, the cloud comforted the people by providing protection from the rays of the scorching sun like the shade of an umbrella. At night, the pillar would provide light and warmth on cold, desert evenings.

* Numbers 9:21—And so it was, when the cloud abode from even unto the morning, and that the cloud was taken up in the morning, then they journeyed: whether it was by day or by night that the cloud was taken up, they journeyed.

In the same manner, the Holy Spirit gives us light and comfort. He teaches and reveals insights to us.

* John 14:26—But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

The pillar was light to His people, but also "darkness" to the Egyptians.

* Exodus 14:20—And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these: so that the one came not near the other all the night.

God not only reveals, but He conceals. Those without Christ do not understand the things of God. People without Christ walk in darkness and do not understand spiritual truths because they have been blinded by Satan and their own sinfulness.

* 1 Corinthians 2:14—But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.
* 2 Corinthians 4:4- In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

**Fifthly, God spoke from the pillar.**

* Psalm 99:7—He spake unto them in the cloudy pillar: they kept his testimonies, and the ordinance that he gave them.
* Exodus 33:9—And it came to pass, as Moses entered into the tabernacle, the cloudy pillar descended, and stood at the door of the tabernacle, and the Lord talked with Moses.
The Holy Spirit speaks to our heart today through prayer, through His Word, and through people that God has placed on our paths.

* Romans 8:16—The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:
* 1 John 3:24—And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.

**Sixthly, when they went through the wilderness, the pillar was never taken away.**

* Nehemiah 9:19—Yet thou in thy manifold mercies forsookest them not in the wilderness: the pillar of the cloud departed not from them by day, to lead them in the way; neither the pillar of fire by night, to shew them light, and the way wherein they should go.

Even when Israel was rebellious and murmuring, the pillar did not leave. The Holy Spirit will not leave the believer either. We are eternally secure in Christ.

* Hebrews 13:5—Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.
* John 14:16—And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;

Paul mentioned that God’s people ate the same spiritual meat and spiritual drink. The word “spiritual” indicates that the food and water that they received were provided by God. He is the One that cared for their needs. He provided water for them from a rock smitten by Moses at the beginning and the end of their journey (Exodus 17 & Numbers 20).

God also supernaturally and miraculously provided manna for His people in the wilderness every day except on the Sabbath.

* It was not a product of earth.
* It was not made by man.
* It was not brought out of Egypt.
* It came down from Heaven from God.

This manna that fell from Heaven was a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ.

* John 6:31-33... Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat. 32 Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from
heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. 33 For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.

God provided for all the needs of His people. Deuteronomy 8:4 says, “Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell, these forty years.” The Lord continues to meet our needs today.

* Philippians 4:19- But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.
* Psalm 23:1-The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.
* Proverbs 3:9-10... Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: 10 So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.
* 2 Corinthians 9:8- And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:

Have you ever heard of George Mueller? One day he looked down the streets of Bristol, England, and saw hundreds of homeless children. He was so moved with concern for them that he decided that something had to be done. He had only two cents in his pocket, but he decided to start an orphanage.

In 60 years, beginning with two cents, George Mueller took care of 10,000 orphans. He looked out and saw homeless kids. He was so moved with concern for them that he decided that something had to be done. He had only two cents in his pocket, but he decided to start an orphanage.

In 60 years, beginning with two cents, George Mueller took care of 10,000 orphans. He looked out and saw homeless kids. He could have said, “But, I don’t have any money. But, there is no way to care for them, to meet their needs, to buy the food.” Instead, he looked at them and said, “Therefore, I will reach out and help them.” And God blessed his efforts in a mighty way.

He told amazing stories of answered prayers. He kept a record of his prayers, and his prayer records filled more than 3,000 pages. His notes show that more than 30,000 prayers were answered.

One night there was no food in the orphanage to give to the children for breakfast. But at 3:00 in the morning, a baker called him up and said, “I just can’t sleep. I’m going down to the bakery to bake some bread. Would it be all right for me to bring some over to you this morning?”

One time, a milk truck just happened to break down in front of the orphanage on a day when they had no milk. The truck driver came in and said, “This milk is all going to spoil. Would you like some of it?” And their need was met. Time and time again, 30,000 times in 60 years, God answered George Muller’s prayers and provided for his needs. Beloved, He will provide for your needs, too.
II. The Rock that Followed God’s People  10:4b
....for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.

It is strongly believed that the water that came from the rock that Moses smote followed the Hebrews as they journeyed through the wilderness. Don’t ask me how to explain it because I can’t. I wasn’t there. The Lord miraculously provided a source of water for three million people through this water and through rain. The pillar of cloud may have provided moisture and rain for them.

Paul identified the source of their strength. He said that the spiritual Rock which provided living water was Christ. The pre-incarnate Christ watched over and cared for His people, protected them, and supplied their needs in that wilderness. Paul wanted the Corinthians to learn this lesson well.

Jesus is the smitten rock from which flows....
* the springs that save,
* the streams that satisfy.
* the fountain that fills us with joy unspeakable,
* the river that redeems and revives us.

Jesus Christ is the smitten Rock that satisfies our thirst. In Him, we find the treasures of the diamonds of deity, the opal of obedience to His Father's will, the sapphire of His saving grace, the polished marble of meekness and manliness, the ruby of redemption, the limestone of His love, and the granite of godliness and goodness. He is the Rock of all ages.

Just as the rock had to be smitten to bring forth life-giving water, Christ had to be smitten on Calvary to bring forth life for us. What happened in the past, affects us today in the present and in the future, too. Christ is the key to an abundant life.

* John 10:10b.... I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.

Don't try to quench your thirst from the mud puddles of this world. Those puddles will leave you meager, messed up, misled, and melancholy. This carnal world says, "You don't need God." Yes, you do beloved! This world promises, "Money will satisfy you!" No, it won't for you can never have enough.

Beloved, the sinful pleasures of this world will only shackle you into slavery. Your only hope is to go to the Rock of Ages and ask the Lord to
forgive and cleanse you of all your sins. He is the Living Water that refreshes our parched souls.

A little brother and sister went to spend the summer with their grandparents. One day the grandfather made the little boy a slingshot. He said, "Now be careful with this son, and never shoot rocks at people or animals." "OK, Grandpa," he solemnly promised. He spent the next few days firing rocks at trees, cans, and other make-believe antagonists.

Then one morning he saw far across the pond his grandma's pet duck. Not really aiming, he let fly a rock. It arched through the air and hit the duck squarely in the head. The little boy, fearing the wrath of his grandparent's, desperately searched for a place to hide the dead duck. Finding the perfect place, he hid the duck under the pile of firewood near the barn.

As he stood up congratulating himself on his cover-up scheme, he noticed his sister watching him from the front porch, "Lunch is ready brotherrrrrrrr." She drew out the word "brother" ever so sweetly and sarcastically. The brother's spirit fell for he knew that she saw everything.

All through lunch he was silent. His food sat in his stomach like lead. He waited for his sister to expose his crime. She smiled and sat silently eating her sandwich. Then the grandmother spoke up, "Sally, will you help me with the dishes?" "I'd be happy to do that Grandma," she replied, "but Johnny told me he wanted to help in the kitchen today. Didn't you Johnny?" Johnny was considering whether to protest or not, but she leaned toward him and whispered as she left the room, "Remember the DUCK!!!!" Johnny sat there in grim silence, realizing bad days were ahead.

The rest of the week was a nightmare for Johnny. He skipped a fishing trip so he could help make supper, and then he graciously let his sister lick the fudge pan. After many days of doing his sister's chores, he could take it no longer. "Grandma," he tearfully confessed, "I didn't mean to, but I killed your duck." "I know Johnny," as she gave him a hug. "I was standing at the window. I saw the whole thing. Because I love you, I forgave you, but I had to wait until you were ready to come to me and ask forgiveness. I wondered how long you'd let your sister keep you a slave."

Beloved, sin will enslave you. Your only hope is in the redemption of Jesus Christ. Christ the Rock, will break the shackles of your sin. Remember the words of David and Asaph.
Ch. 5...Lessons from the Past Help us Live in the Present

* Psalm 61:2- From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I.
* Psalm 78:35-And they remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their redeemer. Is the Lord your redeemer?

We have studied two sections in this portion of chapter ten so far.

* A Reminder of Past Provisions
* The Rock that Followed God’s People
* Next....The Righteous Anger of God and Removal of the Rebellious

III. The Righteous Anger of God and Removal of the Rebellious 10:5

But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

Paul has been teaching lessons from the past to help the Corinthian believers to live in the present. He has dealt with the issues of God’s presence, protection, and provision. He now addresses the matter of the pique or anger of God and His punishment.

Most Christians think of the Lord in light of His love, grace, patience, and mercy. Thank God for all of these attributes. Don’t kid yourself, however, that the Lord never gets angry. He does get angry. In fact, there are approximately 73 verses in the Bible that refer to God’s anger. The Lord does get angry with us and He does something about it. He does chasten us.

* Job 5:17- Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth: therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty:
* Proverbs 3:11- My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction:

What are some of the things that make the Lord angry?

1. Unbelief

* Psalm 78:21,22—Therefore the Lord heard this, and was wroth: so afire was kindled against Jacob, and anger also came up against Israel; Because they believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation:

2. Robbing God of What Belongs to Him

* Joshua 7:11—Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them: for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled also, and they have put it even among their own stuff. Achan took treasures from Jericho that belonged to the Lord.
3. Not following God's Directions  
* 2 Samuel 6:7—And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God. Uzzah touched the Ark which was a violation of God’s command.

4. Idolatry  
* Ezekiel 20:8- But they rebelled against me, and would not hearken unto me: they did not every man cast away the abominations of their eyes, neither did they forsake the idols of Egypt: then I said, I will pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish my anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt.

5. Not following God’s Will  
* Numbers 32:10,11—And the Lord’s anger was kindled the same time, and he sware, saying, Surely none of the men that came up out of Egypt, from twenty years old and upward, shall see the land which I sware unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob; because they have not wholly followed me:

   God was angry with the men, twenty and older that would not go into the Promised Land and conquer it. Their fear was greater than their faith. Paul said that the Lord was not “well pleased” with them. God had performed great miracles for His people, setting them free from slavery, guiding them through a sea, and giving them food and drink in a barren wilderness. Yet, after all this, the people rebelled against God.

   These men were “overthrown” in the wilderness. The word “overthrown” is from the Greek word katastronnumi {kat-as-trone’-noo-mee} which means “to scatter over the ground, to lay low, or to slay.” For forty years, the dead bodies of these men were scattered over the wilderness. The average funeral rate for the forty years was one funeral every thirty seconds. Only two men were allowed to go into the Promised Land after the forty years. Joshua and Caleb were the men that wanted to enter the land when the others did not. Those who disobeyed the Lord and did not follow His will were disqualified.

   Paul was reminding all of us with the lessons of the past that doubt, disbelief, and disobedience can lead to disqualification in serving Christ. Opportunities for reaping God’s blessings can be lost when we are fretful and faithless. Don’t forget Paul’s admonition and warning, “But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway (1 Corinthians 9:27).”
IV. The Recognition of the Mistakes of Others  10:6
*Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.*

Paul tells us that the lessons from the past will help us in the present, especially when we learn from the mistakes that people made in the past. If we will take heed to the blunders that people have made, then we won’t make them today. Those who have blundered become an example to us of what NOT to do. The question I want to ask at this point is this, “Are you alert enough and wise enough to learn from other people’s mistakes?” If you are, then you demonstrate wisdom. If not, then you demonstrate foolishness.

* Proverbs 14:16-A wise man feareth, and departeth from evil: but the fool rageth, and is confident.
* Proverbs 21:11- When the scorner is punished, the simple is made wise: and when the wise is instructed, he receiveth knowledge.
* Proverbs 22:3- A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished.
* Hebrews 2:1-Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.

V. Restraint from Destructive Behavior  10:7-10
*Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. 8 Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. 9 Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. 10 Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.*

A menu of sinful mistakes is listed here by Paul for our benefit. These are sins we are to avoid like a skunk in a tent. The sinful failures of people in the past are instructors to us in the present. If we are teachable and heed their lessons, we can avoid the pain, the problems, and the perplexities that others have reaped. Notice the behavior we are to avoid.
A. Refrain from Idolatry: “Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them...” vs. 7a

Christians are not to be involved in idolatry at all. The believers in Corinth were surrounded by pagan idols and Paul instructs them to stay away from them. As believers, we are not to be praying to idols or statues of the virgin Mary, Catholic saints, or pagan gods. Unfortunately, this goes on today. The idolatry of the Hebrews led to wicked behavior that ended in drunkenness, depravity, debauchery, and death.

* 1 Corinthians 5:11- But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.

* 1 John 5:21- Little children, keep yourselves from idols.

B. Refrain from Immorality: “....as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. 8 Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand.” vs. 7b-8

Linked closely with idolatry is sexual immorality. Corinth was filled with it and Paul confronts the issue head on because these believers had to deal with this issue everyday in their city. He referred to events that took place among the Hebrews when they wandered in the wilderness.

When the Hebrews worshiped the golden calf, they became intoxicated and immoral. They rose up to “play” which involves dancing and sexual involvement with one another. Later, more fornication or immorality led to God’s judgment upon His people. The Hebrews worshiped a pagan god of Canaan, Baal of Peor, and engaged in sexual immorality with Moabite women. Part of the worship of Baal, involved this behavior.

The consequence of this matter was God’s judgment. God commanded Moses to take all the heads (the rulers) of the people, and hang them up before the Lord against the sun. One thousand were slain by Phinehas and his companions. Those who fell by the plague were 23,000, so that the total number amounted to 24,000 (Numbers 25:9).

The lesson Paul was addressing with the Corinthian believers is the host of problems that are attached to immorality including the discipline of God, diseases, and death. This is why Paul told us to run from sexual sin!
* 1 Corinthians 6:18- Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.
* 2 Timothy 2:22a- Flee also youthful lusts....

C. Refrain from Indifference toward God and Inviting His Punishment: “Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.” vs. 9

Paul has dealt with the issues of God’s presence, protection, provision, pique, and punishment. He has shared lessons about perversity in worshiping pagan gods and sexual perversion. Now he deals with the issue of provoking Christ, especially with our arrogant, ungrateful words. He tells us, “Don’t tempt Christ.” Paul had already affirmed that Christ, as the spiritual Rock, accompanied them in their wilderness journeys. This verse affirms Christ’s deity and preexistence. What does he mean, however, “to tempt Christ?”

The word “tempt” is derived from the word peirazo {pi-rad’-zo}. When this word is used in a negative sense, it demonstrates the indifference of a person toward the feelings of another person. The word means “to test one maliciously; to prove a person’s feelings or judgments; to test a person’s virtue or character.” When used with reference to God, it means to try His patience, to provoke His anger, or to act in such a way as to see how much the Lord will bear, and how long He will endure the wickedness and perverseness of men.

The nation of Israel tempted the Lord, or tried His patience and forbearance, by rebellion, murmuring, impatience, and dissatisfaction with His dealings. They were indifferent toward the Lord and His provision and were very vocal with their harsh, unthankful words. Their actions and attitudes invited His judgment. God sent poisonous snakes to bite the people. Many of them died.

* Numbers 21:5-6..... And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread. 6 And the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died.

Multitudes of Christians do the same thing today. They provoke the Lord by their rigid hearts, their rash and ridiculous words and their rebellious ways. They are like children that push the limits of their
parent’s boundaries, seeing what they will tolerate. They forget about God’s holiness and His hatred for sin. Their sassy, foolish mouths and their indifference toward sin and its consequences, lead to serious trouble and destruction. King Solomon warned of the problems of a big mouth and the ungratefulness of a fool.

* Proverbs 10:14 - Wise men lay up knowledge: but the mouth of the foolish is near destruction.
* Proverbs 13:3 - He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life: but he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction.
* Proverbs 18:7 - A fool's mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his soul.
* Proverbs 21:23 - Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles.

D. Refrain from Ingratitude: “Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.” vs. 10

The murmuring, griping, and complaining not only demonstrated indifference toward the Lord, but it also demonstrated a lack of gratefulness for what God had done for them. Their ungrateful spirit brought destruction by the destroyer.

The Jewish people suppose that God employed destroying angels to punish the Hebrews that were rebellious. They believed there were five in number, and one of them they called Meshachith, the destroyer, which appears to be another name for Sammael, the Angel of Death. These names are not found in the Bible, however.

Many Jews believe that those who die violent deaths, or deaths that are not in the common manner of men, are considered as perishing by immediate judgments from God. This was true of the night of the Passover when they were freed from Egyptian slavery. The Lord Himself was the One that smote the Egyptians.

* Exodus 12:23 - For the LORD will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when he seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the LORD will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you.

The key lesson Paul was addressing here is the consequence of ingratitude and griping. Belly-aching will create a belly ache for you, as well as headaches and heartaches. Staying close to the Lord, however, and counting your blessings each day will help you to keep a tender heart.
In the late 19th century John Wanamaker opened a department store in Philadelphia. Within a few years that enterprise had become one of the most successful businesses in the country. Operating his store, however, wasn't Wanamaker's only responsibility. He was also named Postmaster General of the United States, and he served as superintendent for what was then the largest Sunday school in the world at Bethany Presbyterian Church. When someone asked him how he could hold all those positions at once, he explained. "Early in life I read, 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.' The Sunday school is my business, all the rest are the things."

One evidence of Wanamaker's desire to keep the Lord's work first in his life was a specially constructed soundproof room in his store. Every day he spent 30 minutes there praying and meditating upon God's Word. He had his priorities straight!

Seeking God first will help you to avoid or to rid of murmuring in your life. The needs that the Lord supplies for you will foster a grateful heart. In difficult times, God reveals Himself in different ways. It's in those times especially, when we are paying attention and depending upon Him.

* When we need protection, He is our Shield.
* When we need correction and direction, He is our Shepherd.
* When we suffer exhaustion and depletion, He is our Supplier.
* When we need affection, He is our Serenity.
* When we face rejection and dejection, He is our Sustainer.
* When we suffer from infections, He is our Strength.
* When we need preservation, He is our Shelter.
* When we suffer agitation, apprehension, and dissatisfaction, He is our Satisfier.

Why would we ever want to grumble in the first place? May the Lord help us to learn the lessons from the past. {At the end of this chapter, see the additional notes on “What Causes People to Gripe and Complain?”}

We have examined five areas in this passage which provide for us past lessons that will help us in the present.

* A Reminder of Past Provisions
* The Rock that Followed God’s People
* The Righteous Anger of God and Removal of the Rebellious
* The Recognition of the Mistakes of Others
* Restraint from Destructive Behavior
The events of the past that have been written down in the Bible provide examples to us of what to do and what not to do. The successes and failures of others serve to provide us warnings and instructions on making the right choices in our lives. If you are teachable, the lessons from others in the past will help you to live in the present.

World War II produced many heroes. One was Butch O'Hare. He was a fighter pilot assigned to an aircraft carrier in the South Pacific. One day while on a mission, he looked at his fuel gauge and realized someone had forgotten to top off his fuel tank. Unable to complete his mission, he turned around and headed back for the aircraft carrier. As he headed back, he saw a squadron of Japanese Zeroes heading straight for the American fleet. All the American fighters were out on a sortie, leaving the fleet virtually defenseless.

He dove into the formation of Japanese planes in a desperate move to divert them away from the fleet. After a frightening air battle, the Japanese airplanes broke off their assault on the fleet. Butch O'Hare's tattered fighter plane limped back to the aircraft carrier. He was recognized as a hero and given one of the nation's highest military honors. O'Hare International Airport in Chicago is named after him.

Some years earlier, there was a man in Chicago called Easy Eddie. In those days, Al Capone virtually owned the city. Capone's mob was involved in bootlegging booze, murder, and prostitution. Easy Eddie was Al Capone's lawyer and kept Big Al out of jail. In return, Easy Eddie earned big money and lived like a king on an estate so large, it filled an entire city block.

But Easy Eddie had one soft spot—a son whom he loved dearly. Eddie saw that his son had the best of everything: clothes, cars, and a good education. Despite Eddie's involvement with the mob, he tried to teach his son right from wrong. Eddie wanted his son to be a better man than he was. But there were two things Eddie could not give his son—a good name and a good example.
Deciding that giving his son these two things was more important than lavishing him with riches, Eddie had to rectify all the wrongs he had done. He had to make matters right in his life. He went to the authorities and told them the truth about Al Capone.

Easy Eddie eventually testified in court against Al Capone and the mob. He knew the cost would be great, but he wanted to be an example to his son and leave him with a good name. Within a year of testifying against the Mob, Easy Eddie's life ended in a blaze of gunfire on a lonely Chicago street. He had given his son, however, the greatest gift he had to offer at the greatest price he would ever pay. He had given him a good example. What do these stories have to do with one another? Butch O'Hare was Easy Eddie's son.

Beloved, your example, whether it is good or bad, will provide lessons for others now and in the future. May the Lord help us all to set a good example of a wise and godly life.

VII. The Reproof about Overconfidence 10:12
Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

Paul addresses more important issues here about presumptuousness and pride. He warns us about getting overconfident, “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.” Overconfidence says.....

* I don't need to pray about it.
* I don't need to read the Bible each day or study God's Word.
* I don't need God's help or need to wait on His leading.
* I don't need godly counsel.
* I'll do it my way. I don't need anyone's help or advice.
* I don't need my husband, my wife, or my parents.
* I don't need to give 100% or do my best. I'll just get by!

The Bible has a great deal to say about the matter of “overconfidence” and supplies many examples of people who made huge mistakes and failed because they behaved this way.

* Lessons about Overconfidence
1. It is Foolish
* Proverbs 28:26a—He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool...
* Proverbs 26:12—Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him.
There is more hope for a fool than for a man who is wise in his own eyes.  
*Proverbs 14:16—A wise man feareth, and departeth from evil: but the fool rageth, and is confident.*

The person that is cautious and turns away from evil, but a fool is arrogant, careless, and plunges ahead in his confidence.

2. The Fortunes of Success can cause Overconfidence

*Joshua 7:3-4—... And they returned to Joshua, and said unto him, Let not all the people go up; but let about two or three thousand men go up and smite Ai; and make not all the people to labour thither; for they are but few. [4] So there went up thither of the people about three thousand men: and they fled before the men of Ai.*

After the victory at Jericho, God's people became overconfident at a place called Ai. The spies return and basically said, "No problem here. Take a few guys and we will rap this matter up! Two or three thousand is all we need!" This was one fourth to one half of one percent of the total fighting force according to Numbers 26. They did not realize there were over 12,000 people in Ai (Joshua 8:25).

God's people had become over-confident and self-reliant. They were the epitome of overconfidence. They forgot that it was God who delivered them, not the troops.

Beloved, all we have and are, we owe to the Lord Jesus Christ. The spies in their overconfidence underestimated the strength of the enemy and overestimated their own strength and ability. They thought, "We are INVINCIBLE!" Their attitude made them VULNERABLE. Their overconfidence led to presumption which is a form of pride. They felt they didn't need God's leading or help.

Overconfidence makes people reckless or careless, which in turn, leads to their defeat. Overconfidence can breed a lack of accuracy and thoroughness. The amount of men they said they needed for battle was inaccurate. They thought Ai had a few people. Israel was defeated because they were not totally committed to the task and were careless. Later on, when Israel learned their lesson from the past and got matters right with God, Ai became overconfident and they were defeated.

Goliath was another person whose success in past battles made him careless and overconfident when he encountered David. He felt he did not need to be careful or cautious when battling skinny David.
*1 Samuel 17:42-44—... And when the Philistine looked about, and saw David, he disdained him: for he was but a youth, and ruddy, and of a fair countenance. [43] And the Philistine said unto David, Am I a dog, that thou comest to me with staves? And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. [44] And the Philistine said to David, Come to me, and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field. Goliath's overconfidence eventually led to his defeat, too.

When I visited Israel in the early 1980's, I was shown the place at the Golan Heights where, in 1967, the Israelis penetrated the Syrian defenses and secured that strategic area for themselves. From those heights Syrian guns overlooked most of the Galilee region of northern Israel and were a constant threat. The entire Golan area was closely guarded by the Syrians, except for one spot where the cliffs were so high and sheer that they seemed perfectly safe from attack.

One night, however, Israeli bulldozers cut out the cliffs enough to push tanks up to the top. By morning a large contingent of tanks, followed by infantry and supported by fighter planes, completely overran the Syrian positions and secured an area that extended ten miles inland. The spot the Syrians thought to be the safest turned out to be the most vulnerable. Their overconfidence made them careless, which in turn, led to their defeat.

3. Future Plans that are Presumed can create Overconfidence.
*Luke 12:19—And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.

The rich farmer presumed he had all the time in the world, but was sadly mistaken. He had the rest of his life all planned out. The Lord, however, was not part of his plans. His schemes ended by going up in smoke and his life was cut short.

The book of Esther centers around the plan of a proud and overconfident man who saw his plans backfire. King Ahasuerus of Persia promoted Haman to be his second in command, with instructions for the people to bow before Haman as they would the king. Mordecai, however, would not bow to him, and when the proud and arrogant Haman was told that Mordecai was a Jew, he persuaded Ahasuerus to declare an edict that would give him revenge on all Jews in the land by having them destroyed.

Through the intercession of Queen Esther, also a Jew, and the niece of Mordecai, the king issued a far different edict, which allowed, and
even encouraged the Jews to defend themselves—which they did with great success. Haman’s presumptuous plans failed. He was hanged on the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai, who was given all of Haman's possessions and the royal honor Haman had expected for himself.

Over-confidence, coupled with negligence, can lead to sad consequences. This is the case when a person is so sure of himself that he becomes careless about little things that may pose a threat. I’m thinking, for example, of a stuntman named Bobby Leach. In July, 1911, he went over Niagara Falls in a specially designed steel drum and lived to tell about it. Although he suffered minor injuries, he survived because he recognized the tremendous dangers involved in the feat, and because he had done everything he could to protect himself from harm.

Several years after that incident, while skipping down the street in New Zealand, Bobby Leach slipped on an orange peeling, fell, and badly fractured his leg. He was taken to a hospital where he later died of complications from that fall. He received a greater injury walking down the street than he sustained in going over Niagara. He was not prepared for danger in what he assumed to be a safe situation.

*Proverbs 27:1—Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.

*James 4:15-17... For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that. 16 But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil. 17 Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.

4. Faith in our Abilities can lead to Overconfidence.

Peter discovered that where he thought he was strongest and most dependable, he actually was the weakest. He assured Jesus, "Lord, with You I am ready to go both to prison and to death!" But, as Jesus then predicted, before dawn, Peter three times denied even knowing Jesus (Luke 22:33-34, 54-62). He was strong in courage, yet, was tested in this area, only to be defeated.

Moses was strong in faith, but when tested in this area of strength, he failed by hitting the rock instead of speaking to it. If we are not careful, we can drop our guard in those areas where we feel confident and end up feeling the sting of defeat.
5. Failure & Forgetfulness in being Cautious of Temptation.

* 2 John 1:8—Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.
* 2 Timothy 2:15—Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

The church at Sardis was proud of her reputation for being spiritually alive, but the Lord warned her that she was really dead and needed to repent.

* Revelation 3:1-2... And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. 2 Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.

If she did not repent, if she did not snap out of her failure to be cautious about her sin, He would come upon her like a thief (v. 3). The Acropolis of Sardis was built on a jutting spur of rock that was held to be impregnable. When Cyrus was besieging it, he offered a special reward to any who could find a way into it. A certain soldier, Hyeroeades by name, was watching one day and saw a soldier in the Sardian garrison drop his helmet accidentally over the battlements. He saw him climb down after it and marked his path. That night he led a band up the cliffs by that very path and when they reached the top they found it quite unguarded; so they entered in and captured the citadel, which had been considered safe and secure. Overconfidence led to carelessness, and carelessness led to defeat.

The self-confident believers at Laodicea thought they were healthy and wealthy and in need of nothing, but were told by the Lord that they were really "wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked" (3:17).

Christians who become self-confident become less dependent on God's Word and God's Spirit. They become careless in their living. As carelessness increases, openness to temptation increases and resistance to sin decreases. When we feel most secure in ourselves—when we think our spiritual life is the strongest, our doctrine the soundest, and our morals the purest—we should be most on our guard against temptation, and most dependent on the Lord.
* The Consequences of Overconfidence

1. Falling and the Failure of Defeat

* Hosea 10:13—Ye have plowed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity: ye have eaten the fruit of lies: because thou didst trust in thy way, in the multitude of thy mighty men.

In Judges 16, Samson's cockiness led to his defeat and destruction. He did not think he had to obey God's Word or his parents, only to find out too late, that he was wrong. He got what he wanted for sure, but he lost what he had. Overconfidence creates an arrogant attitude that leads to failure. Solomon warned us about our arrogance and its consequences.

* Proverbs 16:18-Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.

This verse was literally fulfilled on the world stage on February 17, 2006, when Lindsey Jacobellis was having the race of her life in the 2006 Winter Olympics at Torino, Italy. Lindsey was racing in the championship heat of the Ladies Snowboard Cross race. She was looking real good. In fact, she had a lead of three seconds or 140 feet over Tanya Freeden of Switzerland.

As Lindsey slid up the last hill of the race and high into the air, she knew the race was in the bag. In her excitement, as she flew high into the air, she did some pre-mature celebrating and showing off to the huge crowd that was gathered at the finish line. She wiggled or rotated her snow board back and forth in the air which looks very impressive, but when she landed, she fell on her face right before the finish line and watched Tanya Freeden come up from behind and pass her for the gold medal.

Lindsey got up and finished, but had to settle for the silver medal and the loss of millions of dollars in commercial endorsements that come from winning a gold medal. Over-confidence, showing off, or perhaps cockiness caused her to fall before the finish line and lose a greater reward.

May we not make the same mistake in our race for Christ. God help us to finish our race for the Lord without getting distracted, proud, and cocky, lest we too, fall before the finish line and lose our influence, usefulness, and some of our reward from the Lord.

* 2 John 1:8—Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.
2. Faltering and Floundering are Created by Overconfidence
* Zephaniah 2:15—This is the rejoicing city that dwelt carelessly, that said in her heart, I am, and there is none beside me: how is she become a desolation, a place for beasts to lie down in! every one that passeth by her shall hiss, and wag his hand.

3. The Forfeiture of Blessings
* Jeremiah 48:7—For because thou hast trusted in thy works and in thy treasures, thou shalt also be taken: and Chemosh shall go forth into captivity with his priests and his princes together.

4. Famine in the Knowledge of the Lord
* 1 Corinthians 8:1-2...Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth. [2] And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.

Man’s arrogance and unteachableness in spiritual matters leaves him with ignorance about spiritual truths.

5. False Security in Facing Foes
* Deuteronomy 1:42-44...And the Lord said unto me, Say unto them, Go not up, neither fight; for I am not among you; lest ye be smitten before your enemies. [43] So I spake unto you; and ye would not hear, but rebelled against the commandment of the Lord, and went presumptuously up into the hill. [44] And the Amorites, which dwelt in that mountain, came out against you, and chased you, as bees do, and destroyed you in Seir, even unto Hormah.

In 1 Samuel 4, Israel put their security in the Ark of the Covenant to defeat the Philistines. Their overconfidence led to defeat.

6. Future Surprises and Upheavals
* Luke 12:20—But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?

Sennacherib, king of Assyria, taunted Israel with the boast that her God could no more save her than the gods of other lands had saved them. A short time later, "the angel of the Lord went out, and struck 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians; and when men arose early in the morning, behold, all of these were dead." A few days after the defeated king
returned to Assyria, he was assassinated by two of his own sons and succeeded on the throne by a third (Isa. 37:36-38). Beloved, let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall! Watch out for overconfidence!

We have examined seven areas in this passage which provide for us past lessons that will help us in the present.

* A Reminder of Past Provisions
* The Rock that Followed God’s People
* The Righteous Anger of God and Removal of the Rebellious
* The Recognition of the Mistakes of Others
* Restraint from Destructive Behavior
* The Reason for Sharing Lessons of the Past
* The Reproof about Overconfidence

Next....The Rudiments of Dealing with Temptation

VIII. The Rudiments of Dealing with Temptation  10:13

*There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.*

This is a very powerful verse in the Bible that offers great hope and comfort when it comes to the matter of temptation or testing in our lives. This one verse is loaded with a great deal of truth. There are three areas that we will study. Notice first of all “A Common Test.”

A. A Common Test

“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man...”

The word “*temptation*” is derived from the word *peirasmos* (pi-\-
ras-mos’) which means “to test or to prove.” It can be an enticement to sin, affliction, trouble, adversity, or a test to prove your character. Whether it becomes a proof of righteousness or an inducement to evil depends on our response. If we resist the temptation with the help of God’s power, the test or temptation proves our integrity and faithfulness. If we succumb to the temptation, then it becomes a solicitation to do something wrong.

Every person faces temptation and testing. No one is immune or exempt from them. Even Jesus faced temptation and testing.
* Matthew 4:1- Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.

It is not a sin to be tempted. It is wrong to yield to the temptation. When Jesus was tested, both Satan and the Lord participated in that time of testing. God’s intention was to prove the integrity of His Son, while Satan wanted Jesus to misuse His divine powers and submit to Satan.

Job was tested in the same manner. Satan wanted to destroy Job and prove that he did not care about God at all, while the Lord wanted to prove that Job was a godly man who truly loved and feared God. The result of enduring the temptations and trials that both Jesus and Job faced was blessing. James spoke about this.

* James 1:12- Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.

Let me add here that James makes it very clear that when God tests our lives, He is not trying to get us to do evil.

* James 1:13- Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:

When Jesus was in the wilderness, the Lord tested His Son by righteousness. Satan tested Him with evil, and wanted Jesus to yield to sin. Temptation becomes an inducement to evil only when a person is drawn away of his own lust, enticed, and behaves sinfully.

*James 1:14-15...But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. 15 Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

Some people think they have been tempted or tested more severely than others, giving them an excuse for failure or giving in to temptation. Comparing your test or temptations with others can cause you to become bitter at God because others may not have problems near as bad as you do. Comparing your trials or temptations can also put you in “Pity Party” mode. You can develop a “Woe is Me” attitude that leaves you defeated, discouraged, and depressed. Beloved, being tempted is not a sign of weakness. Weakness, however, is demonstrated when you let your temptation or test defeat you.

Paul wants us all to know that we are not alone in our trials or temptations. They are common to man. Temptations are never unique experiences to us. We can never have a temptation that has not been experienced by millions of other people. Our circumstances differ but basic temptations do not. Even Jesus faced the same temptations we face.
*Hebrews 4:15-* For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

Because the Lord has faced the same temptations we have faced, He is able to comfort us.

*Hebrews 2:18-* For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.

**B. The Care and Consistency of God**

“...but God is faithful who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able...”

We face temptations and testings, but God is faithful to make sure we are not smothered by them. He knows our limit. Temptation is limited by God according to our strength to resist temptation. No Christian can claim that he was overwhelmed by temptation. He cannot claim the catch phrase of Flip Wilson and say, “The Devil made me do it.”

This indicts everyone who fails in temptation. It is not God's fault, for He has not permitted you to be tempted beyond your strength to resist temptation. The principle is that God never asks us to do something we cannot do. No one, not even Satan, can make us sin. People sin because they willingly choose to sin. You do what you want to do. You are responsible for your choices. You may not want to hear that, but it is the truth. If you want to live for God, you will live for Him. If you want to go to church, then you will go to church. If you want to make your life count for Christ, then you won’t waste it. If you want to be unfaithful or sinful, you will live that way. You do what you want and choose to do.

**C. The Condition or Channel for Escape**

“... but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.”

Paul interestingly states that with the temptation there is a way to escape it. The phrase “way to escape” is from the Greek word *ekbasis* (ek’-bas-is) which means “an exit, a way out of something.” It was used to describe a way out of a mountain pass. This idea is of an army apparently surrounded and then suddenly seeing an escape route to safety through the mountain pass.

The way out of temptation is not by retreating or surrender to the temptation, but by the way of conquering it through the grace and power
of God in our lives. The secret to resisting temptation is to recognize the 
source of the temptation and then to recognize the source of strength in 
temptation. God promises to give His people the strength to resist. 

Sometimes that way is by “fleeing” the temptation. Realize that 
running away from temptation is an act of victory over the flesh. It will 
take self-discipline to look for that "way out" even in the middle of the 
temptation and then to take it when it is found. 

The way out is seldom easy. It takes character to run from 
temptation. Paul told us to run when he said, “Flee also youthful lusts: 
but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the 
Lord out of a pure heart” (2 Timothy 2:22). Joseph demonstrated his 
character when he ran from the seductive, smooth arms of Potiphar’s 
wife. 

God has made a way of escape that we may be able to bear or 
endure the temptation. Such as statement should give hope and 
encouragement. Temptation need never drive a wedge between 
believers and God. Instead, a believer ought to be able to say, "Thank 
you, God, for trusting me that much. You know I can handle this 
temptation. Now what do you want me to do?"

God uses the testings to develop us spiritually and to strengthen our 
ability to bear our testings and temptations. The man who has the most 
temptations has the most chance of growing in grace. Every temptation 
can drive us closer to God and gives Him a chance to confirm and 
demonstrate His victory over Satan. 

What the Devil designs for your destruction, God uses for your 
development. What Satan uses for our pollution, the Lord uses for our 
perfection. The moral struggles that we face can make us more mature, 
or ruin us if we compromise. We were made to be conquerors in Christ, 
not cowards. We are sons of God, not slaves. Yet, we are not to stick our 
head in the mouth of the lion of temptation. If you do that, you'll get bit. 
Stay away from temptation as much as possible. 

* Proverbs 4:14-15—Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in 
the way of evil men. [15] Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass 
away. 

Beloved, God knows what you are able to endure and He will 
sustain you in your test. God has also provided for us now, Biblical 
principles that will help us to overcome temptations and testing in our 
lives.
* Principles for Conquering Temptation

1. Rely upon and Relinquish your Life to the Holy Spirit's Control

If we are unwilling to yield and surrender our lives to the Holy Spirit each day and rely upon His power to live the Christian life, we will yield to temptation. It is vital we let Him control our lives and be yielded to the Lord.

* Ephesians 5:18—And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;
* Romans 6:13—Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

When we are tempted, we need to learn a lesson from dogs. When you place meat in front of a dog and tell him "No," he eventually learns that he must not touch it. The dog eventually takes his eyes off the meat because the temptation is too great to take it. Instead, he will focus his eyes on his master's face. We need to do this, too. Look to Jesus. When you are tempted, tell Him. Ask for immediate help.

2. Replace that Which is Bad with that Which is Good

Fill the vacuums of your life with that which is good and productive. Someone said, "An idle mind is the Devil's workshop." There is truth to that statement. Stay busy for the Lord and serving other people. Encourage others instead of enticing them; love people instead of laughing at them. Use your time to tell others about Christ and make time to pray and study God's Word. Get your focus on the Lord.

* Colossians 3:1, 2—If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.
* Psalm 34:14—Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.
* Proverbs 4:23-27—Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life. [24] Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee. [25] Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee. [26] Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. [27] Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil.

If you are struggling with sinful habits or friends, replace those habits or friends with good ones. Fill the voids of your life. If you don't,
Satan will.

3. Resolve to Do What is Right

A great part of temptation’s power is in its surprise strategy. A surprise attack is an enemy’s most successful tactic. Be prepared for temptation and how to deal with it. It is going to come. If you are going to be victorious over temptations, you need to make up your mind now that you are going to do what is right when you face the temptation. Make your choice now.

* Psalm 119:30—I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid before me.

God does want us to be victorious over temptation. The word "victory" implies a battle. The battlefield is our mind and temptation is the attacker. Indecision on a battlefield spells defeat. The same fact holds true when it comes to overcoming temptation. If we are not sure we want victory, then we most likely will give in to our flesh.

Your overall life purpose will determine how you meet daily temptations. If you waver here, you will vacillate when the pressure is on you to yield to temptation. If your purpose it to glorify God in your life, your daily decisions will revolve around this purpose. If the purpose of your life is undefined or to please yourself, you will fall.

E. Stanley Jones said, "If you don't make up your mind, then your unmade mind will unmake you." Any decision or dallying around will be the Trojan Horse that will get on the inside of your heart and open the gates to your spiritual enemies. For this reason we are exhorted to make up our minds on whom we are going to live for day by day.

* Joshua 24:15—And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

* 1 Kings 18:21—And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.

Don't wait until the time of temptation. Debates with your fleshly nature don't go to well. We have a way of rationalizing wrong and making excuses for evil behavior. You cannot wait until you are nose to nose with temptation to decide what your response is going to be. If you wait that long, it may be too late. In the back seat of a car, at the sales convention, at a party, at the office, these are not places to weigh,
analyze, and decide about extramarital affairs. Make up your mind now. Scripture is filled with believers who resolved to do what was right before they faced temptation. When they were confronted with temptation, they made the right decision.

A. Daniel
* Daniel 1:8—But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.

B. Three Hebrew Children
* Daniel 3:18—But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up. They were determined not to bend, bow, budge, or by the grace of God, burn.

C. The Rechabites
* Jeremiah 35:5, 6—And I set before the sons of the house of the Rechabites pots full of wine, and cups, and I said unto them, Drink ye wine. But they said, We will drink no wine: for Jonadab the son of Rechab our father commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye, nor your sons for ever.

D. Job
* Job 23:11—My foot hath held his steps, his way have I kept, and not declined.

E. Isaiah
* Isaiah 50:7—For the Lord God will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed.

F. Paul
* Acts 20:24—But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

G. Peter & John
* Acts 4:19, 20—But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.
4. **Reject the Deceptions of Carnal Reasoning**

If you are going to conquer temptation, reject the deceptions of carnal reasoning. The lifestyle of this world is directly opposed to the lifestyle of the godly Christian. Worldly living is based on deception that leads to **digression, destruction, and depression**. What deceptions do they offer?

**A) You have your whole life ahead of you.**

Serve God later on in your life. The Word of God addresses this deception.
* James 4:14, 15—Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisbeth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.

**B) Sinful living is fun and fulfilling.**

The Prodigal Son bought into this lie and was left burdened and broke. Satan does all that he can to camouflage the end of a sinful path. He does not want us to see where we are heading until we finally get there.
* Luke 15:14-17—And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. [15] And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. [16] And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. [17] And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

**C) Freedom is doing your own thing and living anyway you wish.**

Responsibility goes with freedom. If we do not live responsibly and righteously, then our so called "freedom" will eventually lead to bondage and addiction.
* Proverbs 5:22—His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins.
* Isaiah 5:18—Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart rope:

**D) You won't get caught.**

David did all he could to cover up his sin with Bathsheba and murder of Uriah, but to no avail. God revealed to Nathan the prophet the truth. Sin is an effective detective. It finds us out.
* Numbers 32:23—But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the Lord: and be sure your sin will find you out.
5. Re-evaluate your Priorities and Values.

Our priorities and what we value, will determine if we are going to overcome our temptations. The area of “priorities” is a fierce battlefield in the lives of believers. Peter and Aaron valued the crowd's opinion over God's. They were both concerned about what others thought of them instead of what the Lord thought. Intimidation led to conforming to the crowd.

People conform to the crowd today because they want to be accepted and not rejected. Trying to serve two masters, however, is impossible. If you try to serve God and the crowd, you will be spiritually stressed out and frustrated.

* James 1:8—A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.
* Matthew 6:24a—No man can serve two masters...

Achan got himself into trouble when his priorities valued material objects over his obedience to the Lord. People today place greater value over material things than spiritual matters. They soon find out that things leave them empty and their values hurt their families.

For example, during a flood in the hill country of Texas in 1978, there was a lady who needlessly lost her life. Her daughter told the reporters, "My mother did not climb the tree with us. She lost her way before we got to the tree. She always kept every little bill, slip, and other stuff. She would not let go of her purse with those papers in it." It was revealed that the family was trying to make a human chain, holding hands to get through the water. The mother, however, had her insurance papers all gathered up in her hands and would not drop those documents. So she just washed away with her papers and all. People, like this woman, are still clinging to their possessions and are being washed away by death.

The priorities of the prodigal son caused him to value his rights and freedom over his respect for God and for his father. The result of his choice was to live like everybody else and suffer the consequences of conformity. He ended up wasting his life. Samson wasted his life, too. His priority valued the pleasures of sin over purity and his responsibilities to the Lord. His “Live for Now” attitude led to his debasement, distress, defeat, destruction and early death.

At the Milan Cathedral, there are three inscriptions over the respective doorways. Over the right-hand door is the motto: All that pleases is but for a moment. Over the left-hand door are these words: All that troubles is but for a moment. Over the central door is a simple sentence: Nothing is important save that which is eternal. We are to live
our lives with eternity in view. Don't sacrifice the eternal on the altar of the immediate.

6. **Research, Recognize & Realize Bible Principles for Living**

A vital defense in conquering temptation is knowing what you believe and why you believe it. YOU need to search the Word of God. YOU need to understand what it says about right and wrong. Don't make the mistake of just taking the word of a preacher. You must understand and know why you are making choices to do or not to do certain things. There is great power that comes from the Word of God that will help you to conquer temptations. David said, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart that I might not sin against thee" (Psalm 119:11).

* Joshua 1:8—This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

In a struggle with temptation, we usually live our values, not our beliefs. If our conscience has been trained by the Bible, and we are committed to its principles, we meet temptation with confidence instead of fear and failure. We are committed to doing what is right. God's warnings are the love words of a parent telling his child not to run into the streets, jump off a bridge, or play with matches. They are loving protections.

* Proverbs 4:23-27—Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life. [24] Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee. [25] Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee. [26] Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. [27] Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil.

7. **Renew Your Dedication to the Lord each Day**

Victorious living comes one day at a time, moment by moment. Each day you should present your body as a living sacrifice, holy, and acceptable to God. The only problem with living sacrifices is they keep crawling off of the altar. That is why each day we must surrender our will to the Lord. What happened yesterday is done and in the past. We have no assurance we will have tomorrow. All we can do is live for Christ now, in the present.
8. Resist Satanic Attacks and Temptations

Many times Christians make the mistake of saying "Maybe" to temptation instead of "No," leaving the option for them to say "Yes." This is not resisting Satan or temptation. When we do this, we are like the person trying to get rid of a salesman on our doorstep without saying a firm "No" and closing the door. Though we say we are not interested in buying Satan's sinful products, we leave the door ajar and continue to discuss his tempting wares. We leave open the possibility for the Devil to make a sale.

Satan is persistent. If he can't snare us with one temptation, he will try another until he finds our soft spot. We must beware and be on our guard for his attacks and lures. We must give a firm "No" toward temptation. Don't put yourself on a path of temptation. Don't play with it. You'll get burnt for sure.

* Ephesians 4:27—Neither give place to the devil. Don't give Satan ground or room to build a stronghold in your life.
* Ephesians 6:11—Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.
* James 4:7—Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.
* 1 Peter 5:8, 9—Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.
* 2 Peter 3:17—Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness.
9. **RUN from Traps or When Cornered**

We mentioned this principle earlier. There may be times you find yourself in a situation where the only thing you can do is run! Such was the case with Joseph when he ran from the clutches of Potiphar's wife. The predicament wasn't Joseph's fault. She was his master. He realized, however, the only thing he could do with Mrs. Potiphar was run. He didn't trust her or he didn't trust himself with a beautiful, sensual, very seductive woman.

* Genesis 39:12—And she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me: and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out.

* 1 Corinthians 6:18—Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. When you flee temptations, be sure to leave no forwarding address.

* Hebrews 12:1—Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us. Our race involves running from sin.

A pastor warned his handsome new assistant about the dangers of immorality in the ministry. The assistant said that he always did his socializing in a group setting and concluded that "there is safety in numbers." The wise pastor replied, "Yes, that is so, but there is more safety in exodus." Pastor, if possible, delegate your counseling of women to the godly women of your church. Train them to counsel if they need training.

10. **Be Responsible or Accountable to a Godly Christian**

Accountability is a great defense against yielding to temptation. When a person knows he must answer to someone for his actions, it helps him or her keep their priorities in perspective.

* 1 Peter 5:5—Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resistenteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.
**Additional Study Notes**

**What Causes People to Gripe and Complain?**

1. Distressful, Overwhelming Circumstances
   
   Danger, sickness, setbacks, shortages, inconveniences, and death can overwhelm us and lead to griping.

   * Exodus 16:2-3—And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness: [3] And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger.

   * Psalm 77:3—I remembered God, and was troubled: I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed.

   The word "troubled" comes from the Hebrew word hamah (haw-maw") which means "to murmur, growl, roar, cry aloud, mourn, rage, sound, make noise, tumult, be clamorous, be disquieted, be loud, be moved, be troubled, be in an uproar." The feeling of being "overwhelmed" or "enveloped, covered, or surrounded" by trouble, as the Hebrew reads, can get our mouths running in the wrong direction. Notice what Job said in Job 10.

   * Job 10:1—My soul is weary of my life; I will leave my complaint upon myself; I will speak in the bitterness of my soul.

   Distress can knock the wind out of your sails for sure. God wants us to counter these feelings of discouragement by focusing on His power and His promises.

   * Hebrews 13:5—Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

   * Psalm 55:22—Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.

   As a pitcher hurls a fast ball to a batter, we are to hurl or cast our burden upon the Lord.

2. Discontentment leads to Griping

   * Mark 14:10—And Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went unto the chief priests, to betray him unto them.

   * John 12:4-6—Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him, [5] Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? [6] This he said, not that he
cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein.

God's solution to our discontent is to be content with what He has given us and our present situation in life. Years ago, Russell Conwell told of an ancient Persian, Ali Hafed, who owned a very large farm that had orchards, grain fields, and gardens... and was a wealthy contented man. One day a wise man from the East told the farmer all about diamonds and how wealthy he would be if he owned a diamond mine.

Ali Hafed went to bed that night a poor man—poor because he was discontented. Craving a mine of diamonds, he sold his farm to search for the rare stones. He traveled the world over, finally becoming so poor, broken, and defeated, that he committed suicide. One day the man who purchased Ali Hafed's farm led his camel into the garden to drink. As his camel put its nose into the brook, the man saw a flash of light from the sands of the stream. He pulled out a stone that reflected all the hues of the rainbow. The man had discovered the diamond mine of Golcanda, the most magnificent mine in all history.

Had Ali Hafed remained at home and dug in his own garden, he would have had acres of diamonds instead of death in a strange land.

Beloved, be content with what you have. God has given you wonderful treasures if you will only open your eyes. This is what Paul was trying to get across to us.  

* Philippians 4:11—Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

3. Dread or fear lead to Griping

When people panic, they drastically change. They will do and say things they would never do at any other time. Fear has great power in changing the personality of a person. Fear will test the faith and beliefs of an individual like no other thing.

* Numbers 14:1-4—And all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night. [2] And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron: and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness! [3] And wherefore hath the Lord brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? were it not better for us to return into Egypt? [4] And they said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt.
God's solution for us is to not be afraid, but to trust Him. Faith in God makes great optimists. Over in Burma, Adoniram Judson was lying in a foul jail with 32 lbs. of chains on his ankles and his feet bound to a bamboo pole. A fellow prisoner with a sneer on his face said, "Dr. Judson, what about the prospect of the conversion of the heathen?" His instant reply was, "The prospects are just as bright as the promises of God." Judson trusted God with his fears. That is what we should do, too. Notice what Isaiah said about fear.

* Isaiah 41:10—Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.

4. A Divisive, argumentative attitude leads to Complaining & Strife

This kind of attitude destroys relationships between husbands and wives, parents and children, pastors and their people. Some people spend their time pointing out everyone else's faults. They are like Admiral Phipps.

It is said that when the British and French were fighting in Canada in the 1750s, Admiral Phipps, commander of the British fleet, was told to anchor outside Quebec. He was given orders to wait for the British land forces to arrive, then support them when they attacked the city. Phipps' navy arrived early. As the admiral waited, he became annoyed by the statues of the saints that adorned the towers of a nearby cathedral, so he commanded his men to shoot at them with the ships' cannons. No one knows how many rounds were fired or how many statues were knocked out, but when the land forces arrived and the signal was given to attack, the admiral was of no help. He had used up all his ammunition shooting at the "saints."

Do you find yourself making the same mistake, spending your valuable time and energy, shooting at the saints? Notice what Solomon and Paul said.

* Proverbs 26:20-21—Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth. [21] As coals are to burning coals, and wood to fire; so is a contentious man to kindle strife.
* 1 Timothy 6:4—He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings.

The person with a divisive spirit has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words. Arguing gets you
nowhere. If people want to argue with me, I tell them that I'm not interested. If they want to know the truth about a matter, I will be glad to share with them what I know, what I have found in my research and studies, and where they can find the same information for themselves. We have tried to do this with the books we write and put into print.

You can tell if people are teachable or not. If they are argumentative, they are usually not teachable. If they offer intelligent ideas and questions, they usually are teachable. I encourage people to study and research their questions on their own. It's pretty hard for them to debate with a book. If they really want to know the truth, they will take the time to study. If they want to blow off steam or waste your time, you have saved time and grief by counseling them to study the issue on their own time. God's solution to a divisive spirit is to control your tongue.

*Psalm 39:1—* I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me.

*Proverbs 17:14—* The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water: therefore leave off contention, before it be meddled with. The word "contention" can also be rendered as "controversy or disputes."

*Proverbs 15:1—* A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.

I like the soft answer of Charles Spurgeon in the following incident. One day a man met Spurgeon on the street, took off his hat and bowed, and said, "The Rev. Mr. Spurgeon—a great humbug!" Spurgeon took off his hat and replied, "Thank you for the compliment. I am glad to hear that I am a great anything!"

Winston Churchill exemplified integrity and respect in the face of opposition and grievous words. During his last year in office, he attended an official ceremony. Several rows behind him two gentlemen began whispering. "That's Winston Churchill. They say he is getting senile. They say he should step aside and leave the running of the nation to more dynamic and capable men." When the ceremony was over, Churchill turned to the men and said, "Gentlemen, they also say he is deaf!" Ah, the power of a soft answer!

5. Dirtiness, Carnality, Lust, and Sensuality lead to Griping

*1 Corinthians 3:3—* For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?
*James 4:1-2—From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? [2] Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not.

Carnality breeds criticalness and complaining. A carnal ministry attracts carnal people. God's solution is to seek the Lord first and live for Him.

* Matthew 6:33—But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

6. Disdain, Hatred, Bitterness, Scorn, or Anger Lead to Murmuring and Conflict

* Proverbs 10:12—Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins.
* Proverbs 22:10—Cast out the scorners, and contention shall go out; yea, strife and reproach shall cease.
* Proverbs 29:22—An angry man stirreth up strife, and a furious man aboundeth in transgression. God's solution is to forgive your offenders.
* Ephesians 4:31-32—Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: [32] And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

Charlie Hainline is a layman at Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. He is a man who radiates the love of Christ, and is serious about sharing his faith with others. One year, his goal was to lead 1650 people to faith in Christ (5 a day)! Once, he was out witnessing with a couple of other folks, and though he didn't share the gospel, he sat there and smiled broadly as a teammate did. When the teammate was finished and asked if the person would like to trust Christ and receive the gift of eternal life, the person replied, "If being a Christian would make me like him (pointing to Charlie), I want it!"

Charlie's life wasn't a bed of roses by any means. His daughter was kidnaped, killed, and her head was found floating in a canal. When the murderer of his daughter was caught and convicted, Charlie went to jail in order to witness to the man. His ability to forgive enabled him to witness to this criminal.

7. Deification of Self or Self-Seeking Leads to Complaining

When people have to be number one and thirst for prestige, power and the lime light, they tend to be very difficult to be around. The most
critical people I have ever met are very selfish people that have to have their own way. Their pride creates problems for themselves and others.

* Luke 22:24—And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest.
* Proverbs 13:10—Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised is wisdom.

God's solution for people who have a problem with selfishness is to deny themselves and glorify Christ in their lives. John the Baptist was not a selfish man. He was greatly loved, yet, his love for Jesus was greater than his love for himself. Both John and Paul had great reasons to glory. They were outstanding men, yet, their focus was on Jesus Christ, not themselves. Perhaps, this is why God used them in such a great way.

* John 3:30—He must increase, but I must decrease.
* 1 Corinthians 1:31—That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

8. Desires for the things of this World lead to Murmuring & Grief

* Numbers 11:4-6—And the mixt multitude that was among them fell a lusting: and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat? [5] We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely: the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick: [6] But now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes.

Israel became ungrateful for what God had given them because they were focused on what they did not have.

* 1 Timothy 6:10—For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

The word "sorrows" can be rendered "consuming grief, pain, and sorrow." God's solution for covetousness and worldly possessions is to be eternally-minded instead of being earthly-minded people.

* Colossians 3:1-2—If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. [2] Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

9. Dissatisfaction and Ingratitude Lead to Complaining

* Numbers 21:5-6—And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our
soul loatheth this light bread. [6] And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died.

When you stop counting your blessings, you forget about them. If you are not careful, you can become so focused on what others have that you become dissatisfied with what you’ve got. It's ironic that many people would love to have what you are dissatisfied with. When we become ungrateful, it warps our perspective on life and on God's blessings.

A certain monastery enforced a vow of silence. Each monk could utter only two words every five years, and those two words had to be spoken in the presence of the leader. One of the monks, when given his opportunity to speak, said, "Bad food!" Five years later, his two words were "Bed hard." When given his third opportunity to speak five years later, he said, "I quit!" The leader said, "Well, you might as well quit. All you've done since you got here is complain!"

Sometimes that is all some people do is complain because of their ungrateful spirit. God's solution for ungratefulness is to count your blessings.

* Psalm 68:19—Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation. Selah.
* Lamentations 3:22-25—It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. [23] They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. [24] The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him. [25] The Lord is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him.

While Mr. Blakley was attending graduate school in the early 1980's, he stopped for coffee in a Malibu, California, restaurant. Coming from a nonpolitical family, he knew nothing of political activists—but he met one that day in that restaurant. The activist told everyone what a mess the United States had become. He ridiculed our government and our educational, industrial, and banking systems. He was on such a roll that he had everyone on his side except for two people, an old man and Mike.

The activist shied away from Mr. Blakley, seeing his Pepperdine hat, Ronald Reagan T-shirt, and Wall Street Journal. So he went after the old man. As he approached, the old man continued slurping his soup and turned his back. The activist sat down at the old man's table and said, "Mister, if you can tell me just one thing the United States has ever done for you, just one measly thing, I will leave you alone."
Finally, the old man looked up. He licked his spoon clean and set it down on the table. His red face indicated years of laboring in the sun. With a heavy Russian accent, he replied, "Ve hold zees truz to be self-evident, dat all men are created equal, life, liberty, perzuit of happiness." Then he went back to the soup. The activist, defeated, could not argue against what the old man had experienced on both sides of Communism. May we be grateful for what God has given to us.

**10. Drifting from the Word of God leads to Murmuring**
* Psalm 119:165—Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.

When we lose our love for the Word, we tend to lose our peace and become restless and frustrated. God's solution is to love His Word.
* 1 Peter 2:2—As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:
* Job 23:12—Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food.
* Jeremiah 15:16—Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O Lord God of hosts.

**11. Disappointments, the "Deserving Complex," and Desires that are Unfulfilled lead to Griping and Grief**

The feeling that you are owed or deserve something can make you critical and a complainer.
* Proverbs 13:12—Hope deferred maketh the heart sick: but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life.

The prodigal son had a "You Owe Me" attitude. He got what he wanted, but lost what he had. The older brother had the same attitude and griped and complained to his father.
* Luke 15:12-14—And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. [13] And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. [14] And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.
* Luke 15:28-30...And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him. [29] And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: [30] But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.

People who complain and don't get all that they deserve should be thankful. We deserve to go to Hell. Thank God for His mercy and grace. God's solution is to put your expectations in the Lord and be thankful for what He gives you.

* Psalm 62:5—My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him.

A party of pioneers on the Oregon Trail suffered for weeks from a scarcity of water and grass for their animals. Most of the wagons had broken down, causing endless delays in the stifling heat. A feeling of fretfulness and futility prevailed. Optimism and cheer were gone. Courage was in limited supply. One night the leaders called a meeting to air complaints. When they gathered around the campfire, one man stood up and said, "Before we commence our grief session, don't you think we should at least first thank God that He has brought us this far with no loss of life, with no serious trouble from the Indians, and that we have enough strength left to finish our journey?" The other settlers agreed.

After the brief prayer, all that could be heard were the cries of a distant pack of wolves. There was, otherwise, stone silence around the campfire, because no one had any grievances they felt were important enough to voice. They suddenly realized if they couldn't be satisfied with what they'd received, they could at least be thankful for what they'd escaped. Thankfulness enabled them to see the mercies of God they had been overlooking.

12. Disbelief or a Lack of Faith and Confidence in God's Way, Will, and Wisdom Lead to Murmuring

* Numbers 11:1—And when the people complained, it displeased the Lord: and the Lord heard it; and his anger was kindled; and the fire of the Lord burnt among them, and consumed them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp.

God's solution for unbelief is to put your life in the Lord's hands.
Chapter 6
Fixing Your Focus
on Important Matters
1 Corinthians 10:14-33

In verses 14-22, Paul takes the time to explain why idolatry is abominable to God. Some of the Corinthians were taking liberty in doing questionable things, and were becoming involved in idolatry. They were worshiping Christ and idols.

Paul explained that we are one body of believers in Christ. The Lord’s Supper that we observe is to remember what Christ has done for us on the cross. Christ is to be worshiped alone because He is the true God. Anyone or anything else that is worshiped is a form of idolatry and is not to characterize the actions of Christians. Jesus is not part of a smorgasbord of gods. He is the only true Lord. To worship any other thing is to rouse the jealousy of the Lord. This is why we are to avoid or flee from any worship of idols, the worship of false gods, or even praying to those who are dead.

Paul continues in verses 23-33, by trying to get us to focus on important matters in our lives. The issues he addressed in these verses are matters that should be of importance to us as Christians. Face it, beloved, we are very easily distracted by all the cares, circumstances, concerns, complications, and conflicts that we face in our lives. Life can become so overwhelming that we become unmindful about the Lord Jesus Christ and the importance of being good ambassadors of Christ. When this happens, we can become very snippy, snooty, snarly, and selfish people that would make Scrooge look like an angel.

Beloved, you will find that distractions such as anger, immaturity, carnality, worry, greed, or selfishness will hinder you from focusing on matters that are really important. Just think for a moment, how many
times have you come to church and had difficulty focusing or concentrating on the message, or trying to encourage someone else because you were fuming with anger, filled with bitterness, frustrated because you did not get your own way on a matter, or focused on something you had to do somewhere else or at another time? If you can keep your focus when you come to church, you will get a lot out of the service and you can be a huge encouragement to someone else.

In this section, Paul pulls us back from the Twilight Zone of self-glory and our own importance. He throws a bucket of reality in our faces. The apostle urges us to fix our focus on important matters. He wants us to wake up and THINK about what we are doing, where we are going, what we are saying, and how our actions affect other people and our relationship with Jesus Christ.

Every day, you represent the Lord among people at school, work, home, or in the neighborhood. Paul urges us here to consider what we are doing by addressing several issues. We are to fix the focus of our lives upon important matters. So upon what should we focus? What are some important matters that should demand our attention? Let’s take a look, beginning with verse 23.

I. Focus on Constructive Things 10:23

All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.

The Apostle Paul begins this portion by addressing our liberty in the Lord. We are allowed to do just about anything, but that does not mean that what we do will be beneficial, helpful, or profitable. This is the idea behind the word “edify” which was used to describe the building of a house or anything else.

The word “edify” signifies something that is constructive. Not everything we do builds us up, is encouraging or constructive. I can think of many things that I could do, but they would be a waste of time and money. I can think of many things that I could do, but they would not be helpful in my Christian growth and could hurt my Christian testimony, which in turn, could cause others to spiritually stumble or fall.

Paul reminds us here to focus our attention on constructive matters. Use your life, use your time, use your talents, use your abilities, use the blessings that God has given you for things that will not only benefit your spiritual growth, but will also help and encourage other people to
grow closer to Christ. Understand that just because you can do certain things, those things that you do may not be the best things for you to do. This principle includes what you do, where you go, what you wear, and what you put into your body, a body, by the way, that does not belong to you but to the Lord Jesus Christ.

* 1 Corinthians 6:19- What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

Don’t waste your life! Make it count for Christ! Focus on constructive things. The Bible gives us a few ideas of some constructive things we can pursue and make the focus of our lives.

* **Focusing on Constructive Things**

1. **Focus on Your Relationship with Christ and His Word**
   * Hebrews 12:2a -Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith....
   * Hebrews 11:27- By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.
   * Colossians 3:1-2... If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. 2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.
   * John 15:5—I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.
   * Jeremiah 15:16—Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O Lord God of hosts.

2. **Focus on being Ready for His Return**
   * 2 Peter 3:11-12....Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, 12 Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?
   * Philippians 3:20 -For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:
   * Titus 2:13- Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;
3. Focus on Your Reward in Heaven
* Philippians 3:14- I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.
* Luke 10:20—Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.

4. Focus on Reaching the Lost
* 1 Corinthians 9:22- To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.

5. Focus on Refusing to Quit in your Service to the Lord
* Luke 9:62- And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

Great Christians of the past were great because of their courage and commitment to Christ, even in the face of death. Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, suffered martyrdom A.D. 167. When brought to the stake, he desired to stand untied and said, "Let me alone, for He who gave me strength to come to the fire, will give me patience to endure the flame." We too, need to rely on God’s strength and the patience to endure the flames of life.

6. Focus on Relying Upon God and Trusting in Him
* Psalm 55:22—Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.
* Philippians 4:11-13...Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. [12] I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. [13] I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

7. Focus on Relinquishing Your Rights to the Will of God
* Psalm 143:10 -Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God: thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness.

When Andy Griffith, star of the classic television program that bore his name, entered his fifties, he found it increasingly difficult to find work in Hollywood, and his personal finances became tighter and tighter.
He wrote in *Guideposts* that finally he and his wife Cindi decided things would be easier if they moved from Los Angeles back to Andy's home state of North Carolina, so they put their home up for sale and waited for a buyer. Unfortunately the real estate market was down, and no one gave them a decent offer for their home. Months passed, and Andy grew depressed.

Then one day the Lord gave Cindi an insight. "Maybe it's a good thing we couldn't sell the house," she said. "Maybe it was God showing us grace. If we moved to North Carolina now, you might indeed never work again. What we need to do is stay here and stoke the fire."

And stoke the fire they did. Day after day they went together to the office of the talent agency that represented Andy. They sat in the lobby, chatted with agents, and went with them to lunch. Eventually the work started to come in: four TV movies that year, including the pilot show for the show *Matlock*, a very popular program that ended up running for nine years and continues to be shown on cable networks today.

Sometimes a closed door is a signpost from God. He has a better way for us to go. Our responsibility is to be yielded to His leading in our lives.

II. Focus on the Concerns of Others 10:24

*Let no man seek his own, but every man another’s wealth.*

Not only are we to focus on constructive things, we also are to focus on the concerns of others. Paul challenges us to not be focused on ourselves, but upon the good, the blessings, or the success of other people.

By making others successful, you will become a success yourself. When you are concerned about others being blessed, you will develop a servant’s attitude that God will use and bless. One of the greatest ways to find joy and fulfillment in your life is to live for others. Being focused on others will help you to deal and to overcome discouragement, depression, a defeated spirit, and a down-in-the-dumps attitude. It will do wonders for you, especially if you struggle with anger, bitterness, boredom, and selfishness in your life! It is when you become a servant in helping others to be blessed that you find true greatness and purpose in your life.

* Matthew 23:11- But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant.
*Mark 10:43-44...But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: 44 And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all.*

A young college graduate joined a small Japanese company as a clerk in the 1960’s. The young clerk would often contact company headquarters pointing out problem areas within the organization and offering his suggestions for correcting them.

For ten years, the young clerk's ideas seemed to go unnoticed. One day as he was leaving work, an executive from corporate headquarters stopped the clerk. He was taken to the president's office, a place he had never been before. In the meeting the man learned the company was about to implement one of his ideas. The president expected this idea would keep an entire division from filing bankruptcy.

A few months later, the clerk's suggestion did keep the division solvent. The young man eventually became chairman of the firm that once ignored his observations. His leadership changed the entire company. The name of that company is Canon, which is a multibillion-dollar producer of cameras, copy machines, printers, and fax machines.

You never know how God wants to use you, but He will when you become concerned about the good of others. Paul put it this way in his letter to the Philippians, “Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves” (Philippians 2:3).

**III. Focus on the Conscience  10:25-30**

*Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, that eat, asking no question for conscience sake: 26 For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.  27 If any of them that believe not bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake.  28 But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof:  29 Conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other: for why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience?  30 For if I by grace be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks?*

Important matters that should grasp our focus are constructive things, a concern for other people, and thirdly, on matters of the
conscience. Paul addresses the issue of the conscience by offering instruction to the Corinthian believers on proper procedures in dealing with the unsaved and meat offered to idols. We do not have to deal with this in our culture, but the principles that are taught here are applicable for us today.

The apostle instructs them that whatever is sold in the shambles or the meat market, they are to eat without asking any questions on the grounds of conscience. The earth and everything in it belong to the Lord. He instructs these folks that if they are invited to dinner by an unsaved person, then go ahead and eat what is served to them without asking questions about the food for “conscience’ sake.” Just enjoy the meal.

Paul continued and told these believers that if they are informed that the meat was a sacrifice to a pagan idol, to refrain from eating for the sake of the person who informed them and for the sake of their conscience. Paul raised two questions about this matter. He asked why should his freedom be determined by the conscience of someone else and why is he denounced or condemned for food for which he gives thanks to God.

The answer to these questions is the fact that as Christians, we are to be careful about our example to other people. We are to be careful that our testimony does not cause others to spiritually stumble. Our freedoms in Jesus Christ are a privilege that is forfeited when what we do is offensive to others or destructive to their spiritual growth.

If you wonder if a certain activity, action, or attitude is questionable or proper, then apply these tests.
1. Will it lead to spiritual slavery, bad habits and addictions?
   * 1 Corinthians 6:12- All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.
2. Will it make me a stumbling block or stepping stone? If it hurts the conscience of others, then it does not edify others.
   * 1 Corinthians 8:13- Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.
   * Romans 14:13- Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.
3. Will it build me up or tear me down? Is it beneficial, helpful, or useful? Does it help me to mature in the Lord?

* 1 Corinthians 10:23 - All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.

There are two other tests or criteria that Paul addresses to help us determine whether an activity is proper or not. There are two other areas in which we should place our focus. We should focus on constructive things, a concern for other people, on the conscience, and next, we should focus upon a Christ-honoring life.

**IV. Focus on a Christ-honoring Life 10:31**

*Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.*

Jonathan Edwards lived by a number of resolutions in his life. The first was, “All men should live for the glory of God. Secondly, that whether others do or not, I will.” Edwards was heeding the admonition of Paul, “Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” We are to glorify God at school, at work, at home, at church, or wherever we go. How do we do this?

* Ways to Glorify God

1. Sin is Confessed to the Lord

* Joshua 7:19 - And Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the LORD God of Israel, and make confession unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me.

2. By Spiritual Fruit in Your Life

* John 15:8 - Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.

3. Staggering Not at God’s Promises

* Romans 4:20 - He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;

4. Speaking with Praise for the Lord

* Psalm 50:23a Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me...

5. Suffering for Jesus Christ

* 1 Peter 4:14-16 - If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. 15 But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in
other men's matters.  16 Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.

6. Supplications to the Lord
* John 14:13- And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

7. Spreading the Word of God
* 2 Thessalonians 3:1- Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you:

Beloved, if your focus is upon living a Christ-honoring life, it will drastically affect what you do, where you go, what you say, what you wear, and what you put into your body. It will revolutionize the priorities of your life. If you ever wonder if something is proper to do, ask yourself, “Will this glorify God?”

J.S. Bach said, "All music should have no other end and aim than the glory of God and the soul's refreshment; where this is not remembered there is no real music but only a devilish hub-bub." He headed his compositions: "J.J." "Jesus Juva" which means "Jesus help me." He ended them "S.D.G." "Soli Dei gratia" which means "To God alone the praise." That should be the aim of our lives, too.

V. Focus on the Conversion of Souls 10:32-33
Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God: Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.

It was Paul's desire to please others for the purpose of trying to win them to Christ. His love, his concern, and his unselfishness opened the door for him to present the gospel to those who needed the Lord. The focus of our lives should be to win our friends, family, and fellow-workers to Christ. For some folks, the only Christian they know is you. Winning the lost to Christ is an important matter that we should try to pursue regularly. May the Lord help us all to keep our focus on important matters to God and stay in the battle for souls.

There is a story told of the MacGregors, a Highland clan in Scotland. There was a battle between the English and the Scotch at a place called Prestonpans in the year 1745. In the course of this battle, the chief of the MacGregor clan was struck by two bullets and fell to the ground. This discouraged his followers very much. They thought their leader was dead.
Having no one to lead them in battle, they began to waver. Just as they were at the point of retreating from the battlefield, their wounded chief raised himself up on his elbows. With blood streaming from his wounds, he cried out, “I am not dead my children. I am looking at you. Do your duty like brave men.”

Those few words inspired the men with confidence and courage and to continue to fight for victory. In the same manner, the eyes of our Lord are upon us. He knows our needs and cares for us. May our focus be upon Him as we face the struggles of life each day. May we focus on those matters that are important to God.
Chapter 7
God’s Design for Men and Women
1 Corinthians 11:1-16

Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ. 2 Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you. 3 But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God. 4 Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head. 5 But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven. 6 For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered. 7 For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man. 8 For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. 9 Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man. 10 For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels. 11 Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. 12 For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God. 13 Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered? 14 Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? 15 But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering. 16 But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.

As our churches and our nation drifts further and further from the principles taught in the Bible which greatly influenced its beginning, we find that clarity is being replaced with confusion, stupidity is replacing sanity, helpfulness is being replaced with harshness, and homes of bliss are turning into battlefields. What has happened to
common sense and wisdom in our families, in our communities, in our governmental leaders, and yes, in America’s churches? What has happened to common sense among men and women?

Over the last few decades, we have been witnessing on our streets and in the media a war that is being waged over the role of women and the role of men in society. The women’s liberation movement has promoted men as villains and the enemy of women. It is ironic, however, that men are disdained, but many of the women in this movement alter their appearance to look and to act like men. I don’t understand.

In the same manner, the homosexual movement encourages men to dress and act like women. In fact, homosexual men are attracted to men who look and act like women.

Let me say that what we are witnessing today is nothing new. This kind of behavior was going on in Paul’s day, especially in the city of Corinth. The same demands for rights and the patterns of behavior of lesbians, homosexuals, and those involved in women’s liberation existed in Paul’s time as they do today. Some of these attitudes of resentment or rebellion toward God’s design for men and women were beginning to creep into the church. Paul was asked about some of these issues and he addressed them here in this chapter.

What is God’s design or role for men in society, the home, and the church? What is God’s role for ladies in the home and the church? What is God’s plan for each sex? This is what we will try to answer in this very difficult and controversial portion of Scripture. Notice verse one and two.

I. A Reminder to Remember 11:1-2

Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ. 2 Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you.

Paul encouraged the church to follow him as he followed the Lord. He praised them for continually remembering him and respecting his apostolic authority. He urged them to keep the ordinances he delivered to them. There are three vital words here: keep, ordinances, and delivered.

The word “keep” is from the word katecho {kat-ekh’-o} which means “to hold fast, to keep a strong grip, or to keep secure.” It was used to describe the pilot who steered the direction of a ship, keeping it on
course. Beloved, we are to keep a strong grip on the principles of God’s Word. God wants us to stay on the right course with His Word.

This word “ordinances” is derived from the Greek word *paradosis* (par-ad’os-is). It means “instruction, precepts, that which passed on to others by word of mouth or writings.” These precepts were “delivered” by Paul to them. This word “delivered” comes from the word *paradidomi* (par-ad-id’o-mee). It means “to give into the hands of another.”

Folks, we are to pass on to other believers the teachings of the Scriptures. Like a sprinter that passes the baton to the next runner in a relay race, we are to pass the baton of Bible truth to the next generation of believers and to those who are lost in sin. The unsaved need to hear the Gospel. If we are to pass God’s truth to others, we are going to have to know it ourselves. Study the Word of God and by studying it, you will understand God’s design for you, whether you are a man or a woman. Understanding His design will give you a purpose in life.

* 2 Thessalonians 2:15- Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.
* 2 Timothy 2:15- Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

A man in Kansas City was severely injured in an explosion. Evangelist Robert L. Sumner tells about him in his book *The Wonders of the Word of God*. The victim's face was badly disfigured, and he lost his eyesight as well as both hands. He was just a new Christian, and one of his greatest disappointments was that he could no longer read the Bible. Then he heard about a lady in England who read braille with her lips. Hoping to do the same, he sent for some books of the Bible in braille.

Much to his dismay, however, he discovered that the nerve endings in his lips had been destroyed by the explosion. One day, as he brought one of the braille pages to his lips, his tongue happened to touch a few of the raised characters and he could feel them. Like a flash, he thought, I can read the Bible using my tongue. At the time Robert Sumner wrote his book, the man had "read" through the entire Bible four times.

Beloved, if this man can read the Word with his tongue, how much more should we read it who have eyes that can see? Don’t forget, you do what you want to do.
II. Relevant Relationships  11:3

But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.

Paul mentions three important relationships in this verse to help us to understand God’s design for men and for women. He talks about three heads.

A. The Head of Every Man: “the head of every man is Christ”

The head of every man is Christ. What does this mean? The word “head” means “origin, source, chief, or authority.” Jesus is not only the Creator of all men, He is the source of spiritual life when a person is “born again” and made a new creature in Christ.

* 2 Corinthians 5:17-Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

Jesus is the Head of the church, not the Pope. He redeemed it with His blood and it belongs to Him.

* Ephesians 1:22-23.... And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, 23 Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

* Colossians 1:18- And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

* 1 Corinthians 6:20- For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

* 1 Peter 1:18-19... Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; 19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

Jesus is not only the head of the church, He is the head of all mankind. Whether a person is a Christian or an unbeliever, he will answer to the Lord Jesus Christ one day, for all authority has been given to Christ by God the Father. Christ is the Judge of the universe. Those who have mocked and maligned Him will answer to Him one day and will acknowledge, whether they like it or not, that He is Lord.

* Matthew 28:18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

* Hebrews 2:8- Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him.
*Philippians 2:10-11... That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; 11 And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

*Every Knee Will Bow*
*Like flaming arrows from a Roman garrison, scorners may hurl their doubt and derision about the deity of Christ, but one day every knee will bow and every tongue will confess Jesus Christ as Lord.*
*Liberal politicians may use legislation to erase Jesus from our society like a little boy that smooths the sand on the beach to cover his footprints, but one day every knee will bow and every tongue will confess Jesus Christ as Lord.*
*Followers of Confucius, Buddha, or Muhammad have wrongly put their gods on the throne that only belongs to Christ, but one day every knee will bow and every tongue will confess Jesus Christ as Lord.*
*Tyrants have burned Bibles or buried them in warehouses. They have martyred courageous Christians by drowning, burning, boiling, cutting, hanging, or feeding them to wild beasts, but one day every knee will bow and every tongue will confess Jesus Christ as Lord.*

It is God’s perfect design and plan that all come to Christ and make Him the Lord of their lives. Unfortunately, multitudes will not do this. Is He the Lord of your life? Have you trusted in Him to save you from Hell and give you eternal life in Heaven?

*2 Peter 3:9- The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*

**B. The Head of the Woman is the Man: “the head of the woman is the man”**

God’s design for women is to be under the leadership or headship of men. Those who embrace the philosophy of the women’s liberation movement would cringe at this statement. Beloved, God’s purpose for creating Eve was to be a help to Adam. His purpose and design for women is to be helpers. This does not mean that ladies have no importance, no worth, no value, no ability, no intelligence, or no competence.

On the contrary, women play a vital role in the home, in the church, and society. My wife Linda helps me in my ministry to our church by
caring for the day to day details of our home. She is extremely, immensely, indispensably valuable to me and to our church because she helps her husband, the pastor, as he does the work of the Lord. She encourages me in my ministry and is worthy of honor, reverence, my respect, and my love that is due to her.

To have order and a functioning chain of command, God intended that the man take the role of leadership. Men especially, should lead their homes and be leaders in the church. When that chain of leadership is disobeyed, then there are problems in the home and problems in the church.

Anytime you violate God’s design in marriage or God’s blueprint for the church, you create unwanted or unneeded problems for yourself, your family, or for the church. In fact, Isaiah considered it a judgment from God when the nation was ruled by women and the men were not taking the responsibility for leadership in their homes and in society.

* Isaiah 3:12- As for my people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them. O my people, they which lead thee cause thee to err, and destroy the way of thy paths.

The fact that God designed men to lead does not mean that a man is superior to a woman. Paul is not saying this at all. In the Lord’s eyes, we are one in Christ. God has designed the relationship between men and women as an essential partnership. Men complement the role of women and women complement the role of men. Both sexes are dependent upon the other and need one another. They are interdependent. The first woman came from man, and now men come from being born by a woman.

* 1 Corinthians 11:11-12... Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. 12 For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God.

* Galatians 3:28- There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

Let me say here that ladies, you may be smarter than your husband. You may even be a better Christian than he is. God’s design for your home, however, is for your husband to lead it. When you let him lead, and that is what you are doing, you are demonstrating spiritual maturity by your submission to what God has told you to do and He will bless your compliance to Him.
**Chapter 7...God's Design for Men and Women...11:1-16**

*Ephesians 5:22-24...* Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.

Let me add here that gentlemen, just because you are to be the leader of your home does not mean that your wife is a piece of property or a slave. You are NOT to be a tyrant toward her. You are not to abuse her physically or verbally. You are not to demean her, demoralize her, and treat her like a piece of garbage. Male chauvinism is a perversion of God’s plan for the home. On the contrary, you are to love and cherish her the same way you love yourself. You show love and respect to her when you listen to her and to her concerns about decisions made for the family.

*Ephesians 5:25-Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it:*

*1 Peter 3:7 -Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.*

Author and business leader Fred Smith writes: One of my treasured memories comes from a doughnut shop in Grand Saline, Texas. There was a young farm couple sitting at the table next to mine. He was wearing overalls and she a gingham dress. After finishing their doughnuts, he got up to pay the bill, and I noticed she didn't get up to follow him.

But then he came back and stood in front of her. She put her arms around his neck, and he lifted her up, revealing that she was wearing a full body brace. He lifted her out of her chair and backed out the front door to the pickup truck, with her hanging from his neck. As he gently put her into the truck, everyone in the shop watched. No one said anything until a waitress remarked, almost reverently, "He took his vows seriously." Paul put it this way in Ephesians 5:28, "So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself."

A man known as Bishop Taylor came the closest of anyone to capturing the sentiment of Proverbs 31 when he wrote about a godly wife: "If you are for pleasure, marry. If you prize rosy health, marry. A good wife is Heaven's last best gift to a man. She is his angel of mercy. She is a minister of graces that are innumerable. She is his gem of many virtues. She is his box of jewels. Her voice is his sweetest music. Her
smiles are his brightest day. Her kiss is the guardian of innocence and her arms are the pale of his safety. She is the balm of his health and the balsam of his life. Her industry is his surest wealth. Her economy is his safest steward. Her lips are his faithful counselors, and her prayers are the ablest advocates of Heaven's blessing on his head."

C. The Head of Christ is God: “the head of Christ is God”

When Jesus came to this earth, He willing subjected Himself to the will of God the Father. Christ willingly yielded His will to God the Father’s will. Christ was equal to the Father and has never been inferior to Him.

* Philippians 2:6-7... Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: 7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

Christ submitted Himself to His Father’s will in order to fulfill His role as the Redeemer and Savior of mankind. Christ’s obedience and submission to God the Father’s will enabled Him to fulfill God’s purpose and plan for mankind’s redemption. His submission was not forced. He willing yielded to the Father’s plan out of love for mankind and His Father. As Jesus was submissive to God the Father, as Christians are to be submissive to the Lord, ladies are to be submissive to the leadership of men.

We have examined two areas so far:

* A Reminder to Remember
* Relevant Relationships
* Reproof about Personal Attire

III. Reproof about Personal Attire 11:4-6

* Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head. 5 But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven. 6 For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered.

Paul now shifts to the appearance of the Christian. How you dress is important. Problems had developed in the Corinthian church from the way that the men and the women were dressing in public,
especially at the worship services. God was being dishonored by their appearance. The apostle directs his attention to the men first. He tells these men that they were behaving shamefully if they covered their heads with a veil when they prayed or preached. Now what is this all about? Understanding the local custom in the region of Corinth will help us to understand this portion of Scripture.

In the Middle East, the custom of a man worshiping with his head uncovered was considered to be an important custom in the early church in this region of the world, especially in Corinth. This command totally clashed with the Jewish tradition in which the men did cover their heads when they worshiped the Lord. The reason the Jewish men did this is because they were copying Moses after he was in the presence of God.

Because of Jesus Christ, believers now can come before the throne of God and commune with Him. The uncovered head was a symbol of the Christian man’s new relationship with God and it was a trait of someone who was a disciple of Jesus Christ. Those men who covered their heads were rebelling against this custom and what it represented. The uncovered head also represented man’s authority over women. If a man veiled his head, it indicated his subjection instead of his authority.

After addressing the men, Paul shifts his attention to the women. There were women in the church that were dressing shamefully because when they prayed or spoke, they were not wearing a veil or covering over their heads according to the local custom of that region. Why did they do this? Dr. MacArthur points out that we know from secular history that various movements of women's liberation and feminism appeared in the Roman empire during New Testament times. Women would often take off their veils or other head coverings and cut their hair in order to look like men.

As in our own day, some women were demanding to be treated exactly like men and they attacked marriage and the raising of children as unjust restrictions of their rights. The harsh treatment of husbands provoked this movement. Women asserted their independence by leaving their husbands and homes, by refusing to care for their children, by living with other men, by demanding jobs traditionally held by men, by wearing men's clothing and hairdos, and by discarding all signs of femininity. It is likely that some of the believers at Corinth were influenced by those movements and, as a sign of protest and independence, refused to cover their heads at appropriate times. This problem crept into the church.
Before we talk about this veil in greater depth, we want to mention here that women were allowed to pray and allowed to speak in the church under the leadership of the pastor, who was a man. Paul made it clear that one of the requirements for a pastor was the fact that the pastor or bishop was to be a man, not a woman. Churches that are pastored by women are in violation of this Biblical requirement. I make no bones about this at all. Women pastors are scripturally out of bounds and violating the Word of God they profess to believe.

* 1 Timothy 3:1-2a - This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. 2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife....

* 1 Timothy 3:4-5 - One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; 5 (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)

* 1 Timothy 3:6-7 - Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. 7 Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

Women are not to usurp authority over men. Men are to carry the responsibility of leadership in the church. When a woman did any speaking or teaching, it was under the direction of the pastor or the male leadership of the church.

* 1 Timothy 2:12 - But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.

* 1 Corinthians 14:34 - Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law.

Let me add here that women can speak to the lost about Christ in the community. They can teach children in the church and other women under the direction of their pastor. This is blessed of God. I do not feel they should teach a class where men are students in the class, however. Some would differ with me on this, but I think it is best to limit the ladies to teaching ladies and children.

* Titus 2:3-4 - The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; 4 That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children.

Ladies are not to be teachers of men in the church, but God has used them to be shapers of men. Great men have come forth from the homes
of a loving, nurturing mother. Mothers have a vital role in training and developing boys. They are shaping “men in the making.” Mothers can instill beauty in a man, while a father can instill strength. Mothers can teach their sons to be gentle toward women and to be loving husbands to their wives. The rebuke and discipline of a mother can also sting like a scorpion. When a mother gets on the war path, everybody in the home usually heads for cover. The firmness of a mother can knock off the rough edges in her sons.

Paul stated here that when these women spoke in the church, they were to wear a covering over their heads. The veil was the power, honor, and dignity of the woman. It represented the fact that a woman was in submission to men. A veiled woman could go anywhere in security and respect because of her veil. Women wore hoods or coverings over their heads in public as legal protection under the law against inappropriate advances from men and rape.

A veiled woman signified that a woman was unavailable and would not expose herself to other men. Her beauty and charms were reserved only for her husband. She did not care to be noticed by other men. Her loyalty was only to her husband. This is its significance in the weddings of our day.

In Paul’s day, a woman that was not veiled in Corinth was considered a woman of loose morals and was subject to ridicule and insults. Her unwillingness to wear it demonstrated her rebellion toward her role as a woman and submission to men. Submission to the husband was the key issue. This custom of the veil seems to be confined to this region of the world at this time. There are, however, some countries in the world that still observe it. Most of them are Muslim nations.

Let me add here that when Paul wrote Timothy in Ephesus, Paul did not mention anything about the women being veiled. He instructed them to wear modest clothing.

* 1 Timothy 2:9a-In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety...

For a woman to not have her head covered, Paul said it was as if she had shaved or sheered the hair from off of her head, which was considered a disgrace. In that time, those who were involved in lesbianism, prostitution, or were extreme feminists sheered or cropped their hair. Such sheering was considered shameful. Chrysostom records that women guilty of adultery had their hair shaved off and were marked as prostitutes. Dr. Phillips points out that during the German occupation
of France and other European countries during World War II, some women collaborated with the Germans and consorted with German soldiers and officials. After the war, their fellow citizens showed their anger at such compromise by seizing the women and shaving off all their hair. They then became objects of public shame and disgrace.

Paul states that if a woman was not going to cover her head, she might as well shave off her hair. Both were considered a disgrace. Paul urged these ladies to cover their heads to demonstrate their subordinate relationship to men and to avoid being accused of being a sinful woman. These were Paul’s instructions on dealing with this custom in the region of Corinth.

We have examined three areas concerning the issue of God’s design for men and women.
* A Reminder to Remember
* Relevant Relationships
* Reproof about Personal Attire
* Next...The Reason for Man’s Restraint

IV. The Reason for Man’s Restraint 11:7-12
For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man. 8 For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. 9 Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man. 10 For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels. Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. 12 For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God.

Paul continues and states that men should refrain or restrain themselves from covering their heads with a veil because men are the image and glory of God. A man is made in God’s image and reflects God’s glory, especially in the fact that he is fearfully and wonderfully made. The human body is a masterpiece of God’s creative wisdom and glory. It is truly a wonder.

The apostle continued and stated that the woman is the glory of the man. God’s design for her was to be at the side of man. She is his encourager, his helper, his glory. The root word for “help meet” in Genesis 2 is azar, meaning “to aid or succor.” This is an important role for a woman. In fact, this same word is used to describe the Lord. It is an
important position.

The woman is to honor the authority of the man. She is not to rebel against his authority. She is not to dishonor her husband. The first man came not from a woman. The first woman came from a man and was created for the purpose of helping the man. Paul then states in verse ten that the woman ought to have power on her head because of the angels.

What does this mean? This is a very difficult verse to understand and has a wide variety of interpretations. My view is not dogmatic, but it seems to mean that Paul encouraged these Christian ladies in Corinth to cover their heads when they prayed because the covered head was the woman’s authority to pray and worship. In that time and culture, her covered head demonstrated her submissiveness to her husband’s authority and to God’s authority.

Sir William Ramsay explained the veil this way, "In Oriental lands, the veil is the power, honor, and dignity of the woman. With the veil on her head she can go anywhere in security and profound respect. She is not seen. It is a mark of thoroughly bad manners to observe a veiled woman in the street. She is alone. The rest of the people around are non-existent to her, as she is to them. She is supreme in the crowd.... But without the veil the woman is a thing of nought, whom anyone may insult.... A woman's authority and dignity vanish along with the all-covering veil that she discards."

Paul also states that her head also needed to be covered because her actions, attitudes, and submission were being viewed by angels, who evidently are witnesses to her worship of God.

V. The Rudiments of Nature 11:13-16

Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered? 14 Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? 15 But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering. 16 But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.

Paul closes this portion about the covering on the heads of men and women by using hair as an object lesson. He has been instructing the women to cover their heads when they pray and instructing the men to keep their heads uncovered. He uses hair to illustrate this truth. Paul states that the long hair of a woman is a natural
Chapter 7...God's Design for Men and Women...11:1-16

covering for her. He states that her long hair is her glory. What does he mean by this? The word “glory” means “majesty, exaltation, honor, dignity, praise, splendor, magnificence, excellence, brightness like the sun, moon, and stars.” The long hair of a woman represents all these things. This is the teaching of nature itself. Ladies, your glory is in your hair.

Since long hair was a covering, the long hair on a man was considered disgraceful or shameful because the man’s head was to be uncovered. Free-flowing hair on men was considered effeminate in Roman culture. In Paul’s day, Stoics and other moral philosophers (Epictetus, Plutarch) argued against long hair for men. The apostle states that the teacher of this truth was nature itself. Nature (phusis) carries the idea of instinct, an innate sense of what is normal and right.

Men and women have distinctive physiologies in many ways. One of them is in the process of hair growth on the head. Hair develops in three stages—formation and growth, resting, and fallout. The male hormone testosterone speeds up the cycle so that men reach the third stage earlier than women. The female hormone estrogen causes the cycle to remain in stage one for a longer time, causing women's hair to grow longer than men’s. Women are rarely bald because few even reach stage three. This physiology is reflected in most cultures of the world in the custom of women wearing longer hair than men.

Nature teaches that long hair on men is not normal or honorable. It is interesting to note that during the hippie craze in the 1960's and 70's, those men who rebelled and revolted against society expressed their disdain by refusing to cut their hair. Long hair was the norm for boys and young men during this time. It was worn as a badge and symbol of rebellion and contempt for the norm or what the apostle Paul calls “nature.”

Rebellion was not only displayed by the long hair on men, it was also expressed by indulging in frequent sexual immorality with loose young women, experimenting with mind-altering drugs like LSD and marijuana, by defying moral standards of decency, by public nudity, by living in poverty and filth, by a fascination for the worship of Satan, and by riots and anti-war demonstrations protesting the war in Vietnam.

If you have ever seen film clips of what happened at a place called Woodstock, one of the largest outdoor rock concerts in history, you will have a pretty good idea of the philosophy and lifestyle of the youth in America at that time. The heroes of young people in the nation were rock
musicians and almost every one of these men wore their hair long.

Beloved, in a nutshell, God intended a distinction between the sexes. Ladies are to yield to the leadership of men. Men are to look and act like men and ladies are to look and to act like ladies. This is part of His design for the sexes.

* Deuteronomy 22:5- The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the LORD thy God.

Paul closed this portion by stating that if anyone wanted to argue or be contentious about this issue, there was no other custom than this one. This issue was not open for debate.

Beloved, the prayer of each one of us should be that we fulfill God’s purpose and will for our own personal lives. His purpose will be fulfilled if we are dedicated to Him. Never underestimate what you can do if you are truly committed to serving the Lord. Committed people accomplish great feats.

Johnny Fulton was run over by a car at the age of three. He suffered crushed hips, broken ribs, a fractured skull, and compound fractures in his legs. It did not look as if he would live. But he would not give up. In fact, he later ran the half-mile in less than two minutes.

Walt Davis was totally paralyzed by polio when he was nine years old, but he did not give up. He became the Olympic high jump champion in 1952. Shelly Mann was paralyzed by polio when she was five years old, but she would not give up. She eventually claimed eight different swimming records for the U.S. and won a gold medal at the 1956 Olympics in Melbourne, Australia.

In 1938, Karoly Takacs, a member of Hungary's world-champion pistol shooting team and sergeant in the army, lost his right hand when a grenade he was holding exploded. But Takacs did not give up. He learned to shoot left-handed and won gold medals in the 1948 and 1952 Olympics.

Lou Gehrig was such a clumsy ball player that the boys in his neighborhood would not let him play on their team. But he was committed. He did not give up. Eventually, his name was entered into baseball's Hall of Fame. People can accomplish tremendous goals if they are dedicated to the task. May the Lord help us all to be faithful in fulfilling His design and plan for our lives.

* 1 Corinthians 15:58a-Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord...
Chapter 8
A Beautiful Banquet that Turned Bitter
1 Corinthians 11:17-34

Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse. 18 For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. 19 For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you. 20 When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper. 21 For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken. 22 What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not. 23 For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: 24 And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. 25 After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. 26 For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come. 27 Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. 28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. 29 For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. 30 For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. 31 For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. 32 But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world. 33 Wherefore, my brethren, when ye
come together to eat, tarry one for another. 34 And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come.

One of Satan’s favorite past times is to try to corrupt that which is good and honors God. Ever since the Garden of Eden, he has been doing this. The beautiful and perfect fellowship that Adam and Eve had with the Lord was corrupted when they yielded to temptation and sinned against God, condemning mankind to death. A beautiful relationship turned bitter.

In Acts chapter five, we find the corruption of a gift given to God. Ananias and Sapphira lied about a gift that was given to the Lord. Instead of giving all that was vowed to the Lord, they kept back part of the money from the sale of some property. They lied to the Lord and died as a result of their deception. A beautiful deed turned bitter.

Every day across the world, the beauty of sexual purity or virginity that God has given to all men and women turns to bitterness when they indulge in sexual immorality and do not wait to save themselves for their spouse on their wedding day. The bitterness of guilt or a sexually transmitted disease leads to regret that can last for a life time. Understand clearly, beloved, that Satan is determined to try to corrupt that which is good and honors Him.

In this portion of 1 Corinthians, Paul addresses this problem in the church in Corinth. The Lord’s Supper had been corrupted by people in the church. That which should have been a time of unity was creating division. That which should have demonstrated love and joy was causing hate and hurt. A beautiful banquet had turned into a time of bitterness.

Paul rebuked the church with firmness and sternness. The issue was so serious that some Christians had died because of their abuse of the Lord’s Supper. Let’s begin and see what happened. Let’s find out what mistakes were being made so that we will not follow in their steps.

I. The Denunciation for Divisive Behavior 11:17-22

Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse. 18 For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. 19 For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you. 20 When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat
the Lord's supper.  21 For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken.  22 What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not.

This morning, one of our kids in church came up to me before today's message and gave me a hug. He does this a lot. I noticed today that he had something in his hand and asked him what it was. He said, “This is Reese’s Peanut Butter Lip Balm. It tastes like peanut butter. I love to lick it off my lips.” I laughed and then I got to thinking, “That is defeating the whole purpose of the lip balm. You don’t want to lick your lips. They will get worse, not better.”

This was the same type of situation in Corinth. What should have created healing in the church was causing a blister among the people. Paul was not a happy camper. The commands and instructions that he was about to give them did not include any praise at all. What should have brought about unity, closeness, and encouragement in the church was in reality causing discouragement, disunity, and hurt.

Unfortunately, there are many churches today that are so filled with bitterness, hate, and hurt, that when they meet together, they do more harm than good by their bickering and battling. If revival does not take place, eventually the doors close on those churches. That is tragic because this should not happen among believers and does not have to happen.

This truth also holds true for some married couples. All they do is fuss, fight, feud, and foam at the mouth. Folks, that is not what God intended for married couples at all. We are to love our spouse for better or worse. We are not to make matters worse every time we spend time with one another.

In this portion of 1 Corinthians, Paul denounces these believers for several corruptive matters. We will note three.

A. Division: “I hear that there be divisions among you” vs. 18

Matters were so bad in the church that word was getting around about the divisions and dissension. This word “division” is from the word schisma [skhis'-mah]. It has the idea of tearing or cutting. This is the kind of treatment these folks had for one another. That is not a good testimony for Christ, is it? We saw earlier in the letter they were divided over leaders. The carnality and selfishness in the lives of
believers also created division. Their “Me First” attitude got them into trouble.

B. Disruptive Dogma: “For there must be also heresies among you,”
vs. 19

The word “heresies” refers to self-willed opinions which oppose truth and which lead to division and to the formation of the sects of men. It is the dogma, opinions, or thinking that characterizes or distinguishes a group of people.

This kind of problem continues today as believers are divided over Bible colleges and Bible translations. Factious groups and beliefs are not only disruptive, they are also destructive. In the beginning they help reveal the strong, spiritually mature leaders, but when left unchallenged, they will undermine any Christian group and are not to be tolerated.

* Titus 3:10-11... A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject; 11 Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.

C. Deprivation and Drunkenness: “When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper. 21 For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken.” vs. 20-21

In the early church, special meals for fellowship were held among the believers. They were called love feasts and were for the purpose of strengthening the fellowship, the care, and affection of Christians for one another. It was a very tender, special time in the church. At the end of these feasts, the Lord’s Supper or Communion was observed which remembered what Christ did on the cross for us and looked forward to His return.

What was supposed to be a blessing, however, turned into something that became a burden. There were people in the church that turned this special occasion into a time of neglect and abuse. Since it was connected to the ordinance of the Lord’s Supper, it actually desecrated the Communion service. What happened? How was this beautiful banquet turned into something that was bitter?

In the church, there were folks who were extremely poor. Some were slaves and there were others that were wealthy. Those who had money could bring plenty of food to these feasts, while those who were poverty stricken could bring very little or nothing at all. These “pot luck”
style love feasts helped many to be nourished and strengthened. Social barriers and prejudices were broken down in the churches because of Jesus Christ. Many churches were composed of Jews, Gentiles, Greeks, Romans, free men, slaves, wealthy citizens, and also barbarians who had been saved. In Corinth, however, the barriers had not been removed and it created a problem at the love feast. This beautiful banquet became a bitter one when those who had an abundance of food brought it to the banquet, but would not share it with the others who had little or none at all. They would eat their food in front of the others and become drunken.

These folks had totally ignored the meaning and spirit behind the word “supper.” The Greek word for supper is deipnon (dipe'-non). The breakfast in the Greek home was usually composed of bread dipped in wine. At noon, they ate their meal just about anywhere, whether it was in the square of the city or on the street. The supper meal, however, was special. It was held after the activities of the day. This meal was the main meal of the day and was characterized by relaxation, no rushing about, and a time to slow down and fellowship with the family. This was to characterize the love feast.

Because of the selfish behavior of some believers at these feasts, the Communion service was eventually separated from the love feast. Paul scolded these Christians for their disdain and disrespect for the church family and for embarrassing the poorer believers. He told them to eat their meals at home if they were not going to share with the others. He had no praise at all for their behavior.

II. The Details of an Important Dinner 11:23-26
For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: 24 And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. 25 After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. 26 For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.

Paul shares the details of the Lord’s Supper that he received from the Lord. The bread that Jesus broke at the meal represented the body of the Lord. You will notice that many of the more
recent translations of the Bible do not have the word “broken” because many of the older, ancient manuscripts do not have this word in this verse. It is omitted.

We do know for a fact that not one bone in the body of Jesus was broken at all when He was crucified. Breaking the legs of those who were crucified was a common practice of Roman soldiers because it hastened the death of the one being crucified.

* John 19:33- But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs:
* John 19:36 For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken.

The cup at this meal represented the blood of the Lord and His new covenant or testament with the church. In the Passover meal, it represented the blood of the lamb spread on the doorposts. Now it represents the blood of Christ shed on the cross. Because of what Christ has done, there is no more need for animal sacrifices because the work of Christ finished the payment for sin once and for all. This is why Jesus cried out, “It is finished!” on the cross.

Eating the bread and drinking the cup is for the purpose of remembering what Jesus did for us until He returns again. The Lord’s Supper looks back at the cross and looks forward to His coming.

Through false teaching, the meaning of the Lord’s Supper has been distorted. That which is good has been corrupted by the Roman Catholic church. The bread used at the communion feast is not magically changed into the material body of Christ by the incantation of certain words by a priest. Eating the communion bread does not mean you are taking Jesus into your heart or that it saves your soul from Hell, yet, many believe this. The Lord meant that the bread was to be regarded as His memorial body. It was a picture of His material body soon to be broken at Calvary. That’s all.

III. The Discipline of the Lord   11:27-34

Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.  28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.  29 For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body.  30 For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. 31 For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be
judged.  32 But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.  33 Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another.  34 And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come.

Paul warns that those who participate in the Lord’s Supper unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. What does he mean by the word “unworthily”? It means “to participate with an improper, inappropriate, careless attitude.” What are some improper attitudes that characterize people today concerning the Lord’s Supper?

1. Some take Communion even though their hearts are filled with hate, bitterness, or sin that they will not forsake.
2. Some believe that Communion saves them or cleanses them of sin.
3. Some are ritualistic in their participation, going through the motions without considering the meaning of the Lord’s Supper. It has no meaning to them.
4. Some are flippant and do not take it seriously. They just want to drink the juice and eat the wafer. Such attitudes dishonor the Lord.

Paul stated that to participate with an improper attitude is to bring discipline or judgment to yourself. The word “damnation” here has the idea of “chastisement.” The chastisement from the Lord may come in the form of weakness, sickness, and even death.

Death is the meaning of this word “sleep.” It is derived from the Greek word koimao (koy-mah’-o). In fact, we derive our English word cemetery from the noun koimeterion. That word was used by the Greeks to refer to a rest house for strangers, but, according to W. E. Vine, it was adopted by the Christians for a place where the bodies of loved ones were laid to rest. The word “cemetery” literally means "the sleeping place."

Because of the chastening of the Lord, a believer should examine himself carefully when he takes the Lord’s Supper to see if there are any issues that he needs to get right with God or with other people. The Lord’s Supper is an important time of self-examination.

Paul also instructs us to judge ourselves. We are not only to look for any problems in our lives, but DO something about them. If our attitude is wrong, we should change it. Judging ourselves involves discernment about what we are now and what we ought to be. If there is sin in our lives, then confess it to the Lord.
* 1 John 1:9- If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

If we are chastened by the Lord, it is for the purpose of bringing us back to the Lord and getting rid of sin in our lives. If we do not deal with our sinfulness, then God will.

* Hebrews 12:11- Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

Paul closes this issue by instructing them to eat some food at home before they meet together for the Lord’s Supper if they have difficulty waiting for the others. This would enable them to come to the service with the right attitude and with more patience as they waited for the others to arrive. This would prevent them from turning a beautiful banquet into something bitter.

Beloved, if we will truly stay close to the Lord, examine ourselves for sin, and overcome our weaknesses and fears, God can and will use us if we are willing to be used. He can take the bitter experiences of our lives and make something beautiful out of us if we are willing.

In closing, I want to tell you a story about a young man named Jesse who overcame his weaknesses and fears to become a great success in life. I want to begin by telling you that Jesse hated his job. And you would too, I imagine, if you had to do it. See, Jesse was a chicken plucker. That's right, he was a chicken plucker! He stood on a line in a chicken factory and spent his days pulling the feathers off dead chickens so the rest of us wouldn't have to do this. It wasn't much of a job, but at the time, Jesse didn't think he was much of a person. He was suffering from stinkin' thinkin'.

His father was a brute of a man. His dad was actually thought to be mentally ill and treated Jesse rough all of his life. Jesse's older brother wasn't much better. He was always picking on Jesse and beating him up. Yes, Jesse grew up in a very rough home in West Virginia. Life was anything but easy for him and he thought life didn't hold much hope for him. That's why he was standing in this chicken line, doing a job that few people wanted.

In addition to all the rough treatment at home, it seems that Jesse was always sick. Sometimes it was real physical illness, but way too often, it was all in his head. He was a small child, skinny and meek. That sure didn't help the situation any at all. When he started off to school, he was the object of every bully on the playground. He was a hypochondriac...
of the first order, always thinking he was sick.

For Jesse, tomorrow was not always something to be looked forward to, but he did have dreams. He wanted to be a ventriloquist. He found books on ventriloquism. He practiced with sock puppets and saved his hard earned dollars until he could get a real ventriloquist dummy.

When he got old enough, he joined the U.S. Army. And even though many of his hypochondriac symptoms persisted, the Army did recognize his talents and put him in the Entertainment Corp. He served from 1943 to 1946. During the enlistment, his world changed. He gained confidence. He found that he had a talent for making people laugh, and laugh so hard they often had tears in their eyes. Yes, little Jesse had found himself.

You know folks, the history books are full of people who overcame a handicap to go on and make a success of themselves, but Jesse is one of the few who didn't overcome it. Instead, he used his paranoia and fear to make a million dollars, and become one of the best-loved characters of all time in doing it!

Yes, that little paranoid hypochondriac, who transferred his fear and nervousness into a successful career, still holds the record for the most Emmies given in a single category. This wonderful, gifted, talented, and nervous comedian brought to us the famous deputy Barney Fife on the Andy Griffith Show. He was Jesse Donald Knotts or to us, Don Knotts.

Now if Don Knotts could manage his weaknesses and fears and become a success, don’t you think that you, with the Lord’s help, can overcome your weaknesses and fears in order to serve the Lord? I think you can and hope you will. Don’t let Satan corrupt or influence you to take your beautiful life and turn it into bitterness.
Chapter 9
Bringing Clarity to a Confusing Issue
1 Corinthians 12:1-11

Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant. Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led. Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost. Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.

Herman and Henrietta were talking one evening at the end of a frustrating day. Herman said to his wife, "Honey, I'm 58 years old, and I still don't know what I want to be when I grow up!" Many people are just like Herman and haunted by uncertainty about what they are supposed to do with their lives. Why am I here? What is the purpose of my life? This same uncertainty unfortunately characterizes multitudes of believers in Jesus Christ. If you asked them, "What does God want you to do or be?" many would answer, "I don't know." This answer would even characterize Christians that have been saved for 30, 40, or 50 or more years.

Beloved, God wants you to know and do His will. He does not want you to be a spectator in the church, but a participant in the ministry. He has given you a spiritual gift that will enable you to do His will and be
a blessing to other people, especially other believers. This is what Paul addresses here at the beginning of the twelfth chapter of 1 Corinthians. God wants us to understand the issue of His spiritual gifts for us. This is what we will address in this message. This matter is so important that it is addressed in several portions of the New Testament including Romans 12, Ephesians 4, 1 Peter 4, and here in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14. In this message, we will begin to answer a number of questions that believers have been asking for years.

* What are spiritual gifts?

* Are spiritual gifts important?

* Does every Christian have a spiritual gift? If so, what is my gift?

* Are all the gifts still being given to the church today?

By the time we finish with this message, hopefully you will have a much better grasp about spiritual gifts and how they relate to you. Let’s begin. Notice verse one.

I. The Desire for Clarity about Spiritual Gifts  12:1

Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant.

It was Paul’s desire to bring clarity to the Corinthians about the issue of spiritual gifts. He did not want them to be ignorant about this important matter. The phrase “I would not have you ignorant” was a phrase that Paul used to encourage those whom he was writing, to pay very close attention to what he was about to say (Romans 1:13; 11:25; 1 Thessalonians 4:13). It was extremely important. It was important then and continues to be important now. This topic is greatly misunderstood and abused today because of ignorance and false teaching. The confusion has gotten Christians sidetracked from reaching the lost for Christ and has hindered them from fulfilling God’s purpose for their lives.

Paul does not want us ignorant about this issue. This word “ignorant” is from the word agnoeo {ag-no-eh’-o} which forms our English word “agnostic.” Agnoeo means “to be ignorant or to not know something; to err or sin through mistakes.” When it came to the matter of spiritual gifts, the apostle did not want them to be ignorant or doubtful about this matter. He did not want them to have any doubts or agnosticism about their spiritual gifts from the Lord because they are so vital for the spiritual health of the church and the ministry of a Christian.
He wanted them to understand their gifts and use them to glorify God.

**What are spiritual gifts?** What is he talking about here? Let me begin by saying that spiritual gifts are not to be confused with your natural talents or abilities, even though God helps us to have different skills. All people, including unsaved people, have abilities and talents whether they are a plumber, a musician, an athlete, or someone who does not believe in God at all.

Spiritual gifts are given to a person after he puts his faith in Jesus Christ for his salvation. Unsaved people do not have a spiritual gift because they are spiritually dead. The Holy Spirit does not indwell them because their spiritual father is Satan. This is what Jesus told us in John 8:44.

So what is a spiritual gift? In the Greek text, it actually reads “spirituals or spiritualities.” The word “gift” has been inserted by the translators because it has been implied. Paul is referring to those things which have spiritual qualities, spiritual characteristics, or is under spiritual control. **Spiritual gifts refer to special abilities that are from the Holy Spirit and are given to every single Christian to be used to serve and meet the needs of others.**

These abilities are given to Christians to enable and empower them to do God’s work and fulfill the will of God for their lives. They help to edify or strengthen the church body and to evangelize those without Christ. They are not for the purpose of edifying yourself, but are to be used to serve others.

* Ephesians 4:8-Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.
* Ephesians 4:12-13...For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: 13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

So if you are wondering if God has given you a spiritual gift, the answer is “Yes.” Even if you are brand-new Christian or a backslidden Christian, you have a gift. We are to use our gift to serve others and the Lord. Don’t bury it! Don’t waste it! Use it for God’s glory!

* Ephesians 4:7-But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.
* 1 Corinthians 12:7-But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.
* 1 Corinthians 7:7b... But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that.
* 1 Peter 4:10-As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

Peter states that we are stewards of the gifts that God has given to us. We will give an account of the way we used them. Each believer plays an important role in the ministry of the church. When Christians use their spiritual gifts, then there is unity, peace, and power among them. These gifts build up people while Satan’s counterfeit gifts destroy, divide, and cause disruption and confusion.

I like the story of a certain sea captain and his chief engineer who were having an argument as to which one of them was more important to the ship. Failing to agree, they resorted to the unique idea of swapping places. The chief ascended to the bridge, and the captain dived into the engine room. After a couple of hours, the captain suddenly appeared on the deck covered with oil and soot. “Chief!” he yelled, wildly waving aloft a monkey wrench. “You’ll have to come down here; I can’t make her go!” “Of course you can’t,” replied the chief. “She’s aground on the beach!” Beloved, we need one another.

God’s gifts are given to us freely by His wonderful grace. We receive one, key motivational gift so we can focus upon that gift. This also helps us to be ministered to by others and helps us to realize that we are not super Christians that can do it all. Gifts are distributed to all of us by the Lord so that no individual Christian will think of himself more highly than he ought. If a person had all the motivational gifts, he would have no need of others.

* Arrogant Attitudes about Spiritual Gifts

Proud attitudes toward spiritual gifts can be placed into five categories.

1. **Boasting**-We are not to use our ability boastfully in order to bring glory to ourselves. We are not in competition with one another.
2. **Belittling**-We are not to depreciate ourselves and our gifts in a false humility. Such an attitude is a poorly disguised effort to get praise. Instead, we are to thank the Lord for His gifts and give Him glory for what He is doing in us.
3. **Blown-up or Ballooning Confidence**- The third wrong attitude is that of claiming impressive gifts that we do not possess. If you do not have a certain gift, then don’t covet it.
4. Bitterness-The fourth wrong attitude is failing to use our gift out of jealousy or resentment. To purposely disregard a spiritual gift is to disdain God’s grace.

* 1 Corinthians 12:15-16... If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body: is it therefore not of the body? [16] And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? God’s plan for all of us is to be perfect or mature.

5. Bull-dog Resistance-The fifth improper attitude about your gift is failing to use your gift at all, whether out of neglect, indifference, anger, or shame.

If you find after examining yourself that you have one or more of the above attitudes, then seek the Lord’s forgiveness and ask Him to help you know, understand, and use the spiritual gift He has given to you. Don’t blow it brethren!

II. Dumb Idols, Denouncing Christ, and Doctrine of Believers 12:2-3

Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led. 3 Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.

Keeping the Corinthian Christians free from the influence of their past idolatry was a constant battle. Paul points to the past and calls to mind the lives of these Christians before they were saved. Without Christ, they were “carried away” in worshiping dumb idols. The words “carried away” are derived from the word apago {ap-ag’-o}. It is an interesting word and was used to describe a prisoner that was taken by an armed guard to trial, to prison, or to execution.

This is a fitting description of a person without Christ. Without Christ, these people were like prisoners who were captivated by the soothsayers and diviners who advocated the worship of pagan gods. If you do not know the Lord, you are a prisoner of Satan and are under the bondage of sin. Without Christ, you are destined to punishment in the Lake of Fire that has been prepared for Satan and all those who have been led astray and follow him. Without Christ you are spiritually blinded by Satan and under his influence. This is why you have not asked Christ
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into your heart or have doubts about the truths of the Bible, about God, and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is risen, but Satan does not want you to believe it or accept it. Realize he has done a hatchet job on you. Wake up!

*2 Corinthians 4:3-4... But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:  4 In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.*

*John 8:44a -Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do.*

*Ephesians 2:2- Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:*

Those without Christ are often led astray into worshiping dumb idols. The word "dumb" does not mean they are stupid. No, it means something that does not have a voice. Beloved, an idol cannot meet the need of any person. It cannot hear you, help you, encourage you, or give you direction in your life. No matter how many candles or incense you burn for it, no matter how many prayers you offer, or tears you shed, it cannot do anything for you. Nothing! Nada!

Unfortunately, many today do not realize this or believe this. They have strong beliefs in idols. In our own country, we are littered with idols including Buddha, the Virgin Mary, dead men of the Catholic church that have been declared to be saints, Hindu gods, gods from Africa, money, fame, and even famous people. We had a neighbor that buried an idol in their front yard because they were going to put their house up for sale. They believed the idol would help it to sell quickly. Beloved, multitudes are under the spell of Satan and worship idols.

A good question to ask here is, “How were these people led astray to worship these idols?” One big factor was the sexual immorality that was involved in the worship of these idols. This appealed to the sinful natures of men and women.

Secondly, in the pagan cults, demonic spirits spoke through their worshipers in what was called ecstatic speech. This state of ecstasy was believed to be supernatural, sensuous fellowship with a god or goddess. It was characterized by hypnotic chants, vigils, fastings, drunkenness, the use of mind-altering drugs, whirling dances, the burning of fragrant incense, visions, divination, and unrestrained immorality. Demon possession and demonic obsession was a genuine reality in Paul’s day.
It still exists today.

*Acts 16:16* And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying:

As Paul continues, he portrays the huge difference between a man without Christ and a man that believes in the Lord. He wanted these folks to clearly understand that no man speaking by the Spirit of God will curse Jesus. The man that believes and says that Jesus is Lord does so because of the work of the Holy Spirit in his heart. What was this all about?

In the Roman Empire, Christians were persecuted as traitors to Caesar because they proclaimed the Jesus was Lord. To avoid execution, believers were commanded to deny Jesus and declare Caesar as lord. In the time of Trajan, it was the test of Pliny, governor of Bithynia, to demand that a person accused of being a Christian should curse and denounce Jesus Christ.

When Polycarp, the Bishop of Smyrna, was arrested, the demand of the proconsul Statius Quadratus was, "Say, 'Away with the atheists,' swear by the godhead of Caesar, and blaspheme Christ." Polycarp responded with his famous words that continue to echo through the halls of time, “Eighty and six years have I served Christ, and he has never done me wrong. How can I blaspheme my King who saved me?” Any man who denies Christ is not speaking under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

Let me add here that any person, preacher, or teacher that denies the fact that Jesus is God is not of God. Doctrine is an essential test in determining the validity of a ministry. Just because a building has the word “church” on it does not necessarily mean it is a true church of believers or is preaching the truth. Not all churches or all preachers are the same. Any teaching or preaching you hear must be compared to the Scriptures.

If a preacher makes light of Bible study or reading, then watch out. That is a red flag. There is a reason he is saying this for he knows he cannot deceive you if you know the truth. Any Bible-believing preacher will want his people to read God’s Word regularly. The only way to be sure if something is spiritual is to be sure it is scriptural.

There are many teachings today that are traditions of men and not Bible doctrines, especially in the area of Bible translations. Let me also add here that if a preacher claims new revelation from God, watch
out. He is a fraud. God's revelation of truth to the church is closed. All
that we need to know for now is in the Word of God.

Paul also added that if any man believes and sincerely confesses
Jesus Christ as Lord does so because of the Holy Spirit dwelling in his
heart. An unbeliever can say these words, but the fruit of his life will
reveal what he truly believes. Faith in Christ and obedience to His Word
are signs of salvation. A false profession, however, will not save anyone
or fool God. Recall the words of the Lord in Matthew 7.

*Matthew 7:21- Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter
into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which
is in heaven.

If you have professed faith in Christ, but there is no change in your
behavior, you may want to examine yourself to see if you have been truly
saved. Head knowledge will not get you to Heaven.

* 2 Corinthians 13:5- Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith;
prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus
Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?

How do you know if you are a Christian? There are several
important marks or signs to look for in your life.

* The Marks of Salvation in the Believer

1. The Mark of the Spirit of God.

* Romans 8:16—The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we
are the children of God:

2. The Mark of Scripture on our Minds.

You will have a new love for God's Word.

* 1 Peter 2:2—As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word,
that ye may grow thereby:

3. The Mark of Service on our Hands.

* James 1:22—But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only,
deceiving your own selves.

4. The Mark of Speech on our Lips.

* 1 John 4:15—Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God,
God dwelleth in him, and he in God.

5. The Mark of Sincere Love on the Heart for Other Christians.

*John 13:35—By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye
have love one to another.

* 1 John 3:14—We know that we have passed from death unto life,
because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in
death.

6. The Mark of a Sense of What is Right and Wrong
* Hebrews 5:14—But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

7. The Mark of a Saintly Life
   There will be new social pressure from those convicted by your changed life.
* 1 Peter 4:3, 4—For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries: Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you:
* 2 Corinthians 5:17—Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

   We have examined two areas so far:
* The Desire for Clarity about Spiritual Gifts
* Dumb Idols, Denouncing Christ, and Doctrine of Believers
* Next...Diversity in Spiritual Gifts and Ministry

III. Diversity in Spiritual Gifts and Ministry   12:4-6
Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.   5 And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord.   6 And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.

Paul states there are diversities or different kinds of spiritual gifts which come from the Holy Spirit. He is the source. There are three basic types of gifts: 1) Gifts of Motivation 2) Gifts of Ministry 3) Gifts of Manifestation. We may receive several ministry gifts. We will talk about those later. We have one main motivation gift so that we can concentrate on it. These gifts are listed in Romans 12:6-9.

* The Key Motivational Gifts of Christians
A. Prophecy- This is the proclamation of the truths of the Word of God. It involves exposing sin for the purpose of helping a person.
B. Ministry or Serving- This gift desires to free others from burdens and meeting the needs of other people. The person with this gift looks for needs to fulfill.
C. Teaching- This gift makes the Word of God understandable. It clarifies truth and validates information for people to make correct decisions.

D. Exhorting- Exhorting means “to call near.” This gift desires to stimulate faith and promote spiritual growth so that the unsaved will be attracted to the Gospel.

E. Giving- The person with this gift makes wise investments in order to advance God’s work. He is aware of the needs of others. He gives with simplicity which means “liberally and with the right motives.”

F. Ruling or Organizing- The person with this gift plans ahead and completes a task. He knows how to delegate in order to reach the goal.

G. Mercy- People with this gift desire to remove distress from others and share their burdens. They give comfort in difficult times.

These gifts are distributed among believers to create a balance in the ministry of the church. It was Bill Gothard who suggested that individuals react to given situations in the light of their spiritual gift. For example, if someone spills food all over the floor at a church banquet or in a restaurant, each Christian present will react in accordance with his spiritual gift to the mess.

* The server responds by concentrating on cleaning up the mess. He might say, “Let me help you clean this up.”
* The person with the gift of mercy focuses on relieving embarrassment and might say, “It’s all right. This could happen to anyone.”
* The prophet on the other hand might say, “That’s what happens when you are not careful!” The prophet is motivated to correct the problem, especially if the person was goofing off.
* Those with the gift of giving offer to pay for another meal if the meal has to be replaced or if something was damaged and needs replaced. The giver sees a need and wants to fill the need.
* The exhorter seeks to cheer up or build up the person emotionally.
* The administrator delegates and organizes the cleanup.
* The teacher suggests some ways to avoid a recurrence of the problem. He will discover why the accident happened in the first place.

Your spiritual gift makes you sensitive to certain needs that others may not perceive. To use your gift effectively you must realize several things.

1. Your gift is from God.
2. Not everyone has the same gift.
3. Be yourself and not someone else.
4. Do your best with what you have been entrusted.
5. Use your gift for the glory of God.

Each of us is commanded in Scripture to perform the functions of all seven motivational gifts regardless of what our gift is. As we learn the skills of the other six gifts, we will be able to use our own motivational gift effectively.

A. We are all to proclaim the truth (prophet).
* 2 Timothy 4:2- Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.

B. We are all to serve others (server).
* Galatians 5:13- For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.

C. We are all to instruct others (teacher).
* Colossians 3:16- Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

D. We are to show mercy to others (mercy).
* Galatians 6:2- Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

E. We are to share with others and be generous (giver).
* Matthew 10:8b..freely ye have received, freely give.
* Romans 12:13-Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.

F. We are to be organized and plan ahead (organizer).
* 1 Corinthians 14:40- Let all things be done decently and in order.

G. We are all to exhort others (exhorter).
* Hebrews 10:25- Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.
* Hebrews 3:13- But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

Paul said there are differences in administrations or ministries. The word “administrations” relates to the ministries and outreach of the local church. We have one key motivational gift, but we may have several ministry gifts. Not all ministries are the same and for good reason. Different kinds of ministries enable the church to be strengthened and the lost to be reached for Christ. The ministry gifts are listed in 1 Corinthian 12:27-31. They include apostles, prophets, teachers, miracles, healings, helps, governments, and tongues. We will
describe these gifts later when we come to this passage.

Paul continued and stated that there are diversities of operations. The word “operations” is from the word *energema* (*en-erg'-ay-mah*). It means “what is worked out or energized.” It has to do with the results, the manifestation, or the ways that God does His work through us when we are led and controlled by the Holy Spirit. We will look at these results in verses 7-11. God is the source of our spiritual gift and He is the One that also provides the power or energy to put it into action. With His power, the Lord enables us to make our spiritual gift to be effective for His glory. Without His power and help, we flop, fail, and become frustrated.

As we exercise our spiritual gifts with the Lord’s help, we will experience satisfaction, joy, and understanding of God’s purpose for our lives as we see Him using us to be a blessing to other people. If you want to have joy in your life, be a blessing and help other people. If you want to be miserable and make others miserable, then be selfish and stuck on yourself.

**IV. Details about the Distribution of Different Gifts**

12:7-11  
*But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. 8 For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; 9 To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; 10 To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: 11 But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.*

In this section, Paul addresses the gifts of the manifestations of the Holy Spirit’s work. The word “manifestation” carries the idea of making something obvious, clear, or known. This is the purpose of our spiritual gifts. We are to make the Lord known to other believers and those without Christ. The gifts that God gives to us are to display His glory.

Let me add here that sometimes the Lord will make known to us things that we cannot explain. There may be times that the Holy Spirit out of the clear blue will prompt a Christian to do something, to say something, or to go somewhere and speak to a person.
Pastor William Eddy, who ministered in southern Syria, has shared a wonderful experience he had under the Holy Spirit’s guidance. Late one night when he was asleep in the town of Sidon, he was awakened by an unusual sound. He sat straight up in his bed. The room was enshrouded with a curtain of darkness while the applause of rain could be heard outside. The Lord spoke to his heart and distinctly impressed him to go to a certain man’s house, Mr. Najeeb in Mukdouski. Immediately he arose, dressed, went out into the storm, saddled his horse and departed toward the town.

When he arrived at the house, the door was opened by Mr. Najeeb and his brother. They told the pastor, “We were expecting you. Father is dying and you know that he has never been saved. We have been praying for you to come and win him to the Lord.”

Pastor Eddy spoke to the father about the Lord and he asked Jesus Christ to be his Savior. How does a person account for the fact that Pastor Eddy was impressed to see this man in the middle of the night and lead him to Christ? Paul explains that the manifestation gifts of the Holy Spirit are given to every man for profit. What does this mean?

The word “profit” is from the word *sumphero* (soom-fé’-rō). It means “to bring together; to carry the load with others; to contribute in order to help others.” Our gift is for the purpose of building up and helping the church body, and to reach those without Christ. The Spirit of God will prompt us to use this gift to benefit others.

Listed here are the manifestation gifts that are distributed by the Holy Spirit, who decides what gifts each Christian should possess.

1. **Word of Wisdom**

   This person sees life from God’s point of view. He has developed a fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom. His wisdom comes from getting to know God and spending time with Him. God wants us to have wisdom, but we need to want it ourselves. We need to ask God for it.

   *James 1:5- If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.*

2. **Word of Knowledge**

   This person has gained understanding and discernment from God’s Word and his relationship with Christ. God has revealed biblical insights to him that will enable him to live a godly life and to help others live for God. These insights do not come from being lazy, but from diligent study...
of God’s Word. The knowledge that he has gained from the Scriptures, enables him to know what to do in multitudes of difficult situations. The word of knowledge is the practical application of Bible truth to every day circumstances.

* Psalm 119:130-The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.

It is when we are ignorant of Bible truths that we make many blunders and mistakes in our lives. This is why we need to study the Word and spend time getting to know God.

* Matthew 22:29- Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.

3. Faith

This kind of unusual faith is the kind that moves a person to act and it produces results that honor the Lord. It is the kind of faith that moves mountains. This faith expects great things from God and attempts great things for God. John described it in his epistle.

* 1 John 5:4- For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.

The person with this gift has learned to visualize what God wants to accomplish and trusts God to do it by His leading and by His provision. His faith has developed from his time spent in God’s Word.

* Romans 10:17- So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

George Mueller was a man with the gift of faith. In fifty years, he received and disbursed 6 ½ million dollars in his orphanage ministry in Bristol, England. He received the funds without telling anyone his needs except the Lord. He was a great prayer warrior.

4. Healing

This person has learned to help others remove diseases from the spirit, the soul, or the body through the ministry of God’s Word and Holy Spirit. The person who has diseases of the spirit is afflicted with guilt, greed, hate, jealousy, and bitterness. Those who have diseases in their soul are afflicted with depression, discouragement, worry, and other attitudes that are very damaging. These attitudes have destructive effects upon a person’s body. Many times, when there is healing in the spirit or soul, it tends to lead to physical healing.

At the dawn of the church, the gift of physical healing was manifested through the apostles who were granted this ability by the Lord. It was a supernatural gift.
Chapter 9...Bringing Clarity to a Confusing Issue...12:1-11

* Acts 5:12a- And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people;
* Acts 5:15-16... Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them. 16 There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one.

Today, God continues to heal people through answered prayer, but as far as we know, no one has the ability to heal a person of leprosy, blindness, deafness, or lameness by laying hands on them. If someone did have this gift, the world would be at their door step. It is interesting to note that those who claim to be faith healers avoid hospitals and sanatoriums like the plague. If they were like the Lord, they would seek out those that needed healing.

5. Miracles

This person is especially gifted in his prayer life which results in natural or supernatural events with precise timing in order to bring glory to God. The person with this gift is especially sensitive to Holy Spirit’s direction in prayer and realizes that any miracle is accomplished by God’s power.

* Romans 8:26-Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.
* Zechariah 4:6b...Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.

Do miracles happen today? Of course they do. Miracles are possible when they are necessary and the Lord is the One that determines whether they are necessary or not. Miracles occur when God wants them to occur.

* Jeremiah 33:3- Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.

6. Prophecy

The person with this gift brings to light the secret motives of the heart. He is given the ability, like the Old Testament prophets, to courageously declare a message of God for His people. He speaks with authority as he warns, rebukes, encourages, or exhorts others. His message is based on the Scriptures, not new revelation from God.
7. Discerning of Spirits

The person with this gift is able to recognize what is of God and what is of this world, the flesh, or the devil. If any in the church in Corinth possessed this gift, they were not using it. The Holy Spirit enables him to discern what is truth and what is a lie, to search into a person’s heart and know a man’s purpose, feelings, or views.

The discerning of spirits was important in the early church since Satan tried to counterfeit the work of God and the Word of God. That which is valuable is counterfeited. Satan has endeavored to counterfeit the gifts of the spirit in order to confuse the church and get them sidetracked from reaching the lost for the Lord. He has been doing a pretty good job, too. Today, the Spirit especially uses the written Word to give us discernment.

* 1 John 4:1-6.... Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. 2 Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: 3 And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world. 4 Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. 5 They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. 6 We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.

8. Different Kinds of Tongues

This gift enables the believer to glorify God through language and through music. In the early church, people were given the ability to speak and understand a living, foreign language or tongue especially for the purpose of reaching people for Christ with the gospel. This gift was used by the Lord to help establish the church in the beginning, especially with the Jews who required a sign.

* Acts 2:6-11....Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. 7 And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? 8 And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? 9 Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, 10
Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes. 11 Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.

It is interesting to note that Charismatic churches emphasize the gift of tongues the most, when the apostle Paul listed it as the least important gift. In fact, Paul said this gift would cease and it did when the Jewish people continued to harden their hearts against the gospel that was preached by the apostles.

* 1 Corinthians 13:8a... Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease....

Beloved, all the different kinds of spiritual gifts that God has given to us are for the purpose of ministering to other people. We are to care for others.

A man named Kevin Miller spoke of his friend named Joe who was an executive and did a lot of business traveling. One day when Joe was on a flight, he commented to himself, “I cannot believe this flight crew. They are the most attentive, responsive flight crew that I've ever seen.” So, toward the end of the flight, he stopped one of the flight crew members and said, "Excuse me, I don't mean to bother you, but I fly a lot, and I have never seen a flight crew this. You are the most engaged, enthusiastic, service-oriented flight crew that I've ever seen."

The female flight attendant got a little smile on her face as she bent down and whispered to my friend Joe, "Thank you, sir, but for that you can thank the woman seated back there in 12B." She paused, nodded her head slightly towards seat 12B, and continued, "You see, sir, the woman in seat 12B is the head supervisor for all of the flight attendants for our airlines. And she's on our flight!"

Beloved, when we understand and are conscious of the presence of Christ in our lives, when we comprehend that He is present and watching us “on our flight” if you please, it will revolutionize the way we serve other people and it will motivate us to use the spiritual gifts that God has given to us. Understanding the fact that we will give an accounting of our lives to Him will motivate us to be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

* Romans 14:12-So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.
Chapter 10
What is Your Spiritual Gift?
1 Corinthians 12

We have been addressing the issue of spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12. What we want to do here is provide insights that will help you to discover your spiritual gift. In this message we will actually go into more detail about the traits of the seven motivational gifts. Hopefully, you will have a better idea of your own gift and better understanding of the gifts of others and why they act and think the way they do.

So how does a Christian discover his or her spiritual gift? First of all, realize that God wants you to know your gift. It is not classified “Top Secret” or just for super-Christians that wear a big “S” on the front of their T-shirts.

Secondly, obedience to God’s Word is vital if you are going to discern the identity of your gift. Most Christians are ignorant of their gift because of their lack of concern to obey God’s Word and do His will for their lives. Your spiritual gift is given to you to help other people and to meet needs. The needs that you see and burden you will begin to reveal the nature of your gift. Your spiritual gift will make you sensitive to certain kinds of needs. For example, givers are sensitive to financial needs. Teachers will share solutions from God’s Word when problems arise. Chaos, confusion, or disorganization will grab the attention of the administrator to correct the problem.

Thirdly, devote yourself to do your best to meet the needs you see. As you do this, you will find that you may do some things better than others because you are gifted in a certain area.

Last of all, by examining the traits of each gift, it will give you understanding of what gift you possess. That’s what we want to begin now in this message. We want to look at the predominant traits of each
of the seven motivational gifts which move people to action. Many of these principles are from lecture notes taken at a seminar I attended in 1977 from the Institute of Basic Youth Conflicts in Dallas, Texas. As we go through these gifts, determine which traits describe you.

I. Those with the Gift of Giving

1. Their Detection

High pressure appeals for money tend to turn off the giver. He has no problem in a need being presented, but does not want to be put on a “guilt trip” in matters of giving. He also looks for financial needs that other people tend to miss.

2. Their Desire to Be a Blessing

Even when a need is not obvious, a giver may still be moved by the Lord’s leading to give. When he finds out that his gift was an answer to prayer, it is a confirmation to him that he was following God’s direction and will. His heart’s desire is to use what God has given to him to further God’s work and be a source of strength to others in need.

3. Their Desire to Be an Encouragement

It is the desire of a giver to also encourage others to give by their example. He wants others to learn the joy of giving. To encourage others, the giver may anonymously provide matching funds to motivate people to give. People do tend to give better if someone has offered a challenge to match the gifts.

4. Their Distribution tends to be Secret to Avoid Dependency

Givers want people to look to the Lord for their needs and praise Him for their provisions. They will find ways to give so that others will not become lazy or dependent upon them. In order to do this, they will usually give anonymously to others in order to receive a full reward from the Lord and fulfill Matthew 6:1-4.

*Matthew 6:1-4...Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. 2 Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. 3 But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: 4 That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.*

Charles Spurgeon and his wife, according to a story in the Chaplain magazine, would sell, but refused to give away, the eggs their chickens
laid. Even close relatives were told, "You may have them if you pay for them." As a result some people labeled the Spurgeons as greedy and grasping people. They accepted the criticisms without defending themselves, and only after Mrs. Spurgeon died was the full story revealed. All the profits from the sale of eggs went to support two elderly widows. Because the Spurgeons were unwilling to let their left hand know what the right hand was doing, they endured the attacks in silence.

5. Durable Gifts are Sought

Givers are motivated to provide gifts of good quality or durability. They want their gift to last a while. What they need to be careful about is controlling others or a ministry if they sponsor a project. They need to give to the Lord without any strings attached.

6. Their Discernment

A giver has a knack at discerning what investments are good ones. It is his goal to use what God has given to him, whether it is his possessions, his money, or his time, to further God’s work.

7. Their Doubts

Those folks who are givers need continual reassurance that their choices to give to others are according to God’s direction or will for their lives. They don’t want any doubts about what God wants them to do. To remove any doubts, they will present themselves to the Lord as a living sacrifice and then their gift to the Lord. They follow the example of the Christians in Macedonia.

* 2 Corinthians 8:5- And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.

A mother wanted to teach her daughter a moral lesson. She gave the little girl a quarter and a dollar for church. She told her daughter, "Put whichever one you want in the collection plate and keep the other for yourself."

When they were coming out of church, the mother asked her daughter which amount she had given. "Well," said the little girl, "I was going to give the dollar, but just before the collection the man in the pulpit said that we should all be cheerful givers. I knew I'd be a lot more cheerful if I gave the quarter, so I did." This humorous story illustrates the plight of many adult believers who have the same basic attitude. They have not learned to give themselves to the Lord first and have not learned the joy of giving generously.
II. Those with the Gift of Exhorting

1. Contact is Desired Directly

Those who have the gift of exhorting need to see the facial expressions of those they are speaking to in order to discern their response and to reach the goal of having a positive result. When we look at Paul, his ministry involved a lot of personal contact.

* 1 Thessalonians 2:17- But we, brethren, being taken from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavoured the more abundantly to see your face with great desire.

* 1 Thessalonians 3:10- Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith?

2. They Cheer Others Up

Exhorters will use the testimony of others to help the people they are encouraging to see their potential for consistent victory in their walk with God. In Paul’s case, he used the example of one church to challenge another church. The apostle also claimed to be the chief of sinners, but pointed to God’s grace that enabled him to change and be what God wanted him to be. This in turn, gave hope to other believers.

* 1 Timothy 1:15- This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.

* 2 Corinthians 9:2- For I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many.

3. Their Challenge

Exhorters motivate people to act upon the truth and put it into practice by clearly and logically explaining it. When we look at Paul, we find him reasoning with Greeks, with Jews, and with folks like King Agrippa.

* Acts 26:28 Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.

What they need to guard against is discouragement if people do not respond quickly to their challenges or steps of action.

4. Complications or Circumstances are Carefully Examined

In order to find out practical principles for daily living, exhorters desire to find out the cause and effect sequences of good and bad circumstances. In other words, doing this and this and this, will lead to this and this. They will study the Word of God and the circumstances of people to find important insights for daily living. What they must guard
against is neglecting doctrinal teaching which may not have immediate practical applications.

5. Their Clear Conscience

People do not grow in the Lord when they are hampered by guilt. They do not minister effectively if they struggle with it. This is why a clear conscience between God and men is important to the exhorter. His goal is to be transparent in order to have an inroad in helping other struggling believers or reaching people for Christ. Paul repeatedly spoke of having a clear conscience and was transparent in his ministry.

*Acts 24:16- And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.*

*1 Corinthians 9:22- To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.*

6. Their Commitment to Spiritual Growth

The goal of exhorters is the spiritual growth of the people they are trying to help. In order to achieve this goal, exhorters will get personally involved with the ones they are encouraging.

*Colossians 1:28- Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:*

7. Their Contemplation and Counsel

Edward Steichen, who eventually became one of the world's most renowned photographers, almost gave up on the day he shot his first pictures. At 16, young Steichen bought a camera and took 50 photos. Only one turned out -- a portrait of his sister at the piano. Edward's father thought that was a poor showing. But his mother insisted that the photograph of his sister was so beautiful that it more than compensated for 49 failures. Her encouragement convinced the youngster to stick with his new hobby. He stayed with it for the rest of his life, but it had been a close call. What tipped the scales? The vision to spot excellence in the midst of a lot of failure.

This is the gift of the exhorter. He can spot excellence in the midst of failure. Exhorters have a unique ability to see the spiritual accomplishments for other Christians. They can offer practical counsel and insights to help believers achieve spiritual growth and goals. The advice that is given is for the purpose of removing any obstacles that would hinder the Christian from growing in the Lord and being his or her best for God. Notice Paul’s counsel to Timothy.
*2 Timothy 2:22-23... Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. 23 But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes.

8. Their Comprehension

Exhorters have the ability to discern the spiritual maturity of another believer. Because they have this kind of discernment, they are motivated to find out the hindrances in folks that are not growing spiritually and help them to get victory. Exhorters have a great desire to do this. They also enjoy encouraging those believers that are thriving in their spiritual growth. An example of this kind of discernment or comprehension is seen in Paul when he told the Corinthian believers that they were carnal and not spiritual (1 Corinthians 3:1). The epistle of 1 Corinthians addresses their hindrances.

III. Those With the Gift of Serving

1. Their Avoidances and Assets

Servers avoid “red tape” or unnecessary obstacles in order to get a task completed. In order to avoid setbacks and delays, he will use his own money to finish the job. Once a task has begun, he wants to get it finished and is willing to take the time, the strength, and money to complete the task that will benefit someone else. This is what gives him joy.

What the server must carefully discern is God’s leading in helping someone. Sometimes God allows people to suffer financially because of sin in their lives. The purpose of the suffering is to bring the person to repentance. Such was the case of the prodigal son. If someone met the physical needs of the prodigal while he was in the pig pen, his repentance and return home would have been hindered.

2. Their Arduousness in Turning Down Requests

Servers have arduousness or difficulty in saying “No” to the needs of others. If asked for help, the server feels obligated to meet the need. If they are not careful, however, they can get too many brands in the fire and tasks are not completed or done correctly. They can also burn out physically.

3. Their Attentiveness

Needs that might seem insignificant to most people, grasp the attention of servers. Most of the time the needs are physical needs. Servers know, however, that if they can meet those needs, they will
encourage and lift up those folks they are helping. In so doing, they will be honored and exalted. Jesus said the greatest among us is the one who serves. That truth was seen in WW2 in Washington D.C.

Franklin Roosevelt's closest adviser during much of his presidency was a man named Harry Hopkins. During World War II, when his influence with Roosevelt was at its peak, Hopkins held no official Cabinet position. Moreover, Hopkins's closeness to Roosevelt caused many to regard him as a shadowy, sinister figure. As a result he was a major political liability to the President.

A political foe once asked Roosevelt, "Why do you keep Hopkins so close to you? You surely realize that people distrust him and resent his influence." Roosevelt replied, "Someday you may well be sitting here where I am now as President of the United States. And when you are, you'll be looking at that door over there, knowing that practically everybody who walks through it wants something out of you. You'll learn what a lonely job this is, and you'll discover the need for somebody like Harry Hopkins, who asks for nothing except to serve you."

Winston Churchill rated Hopkins as one of the half-dozen most powerful men in the world in the early 1940s. And the sole source of Hopkins's power was his willingness to serve.

When we look in the New Testament, we find that Timothy had the gift of serving. Notice what Paul said of him.

* Philippians 2:20- For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state.

4. Their Appeasement

Servers find great joy and contentment in helping others, as they give joy, peace of mind, encouragement, and strength to them. The server also finds peace in helping others be more productive in the work that God has called them to do. Paul was able to carry out his ministry because of the help he received from Timothy.

5. Their Alertness

Servers have a great ability in remembering the special interests of the people they serve. Days like birthdays and anniversaries are special to the servers. They also remember the favorite things of those they serve.

6. Their Additions

Servers are willing to go the extra mile or do more than what is expected of them because they know it will bring joy to the one they are serving and they will also be demonstrating that their service is for the
Lord. What they must guard against is neglecting their family as they serve others.

7. Appealing Attractions to Servers

Servers are especially attracted to needs that are immediate. Long-range planning or projects that seem to have little visible progress tax the patience of servers. Servers prefer short-range projects.

8. The Appreciation and Approval for Servers

When gratitude and thanks are expressed to servers, those things confirm to them that their labor is necessary, valuable, and blessed by God. This is why servers enjoy and prefer working with a person rather than for a person. They enjoy the fellowship and the feedback they get from bringing joy to other people.

During World War II, England needed to increase its production of coal. Winston Churchill called together labor leaders to enlist their support. At the end of his presentation he asked them to picture in their minds a parade which he knew would be held in Picadilly Circus after the war.

First, he said, would come the sailors who had kept the vital sea lanes open. Then would come the soldiers who had come home from Dunkirk and then gone on to defeat Rommel in Africa. Then would come the pilots who had driven the Luftwaffe from the sky.

Last of all, he said, would come a long line of sweat-stained, soot-streaked men in miner's caps. Someone would cry from the crowd, 'And where were you during the critical days of our struggle?' And from ten thousand throats would come the answer, 'We were deep in the earth with our faces to the coal.'

Not all the jobs in a church are prominent and glamorous. But it is often the people with their "faces to the coal" who help the church accomplish its mission. The appreciation they are given goes a long way. Don’t forget to express your gratitude to your spouse, fellow workers that work for you and with you, and for those who serve you.

IV. Those with the Gift of Mercy

1. Their Discernment

The person with this gift is able to discern people that are hurting and are able to share their pain.

2. Their Devotion

Those with the gift of mercy demonstrate great loyalty to their friends, especially if they are attacked by others. What they have to
guard against is becoming bitter toward those who are offensive to others, especially their friends.

3. Their Desire
Those with the gift of mercy have a great desire for close friendships. They need physical closeness and fellowship in order to be reassured of their acceptance. John was one in the New Testament that had this gift. He dearly loved the Lord and leaned upon Him at the Last Supper.

4. They’re Drawn toward Prophets
They are drawn toward those who have the gift of prophecy. The firmness of the prophet in presenting truth is balanced out by the love of those with mercy. When you look in the New Testament, you find that John spent more time with Peter than any of the other disciples.

5. Their Decisions
It is difficult for those with this gift to be firm or decisive because they don’t want to offend anyone. They base their decisions on the benefits they will bring to others. If they see that their lack of decisiveness or firmness will bring greater harm or hurt to someone, they will decisive.

6. Their Deep Sensitivity
The gift of mercy enables a person to have a deep sensitivity in detecting genuine love.

7. Their Disposition
Those with the gift of mercy have a desire to remove the source of that which brings hurt to people. When you look at John’s first letter, you will find that he urged Christians to cease hating and hurting one another.

* 1 John 3:11-For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.
* 1 John 3:15-Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.

8. The Distressed Are Attracted to Them
Believers who have the gift of mercy are attentive and alert to those going through distressful times, whether it is mental or emotional distress. They demonstrate empathy, sensitivity, understanding, and responsiveness to those who are going through the ringer. This understanding, in turn, causes those who are distressed to be drawn toward those who have this gift and to confide in them.
V. Those with the Gift of Organization

In a Peanuts cartoon Lucy demanded that Linus change TV channels, threatening him with her fist if he didn't. "What makes you think you can walk right in here and take over?" asks Linus.

"These five fingers," says Lucy. "Individually they're nothing but when I curl them together like this into a single unit, they form a weapon that is terrible to behold." "Which channel do you want?" asks Linus. Turning away, he looks at his fingers and says, "Why can't you guys get organized like that?"

Beloved, there is a lot that can be accomplished when you get organized. Those who have the gift of organization are equipped to accomplish great things. Let's note some of their traits.

1. Their Ability

Organizers have the ability to visualize a completed job and what it will take to bring it to completion. Nehemiah was a man in the Bible that seemed to possess this ability. If he does not have the authority to make decisions, he will have to guard against discouragement if his suggestions are not heeded.

2. Their Adequacy

Organizers are good at delegating tasks. They know what responsibilities to "farm out" to others and what they need to do personally. They also have discernment in knowing which workers are going to need assistance in the job that needs to be done.

3. Their Associates

Organizers need to know the people they can count upon in order to reach the goal. Faithful helpers are crucial in completing the task. Organizers are sensitive to loyalty and would rather have fewer workers that they can count upon than many workers that are unreliable. Solomon spoke of the frustration and pain that come from unreliable people.

* Proverbs 25:19- Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble is like a broken tooth, and a foot out of joint.

4. Their Adamant Resolve

When organizers sink their teeth into a task, they are willing to endure resistance to their leadership, whether that resistance comes from inside the ranks or outside. Nehemiah faced continual opposition, but completed the job anyway. What an organizer needs to guard against, however, is to not reject good suggestions or ignore the valid hurts or grievances of others working under him or above him. Ignoring such matters can cause the organizer to become harsh, resentful, and bitter.
His actions can also create bitterness in others. Organizers also need to be sure that their instructions are clear and explained. When those who carry out their instructions do a good job, they need to make sure they demonstrate praise and appreciation for those who worked so hard.

5. Their Adeptness
Organizers tend to be very efficient workers because of the preparations they make before they engage the task at hand. They check their inventories to make sure they have what they need to get the job done quickly which include materials, laborers, permits, and funds. When we look at Nehemiah, we find that he secured the wood that he would need from the royal forest before he started reconstruction in Jerusalem.

Because organizers know what they want to accomplish, they are able to evaluate requests quickly and make decisive decisions. Others tried to distract Nehemiah in his task of rebuilding, but he quickly and firmly turned down those requests.

* Nehemiah 6:2-3... That Sanballat and Geshem sent unto me, saying, Come, let us meet together in some one of the villages in the plain of Ono. But they thought to do me mischief. 3 And I sent messengers unto them, saying, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?

6. Their Achievements
Organizers are very gifted in taking projects that seem almost impossible and break them down into goals that are achievable. Nehemiah was able to apply this method when he led his people in rebuilding Jerusalem. The task of rebuilding the walls was broken down into small sections that each family could complete.

7. Their Alertness
The organizer is alert to those tiny details which are vital in order for the job to be completed properly. He guards against distractions that would hinder him from accomplishing his goals.

8. Their Aims
Organizers are happy when the job is properly done and everything is where it should be. They will endeavor to encourage their helpers to complete the task with praise, approval, challenges, and with reproof. Reaching the goal gives the organizer fulfillment. Once the job is completed, the organizer needs to be sure to have a plan to maintain the completed project.
VI. Those with the Gift of Prophecy

The gift of prophecy does not refer to the ability to predict the future. The following traits describe this gift and those have it.

1. Their Speech

Those who have the prophecy gift, referred to as prophets, need to verbalize their thoughts, especially in matters of right and wrong. They have a special ability to articulate what is right and what is wrong. They speak up and believe the first step of restoring someone is the exposure of sin.

Exposing sin should lead to repentance. That’s fine, as long as there are serious efforts to restore the offender. Prophets also need to be careful about dwelling on negative things all the time because it will rob them of their joy. In the New Testament, we find that Peter had the prophet traits.

2. Their Search for Justice

In order that justice will be done and people will be warned about the woes of wickedness or injustice, prophets will be firm and stern in dealing with sin. They will cast out from fellowship those that sin. Prophets know that a little leaven will affect the whole lump.

3. Their Speedy Conclusions

Those with the gift of prophecy tend to come to quick conclusions about what they see and hear others do. They also have a tendency to express their viewpoints before others say anything. It is interesting to note that when you look at Peter, you find that he spoke first more than any other disciple. If the prophet is not careful, his speedy conclusions can lead to mistakes because he does not get all the facts about a person or situation. Solomon warned us about this.

* Proverbs 18:13- He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.

4. Their Straightforwardness

Prophets are just as open about their own weaknesses, failures, and mistakes as they want other people to be about theirs. It was Peter who said to the Lord, “Depart from me for I am a sinful man O Lord” (Luke 5:8). Because they are open about their faults they need to be on guard for depression. Prophets tend to be very critical of themselves and feel totally useless and worthless when they flub up and fail. This leads to discouragement, depression, and quitting.
5. Their Surrender and Sold Out Attitude to a Task
When prophets make the decision to commit to a task or cause, they jump in with both feet. They are quick to respond to opportunities that might arise. Recall what Peter did when he saw Jesus walking on the water. Peter jumped in the water and wanted to do it, too.

6. Their Sense of Deception
Those with the gift of prophecy have a unique ability to sense deception. They can sense when someone is not what they claim to be or appear to be. When deception is discovered, prophets react harshly. Peter sensed the deception of Ananias and Sapphira and questioned them about their claims (Acts 5).

7. Their Stand for the Truth
When it comes to the truth, prophets will stand for what is true and right even if it means losing friends. They will not compromise the truth. When Jesus asked the disciples if they would leave Him like the crowd, it was Peter who spoke up. Notice John 6:67-69.
* John 6:67-69... Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? 68 Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. 69 And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.

8. Their Suffering
When it comes to doing what is right or standing for the truth, prophets are willing to suffer and pay the price for doing what is right. They do not want to fail in this area. Peter rejoiced and felt it was a honor to suffer for Christ.
* Acts 5:29-Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.
* Acts 5:40-41... And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. 41 And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.

VII. Those with the Gift of Teaching
1. Their Confirmation
Those with the gift of teaching desire to confirm or verify important statements when they hear them. The reason they do this is because they want to make sure that the statements are accurate and true. Teachers will go to primary sources to validate truth and recognize the works of
authorities to validate statements that others make. For example, the Berean Christians daily checked Paul’s statements with passages in the Old Testament.

*Acts 17:11- These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

Luke seems to be an example in the New Testament of one who had this gift. Luke’s motivation for writing the Gospel of Luke to Theophilus was to provide as much information about the Lord and His ministry and confirm the facts of what had been told about His life.

* Luke 1:4 -That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.

In his quest for checking the facts, the teacher will gain knowledge. In so doing, he will need to guard against pride because knowledge can puff up a person’s ego.

2. Their Concern

Believers who have the gift of teaching are very alert toward false prophets or teachers. They desire to know the background of a person before they listen to them.

3. Their Comfort

When material is presented in an orderly fashion and sequence, teachers feel much more comfortable. They enjoy knowing the events in the order that they occurred. In his quest for verifying statements, the teacher will need to make sure that he does not miss the practical applications of what he is studying.

4. Their Cheer

Teachers love to research information almost as much as teaching it. When they speak, they are motivated to give as much information as possible to the subject at hand. When you look at Luke’s gospel, you will find it is the longest of all the gospels. Luke includes information in his writings that was left out in the other gospels. In his quest for researching material, the teacher will need to guard against totally isolating himself from people.

5. Their Conciseness and Clarity

Teachers enjoy giving details or information which are not mentioned or noticed by others. They want to present a clearer picture of events or circumstances for those they teach. Interesting facts like names, descriptions of events, physical conditions, customs, historical facts, and conversations are shared by those with the gift of teaching.
6. Their Clarification of Misunderstanding or Mistakes

If a teacher discovers that his information is incorrect, he will not only accept his mistake, but he will go back to his research and try to find where he made his mistake. That is important to the teacher because he has a passion to get the facts straight and get the information right. If others have strayed from the truth, he will use the same steps to help them find out where they got sidetracked from the truth.

Hopefully, this study will give you better understanding about yourself, your spiritual gift, and better understanding about other people and why they act and think the way they do.
Chapter 11
Who do You Think You Are?
1 Corinthians 12:12-19

For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. 13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. 14 For the body is not one member, but many. 15 If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? 16 And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? 17 If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? 18 But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. 19 And if they were all one member, where were the body?

On April 11th, 2012, Yahoo News reported that a newborn baby in Argentina was found in the morgue by her mother twelve hours after the doctors on the hospital staff declared the baby to be dead. Analia Bouquet gave birth to her fifth child, but the baby was born prematurely and thought to be dead. Two hours after the hospital finally gave the parents the death certificate, they wanted to see the baby one more time and take her picture, so they went to the morgue.

The little casket containing the baby was placed on a stretcher. The father, Fabian Veron, got a crow-bar and very carefully and very slowly pried open the nailed lid to the tiny casket. Analia looked at her baby’s tiny hand and then uncovered her little face. That’s when the baby let out her first little cry. Her baby was ALIVE!

The parents have named this little baby Luz Milagros which means “Miracle Light.” She is still in critical condition but is improving. The deputy provincial health minister announced that five medical professionals involved in the case have been suspended, pending further investigation.
"At the moment we have no explanation," hospital director Jose Luis Meirino told the paper. “The baby was attended to by obstetricians, gynecologists and a neonatologist. They all reached the same conclusion that this girl was stillborn."

In spite of the agreement of all these different people, they were wrong. Such was the case of a large number of the believers in the Corinth church. Many of these Christians were confused about the issue of spiritual gifts and the issue of their own importance. Their confusion created division and disruption among the people instead of unity, peace, and joy.

As we go through this portion of 1 Corinthians, the question that comes to my mind is, “Who do you think you are?” It comes to mind because of their pride, because of their position, and because of their purpose.

Their pride prompts the question, “WHO do YOU think you are?” Their position in the body of Christ and their purpose also prompts the question. Paul wanted them to see their role and the role of other believers in the church. So as we begin, let me ask the question in a slightly different way, “Who do you THINK you are?” Let’s begin and notice verse twelve.

I. The Body of Christ  12:12

*For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.*

Just as the human body, that was made by God, has many different part or “members,” all the different parts form one body of a person. The different parts cannot be cut off from the body and survive. The same truth applies to the church body of Jesus Christ. The body of Christ is composed of many different kinds of saved people who have different gifts that can contribute to the spiritual health, growth, and maturity of other believers. The unifying factor of all believers is Jesus Christ. He is our Savior.

The Holy Spirit indwells all Christians, making them brothers and sisters in Christ. Without our Lord, we would be nothing and would be unable to change, to grow, to be victorious over sin, to minister to one another, and reach the lost for Christ. Jesus made this very clear in the gospel of John.
*John 15:5* - *I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.*

We need the Lord in order to be what God wants us to be, but we also need one another. We need the love, encouragement, support, prayers, and challenges that are provided from other believers. Let me illustrate. There is a story of a little teeny pygmy who was standing over a rhinoceros that he killed. This was an odd sight to behold, a big, violent rhinoceros under the feet of a little teeny pygmy. A guy saw this dead rhinoceros and this little pygmy hovering over it and said, "Did you kill that?" The little pygmy said, "Yeah, I killed it."

Curious, the man asked, "So how did you, a little tiny pygmy, kill this rhinoceros?" He answered, "With my club. Yep! I killed this rhinoceros with my club." The man was still thoroughly confused, "Well, how big is your club?" The pygmy said, "There are about a hundred of us in my club." In other words, he was surrounded by folk who had the same belief system and worked together so that they could handle being attacked by a rhinoceros.

The same truth holds for the church. As a church family, we need one another and we can accomplish great tasks in the ministry of the church when everyone gets involved in the ministry. If you are not sure what to do in the church, you can always pick up a neighbor, a friend, or family member who does not attend church, and bring them in your car with you. That is a great start. If you are unwilling or feel you are beyond serving the Lord Jesus Christ in your church in some way, then let me ask, "Who do you think you are?"

**II. The Baptism of the Holy Spirit**  
12:13

*For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.*

No matter what our background is, Jew, Gentile, red, yellow, black, brown, white, slave, or free, all believers are baptized by the Holy Spirit into one body. Let me add here that this baptism does not refer to water baptism. Baptism by immersion does not save a person. It is an act of obedience to the command of Christ. AFTER a person is saved, he is to follow the Lord in “Believers Baptism” as a testimony to others that he has put his faith in Christ.
Chapter 11...Who do You Think You Are?...12:12-19

Baptism of the Spirit refers to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, who comes into the life of the believer at the very moment of salvation. This baptism is the work of Christ, not man. It makes a Christian a part of the body of Jesus Christ. There are no partial Christians or partial members of the body of Christ. The work of Christ is complete, once and for all. You only need to be saved once.

* Galatians 3:26-27... For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

Incorrect or errant teaching on the baptism of the Holy Spirit has created a great deal of confusion today among Christians. When a person puts their faith in Christ, at that moment he is baptized by the Holy Spirit. That means that ALL Christians have been baptized by the Spirit. This baptism is not for the spiritual elite. In fact, there is no such creature as the “spiritual elite.”

There are some today, however, that have taught that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is something you search for because you don’t have it, yet. They teach that this is a second blessing from the Holy Spirit that only certain elite Christians possess or attain, and others do not. My question to a person who believes this is, “Who do you think you are?”

This doctrine is false and it also creates frustration, disappointment, and an attitude of pride. People who think they have received a second blessing of the Holy Spirit demonstrate pride because they are claiming something that they have achieved and believe others have not received. Yet, they cannot state from Scripture how to get this “so called” second blessing or baptism of the Spirit.

Those who believe the teaching about the second blessing state that you know you have received it when you speak in tongues. Some go as far to state that if you do not speak in tongues, the Holy Spirit is not in you. Such teaching is false and a distortion of the gospel.

Let me add here that speaking in tongues was the miraculous ability to speak or understand a foreign language. It was one of the temporary sign gifts in the birth of the church to convince unbelieving Jews that the message of the gospel was of God. Three thousand did recognize this sign on the day of Pentecost and put their faith in Christ.

As time passed, however, the Jewish people became entrenched in their unbelief and rejection of Christ. They became adamant in the rejection of the ministry of the apostles, so this sign gift ceased just as Paul foretold. They rejected the sign of the miraculous ability to speak
in a foreign language.

* 1 Corinthians 13:8a- Charity never faileth: but whether there be
prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease....

Those who feel they have not received a second blessing of grace or
the Spirit feel frustrated because they feel they have not experienced all
that God has for them. This causes the believer to not enjoy what he
already possesses. Listen, if you are searching for a second blessing, you
are seeking something that does not exist, and you cannot enjoy your
salvation and your relationship with God because you are looking for
something else.

Beloved, when you were saved, you got all of the Holy Spirit you
needed. He indwells you now. There are no partially indwelt Christians.
The Holy Spirit is not on an installment plan in your life.

* John 3:34- For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for
God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.

You got all of Holy Spirit when you were saved. This is why we
are not commanded in the Bible to seek a second blessing of the Spirit.
You do not seek for that which you already possess.

* Romans 8:9- But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that
the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of
Christ, he is none of his.

When you put your faith in Christ, you got all of the Holy Spirit, but
He may not have all of you. This is where the fulness of the Holy Spirit
comes in and should not be confused with the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

* Ephesians 5:18- And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be
filled with the Spirit;

The fulness of the Holy Spirit refers to the control of the Holy
Spirit over our lives. In other words, “Does the Holy Spirit have all of
you? Are you yielded or surrendered to Him?” We are to be yielded to
Him each day. That means this experience is to be repeated hourly, daily,
and weekly, where the baptism of the Holy Spirit happens once, at the
moment of conversion.

Once a person is saved, the Holy Spirit indwells the believer
forever. You don’t get saved, lose your salvation, get saved, and lose
your salvation. The Holy Spirit doesn’t come into your heart and then
leave, come in again, and leave. You are eternally secure in Christ. Your
heart is not a revolving door.

* John 10:28- And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never
perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.
How does a person know if he is indwelt by the Holy Spirit?
* There will be spiritual growth and maturity.
* There will be joy in the Lord and submission to Christ.
* There will be an increase in understanding and love for God’s Word.
* The person’s life will be Christlike.
* There will be power for witnessing to others about Christ.

One of my favorite programs when I was a kid was a show called “Candid Camera.” It was a very funny show. On one episode, I remember them trying an experiment. As a practical joke, a young lady at the wheel of a beautiful car was instructed to drive down a hill into a gas station and ask the attendant to check the water and oil. The car was a beauty and had everything you could desire except one thing. It had no engine. The young lady coasted down the hill into the gas station and asked the attendant, “Would you please check my oil and water.” While the candid camera was shooting the film, the attendant opened the hood and the camera caught the expression of the man. With a puzzled, shocked, and confused look, he said, “Miss, you ain’t got no motor!”

The car had everything except no power. This is the case of many believers. They have no power because they are not yielded to the Holy Spirit’s control. Does this describe you? We are not to seek a second blessing, but we are to seek the fulness of the Holy Spirit every day. We are to do our best to be yielded to His control over us. If you don’t think that yielding to the Holy Spirit is an important matter, then let me ask again, “Who do you think you are?”

III. The Bad Attitudes and Beef of Bleating Believers 12:14-17

T

his portion reveals that many of the Corinthian believers were evidently not happy campers. They were dissatisfied with
their spiritual gifts causing them to have rotten attitudes, stinkin’ thinkin’, and beefing with bitterness. These folks that griped were dominated by self-conceit and self-centeredness. What caused all of this mess? Why were they bleating like a bunch of unhappy sheep? There were several problems they had.

1. The Problem of Comparison

By comparing themselves with one another, they became either arrogant with the gifts they possessed or they were disgruntled with the spiritual gifts that others possessed. When Paul writes his second epistle to them, he will warn them about the problems of comparing themselves with others.

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

2. The Problem with Confidence

Those whose gifts were not as glorious as others lacked confidence. They may have thought, “My gift is not as important as others.” Some folks may have said, “I don’t have any gifts at all. I am worthless. My life is a waste. What good am I?” While these lacked confidence, others were over-confident, cocky and proud. Solomon warned us about the problems of pride.

* Proverbs 16:18- Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.

Those who feel worthless need to recall the words and challenge of David.

* Psalm 139:14- I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well.

3. The Problem of Covetousness

Some of the believers were jealous or envious of the gifts of other Christians. They coveted the spiritual gifts that other believers were given by the Lord. In so doing, they were not enjoying or using the gifts they possessed. They were wasting away. Covetousness not only involves money or possessions, it can involve people or positions. Paul warned us to guard against it.

* Luke 12:15- And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.
4. The Problem of their Conclusions

Many of these folks came to the conclusion that if they had the spiritual gifts of others, they would be happy or content. Contentment, however, comes from being yielded to the Lord and doing what He wants you to do. It comes from accepting God’s will for your life, whatever it may be. It comes from finding your joy from His presence in your life.

* Philippians 4:11- Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.
* Hebrews 13:5- Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

5. The Problem with their Commitment

Those who were disgruntled tended to pout, and behaved like kids that don’t get their own way and cry, “I’m going home and not going to play anymore.” Their view of Christ was distorted by the distraction of their discouragement or dander. When a Christian loses his concern about God’s approval of his life, then his life is on a steep slope downward. His commitment to God wanes.

The story is told of a PROFESSIONAL violinist who was giving a concert. When he finished, the crowd jumped up from their seats and gave him a standing ovation. He had delivered a magnificent performance. The young violinist, with tears coming down his cheeks, walked off the stage, dejected. The stagehand saw him and said, "Why are you so sad? Those people are going crazy out there and you are crying. I don't understand."

The musician said, "Do you see the one man in the center down there? He is still sitting." The stagehand said, "Yeah, so what? There are two thousand other people who are standing."

"This is true, but you don't understand. That man down there in the middle is my dad. He's also my violin teacher. If he doesn't stand, it doesn't matter what two thousand other people do."

Beloved, if God doesn't applaud when He sees how you live your life, it doesn't matter what everybody else does or think. May your commitment to Him be a priority in your life and may your realize that HE has entrusted you with certain spiritual gifts for a reason. Those gifts are just as important to the body of Christ as the gifts of others.

Paul illustrated this truth by using the parts of the human body. It is composed of many parts, but they are all important. The foot is just as important as the hand. The ear is just as vital as the eye. Each organ
serves a special purpose and performs an important function that the other organs do not. If the body was a giant eyeball, how would we hear, smell, or touch anything? We couldn’t. This is what Paul was stressing to these folks. Every part is important just as every believer is important in the plan of God, no matter what his or her gift may be.

Jamie Scott tried out for the play at his elementary school. He had his heart set on being one of the main characters, but his mother feared he would not be chosen. On the day the parts were awarded to the children, Jamie's mother and a friend went to pick him up, just in case he was terribly disappointed. When Jamie saw his mother, he rushed up to her, his eyes shining with pride and excitement, and said, "Guess what, Mom. I've been chosen to clap and cheer."

Beloved, may we be like this boy and find excitement with the spiritual gifts that God has given to us, even if it is just clapping and cheering for others. May we be committed to serving the Lord and pleasing Him with our lives.

* 1 Thessalonians 2:4 - But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.

* Galatians 1:10 - For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.

* Ephesians 6:6 - Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;

If the desire to please the Lord with your life is not an important issue to you, let me ask, “Who do you think you are?”

IV. The Business of the Lord and His Basis for Spiritual Gifts 12:18-19

But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. 19 And if they were all one member, where were the body?

Our bodies have many different parts that have been created by God and placed where He wants them. Each organ is part of His intricate design. God does His own business and He does what He thinks best. He does what pleases Him...period. He knows what He is doing whether we like it or not.

All spiritual gifts find their source in the Lord. The gifts that each believer has received are based on His grace for us and His wisdom. So
let me ask, “Who do you think you are?” Realize as a Christian, you belong to God and not yourself. He has made you and bestowed gifts and abilities with you for a reason. Find out His plan for your life and do His will. May your prayer be like David’s.

* Psalm 143:10- Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God: thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness.
Chapter 12
The Impossibility of Independence from God’s Indispensable Saints

1 Corinthians 12:20-31

But now are they many members, yet but one body. 21 And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. 22 Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: 23 And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. 24 For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked:

25 That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. 26 And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. 27 Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. 28 And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. 29 Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? 30 Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret? 31 But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.
When you take on a project, do you like to do it alone or do you like to have people to help you? Answers will vary on this issue. Some folks like to work alone because they enjoy the solitude of being alone and taking their time on the project. Some work alone because they don’t want to bother other people with their tasks.

There are some, however, that shun the company of others or God, because they feel they don’t need anyone’s help, no matter what they do. People who follow this self-sufficient attitude of basically being their own god have adopted a Satanic philosophy that is totally contrary to God’s plan. They have adopted the thinking from William Ernest Henley’s poem, *Invictus*, which states at the end, “I am the captain of my fate; I am the master of my soul.” This attitude of independence is what we are going to hone in on in this message.

If you are not careful, you can begin to adopt an attitude of independence in your heart that avoids relationships with other Christians and God Himself. God has designed believers in Christ to be interdependent with one another and with Him, because that is what develops maturity, ministry, and the manifestation of the Holy Spirit’s work in the lives of Christians.

You are going to have difficulty being a blessing to those who know the Lord if you isolate yourself from them and if you shirk your time with God. This is why going to church and being faithful is so important. You may not feel you need church or that no one needs you. If you think this way, Satan has you right where he wants you. Understand, however, that others need you and you need them. Don’t miss the opportunities that are found in every church service to strengthen, encourage, and love someone else and to receive that encouragement and love.

In this section, Paul shows us the impossibility of independence from God’s indispensable saints. He makes it very clear we need one another and the Lord has equipped us with spiritual gifts and callings that we might have unity, serenity, generosity, hospitality, opportunity, productivity, prosperity, tranquility, vitality, and victory in the church. Let’s begin.
I. Our Dependence Upon One Another  

12:20-24

But now are they many members, yet but one body. 21 And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. 22 Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: 23 And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. 24 For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked:

There are many different kinds of people that have come to know Christ as their Savior, yet, we are ALL one body in Jesus Christ. The body of Christ is not based on denominational tags, it is based on a person’s faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for his salvation. Even though I am a Baptist, I assure you there is no such creature as the “Baptist Bride.” Baptists are not the only ones going to Heaven. In fact, there are many Baptists who are going to Hell because they have never been saved and are relying on their church memberships or their works to get them to Heaven. Beloved, no matter who you are, you must be born again.

Paul deals with the independent spirit of some of the believers in the church by using the parts of the body as an object lesson to teach the important truth of our dependence and reliance upon one another. The eye cannot yell at the hand and say, “I don’t need you buddy.” The head cannot say to the feet, “You guys are not important. Don’t need you folks anymore.” That would be a big mistake, especially if the eye got some dirt in it and needed the hand to get it out, or if the head saw a tornado heading its way and needed the feet to run like crazy for cover. I dare say the head would be saying, “Get moving boys. Get moving NOW!” There would be a real need for sure.

Paul points out that those folks in the body of Christ that appear or seem to be weaker, less important or less noticeable are absolutely essential and necessary for the health of the church body. In fact, this word “necessary” (vs.22) comes from the word anagkaios [an-ang-kah'-yos] which means “what one cannot do without; indispensable or necessary.” Those that appear to be weak in the church, whether they are a little child or an elderly saint of God, they are indispensable.
Paul illustrates this truth by referring to the weaker parts of the body which we honor by trying to protect them. For example, our internal organs like our heart, lungs, and brain are obscure, but vital for survival. God has protected them with a skeleton and skull. We also protect them with helmets or protective padding in physical sports or dangerous activities. We can lose an arm or hand and live, but we cannot survive without a heart or brain. The protection we implement to guard these more delicate, weaker organs, show their importance to us. The attention we give to those who are weak in the church demonstrates their importance, too.

The less honorable or less attractive parts of our body such as a flabby tummy or thighs are given honor by being covered or clothed. The word “bestowed” (vs.23) is from the word peritithemi [per-ee-tith-ay-mee] which means “to place around or to put on a garment.” Along the same lines, the private parts of our bodies that should not be seen are clothed for protection and modesty. Such display would be shameful and immodest. Our private parts have more abundant comeliness or modesty compared to other visible parts of our bodies like our face, hands, or arms which do not require as much covering.

Applying this to the church, those who have unseen ministries in the church are just as important than those who have more visible ministries in the church. The unseen or less visible ones should be greatly cared for and honored just as much as those who are in more prominent ministries.

People may not see the prayer warriors, the janitorial staff, the mowers, the nursery workers, the children’s workers, the money counters, the treasurer, the cooks, or the greeters, but I assure you all of these people play an extremely vital role in this ministry and should be honored and repeatedly thanked for what they do for Christ by all of us. They are an essential part of this ministry even though they may not be readily seen. We all need them. Paul is stressing to us the impossibility of independence from God’s indispensable saints.

Are you important? Yes, you are. Do others really need you? Yes, beloved, they do. Are others important? You bet. Do you really need them? Yes, you do. Some folks, however, don’t feel this way about other people. They are suffering from what I call the “No Need” Syndrome. What is the “No Need” Syndrome and what does it do to a person? How does it develop in a person’s life? When we look through the Bible, we find a number of insights that provide some answers for us. Let’s pull over and park for a bit and look at this in detail.
* The Detriments and Sentiments of the “No Need” Syndrome

1. It Belittles a Relationship with God, His Word, and Other Christians

When a believer does not value his relationship with the Lord or other believers, he is on a path that will put him on the battlefield of God’s authority over his life. He will begin to resist God’s ownership, which in turn leads to rebellion and ungratefulness. When this condition exists in the believer’s heart, it will be easy for him to drift out of church and to develop a self-centered, ungrateful attitude.

Of the ten lepers that were healed by Jesus, nine did not feel that going back to Jesus and saying “Thank you” was important. Their relationship with Him was not a priority and the result was a selfish, ungrateful response.

* Luke 17:17-18...And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? 18 There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger.

Beloved, our attitude and relationship with God’s Word is extremely important.

* Matthew 4:2-4... And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred. 3 And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. 4 But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

We all need to understand that we are nothing without the Lord. We desperately need His care, closeness, counsel, and His course for our lives. He is our source of blessing. Why would anyone think they would not need Him?

* Jeremiah 10:23- O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.

* John 15:5- I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

* John 3:27-John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.

* 2 Corinthians 3:5- Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God;

* Jeremiah 9:23-24... Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: 24 But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which
exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD.

2. It Balks at Obedience

The “No Need” Syndrome can cause a person to feel they do not need to obey those over them, especially God and His commands. Because they are self-sufficient and their own masters, they feel they don’t have to obey the dictates of others in authority. As their hearts become harder, they balk at submitting to God’s authority and commands. Solomon warned about this attitude.

* Proverbs 14:12 - There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.

When we look through the Bible, we find several examples of people who had the “No Need” Syndrome and balked at obedience.

* Achan: He felt that he did not have to obey God’s commands concerning the spoils of Jericho. All the spoils were to go to the Lord, but Achan felt that this command did not apply to him. He balked at obedience, stole garments and gold, and was executed along with his family.

* Jonah: The prophet balked at obeying God’s command to go to Nineveh and preach against their sins and call them to repentance. The result was a stay in the Whale Motel. He almost lost his life. The trauma that he encountered was so unnecessary and could have been avoided by his compliance to the Lord.

* Samson: Samson felt he did not need to obey his parents about staying away from pagan women. He also felt he did not need to honor the Lord concerning his Nazarite vow. He flirted with sin and it came back to bite him. He lost his sight, his freedom, and eventually his life because he balked at being obedient. Satan used a pagan woman to lead to his fall and destruction. God’s commands about obeying parents are in the Bible for good reasons.

* Ephesians 6:1-3... Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. 2 Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) 3 That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.

Arabian horses go through rigorous training in the deserts of the Middle East. The trainers require absolute obedience from the horses, and test them to see if they are completely trained. The final test is almost beyond the endurance of any living thing. The trainers force the horses to go without water for many days. Then he turns them loose and of
course they start running toward the water, but just as they get to the edge, ready to plunge in and drink, the trainer blows his whistle. The horses who have been completely trained and who have learned perfect obedience, stop. They turn around and come pacing back to the trainer. They stand there quivering, wanting water, but they wait in perfect obedience. When the trainer is sure that he has their obedience he gives them a signal to go back to drink.

Now this may be severe but when you are on the trackless desert of Arabia and your life is entrusted to a horse, you had better have a trained, obedient horse. Beloved, we too, must accept God's training and obey Him if we are to enjoy His blessings.

3. It Blows Up or Inflates the Ego, which Leads to Pride, Deception, and Ruin

A person who feels he has no need of others or God has a pride problem. His head has swelled like a balloon full of helium. When pride gets its paws into a person’s perception of their prominence, prestige, power, and priorities, then problems, perplexity, and pandemonium are in a pressing pursuit. Watch out!

On November 30, 1991, fierce winds from a freakish dust storm triggered a massive freeway pileup along Interstate 5 near Coalinga, California. At least 14 people died and dozens more were injured as topsoil whipped by 50 mile-per-hour winds, reduced visibility to zero. The afternoon holocaust left a three-mile trail of twisted and burning vehicles, some stacked on top of one another 100 yards off the side of the freeway. Unable to see their way, dozens of motorists drove blindly ahead into disaster. This is what happens to people who suffer from the “No Need” Syndrome. They are heading into disaster.

When a person has an inflated ego, it can cause him to not see or acknowledge faults or problems. If the faults are not corrected, then problems develop that can lead to ruin.

* Proverbs 18:12- Before destruction the heart of man is haughty, and before honour is humility.
* 1 Corinthians 10:12-Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

This was true of the church at Laodicea. They suffered from the “No Need” Syndrome and did not realize they were in a terrible condition.
* Revelation 3:17- Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:

An inflated ego can also cause a person to deceive themselves into thinking their way is best, there is nothing wrong with their plans, or the way they are living right now. They feel invincible. David describe these folks in Psalm chapter ten.

* Psalm 10:6- He hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved: for I shall never be in adversity.

A good example of someone who deceived himself into thinking his way was best and he could live as he pleased was the prodigal son. He had no need for his father or for God. His lifestyle, however, put him on a path that beckoned the need for other people. When you get on the Hog Pen Trail, sooner or later you are going to find out you need help, you need God, and you need family and friends.

* Luke 15:17-18... And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! 18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee.

The prodigal son woke up in time before he was totally destroyed. Most egomaniacs, however, on a destructive path will not admit it for they have deceived themselves. The result is a catastrophe because they have lied to themselves. Both Paul and John warned us about self-deception.

* Galatians 6:3- For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.

* 1 John 1:6-10... If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: 7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. 8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

An inflated ego also causes a person to have a false sense of security. This was true of the Pharaoh of Egypt.

* Exodus 5:2- And Pharaoh said, Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go.
When an arrogant person feels secure, cautions and counsel are ignored. Choices that should be made to prepare for the future are neglected, especially in matters about trusting in Christ for salvation. The rich farmer thought he had plenty of time to eat, drink, and be merry, but was sadly mistaken.

* Luke 12:19-20... And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. 20 But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?

The “No Need” Syndrome makes a fool out of a man when that man becomes arrogant and unteachable.

* Proverbs 12:15a- The way of a fool is right in his own eyes...
* Proverbs 28:26a- He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool....
* Isaiah 5:21- Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!
* Proverbs 3:5,7... Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. 7 Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil.

We have been looking at the detriment and sentiments of the “No Need” Syndrome. We have examined four traits so far.

* It Belittles One’s Relationship with God, the Bible, and Other Christians
* It Balks at Obedience
* It Blows Up or Inflates the Ego, which Leads to Pride, Deception, and Ruin
* Next... It is Blinded toward the Needs of Others

4. It Blinds a Person to the Needs of Others

The “No Need” Syndrome will make a person apathetic, selfish, and focused upon themselves. Everything is “Me, me, me.” Not only do people become selfish, they can get an inflated view of themselves, thinking they are better than they really are. Solomon spoke of a generation that had a distorted, unrealistic view of themselves.

* Proverbs 30:12-There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness.

Beloved, when we feel that we do not need others, and tell them that, we hurt them. People like to be needed and don’t want to feel like discarded trash. When we become indifferent and don’t feel we need others, we cut them out of our lives. This blinds us to what is happening
in their lives and what needs they might have whether it is emotional, physical, or spiritual needs. We don’t know their needs because we are not around them. Paul made it clear we do need one another and we all play an important role in the body of Christ like pieces of a puzzle.

*Ephesians 4:16- From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.*

Just as our entire body that God has given to us is put together perfectly, the church body is perfectly put together, too. As each part of the body serves an important function that promotes the health of the body, each believer plays an important part in the health of the church body. It is impossible to be independent from God’s indispensable saints. This is why it is vital that we NOT become apathetic about caring for others.

Some years ago in South America, a crew of Peruvian sailors headed up the Amazon river and came upon a strange sight. It was like a scene from "The Twilight Zone." A Spanish ship was anchored off the coast and all the sailors were stretched out weakly on the deck of the ship. As the Peruvians drew closer, they saw that the Spaniards were in terrible physical condition. They looked the picture of death itself, their lips parched and swollen. The were literally dying of thirst.

"Can we help you?" shouted the Peruvians. The Spaniards cried out, "Water! Water! We need fresh water!" The Peruvian sailors, surprised at this request, told them to lower their buckets and help themselves. The Spaniards, fearing they'd been misunderstood cried back, "No, no we need FRESH water!" But they received the same reply from the Peruvians to lower their buckets and help themselves.

They finally did lower their buckets into the ocean waters and when they brought the buckets on deck they discovered to their amazement fresh water. They had quit trying. There at the mouth of the Amazon River, anchored for days, too far from land to see the coast, but not too far from the mouth of the River, they had fresh water in abundance. Apathy had over taken them and they had quit. They were resigned to die when all that was needed was to lower their bucket. A small effort would have made all the difference.

The same truth holds in the Christian life. The “No Need” Syndrome makes a person apathetic and unconcerned about others. This should never characterize the Christian. If we could all realize that just
a small effort in helping someone else can make a huge difference in their lives.

5. **It Brings about the Bashing of Another Person’s Life**

People that feel they do not need anyone in their lives tend to view others as insignificant and unimportant. When that attitude grips the heart of a person, they can become very harsh toward others and hurt them emotionally or physically. A classic example is seen in Cain. One of the factors that led to Cain bashing and killing Abel was the fact that his brother was not important to him. He made this clear when he made the statement, “Am I my brother’s keeper?”

Absalom had the same “No Need” attitude toward his father David and sought to kill him to gain the throne. He would have never done this if his dad was important to him. Instead of bashing people physically or verbally, we should be building them up.

* 1 Thessalonians 5:11- Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.
* Hebrews 3:13- But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

6. **It Burdens a Person with the Waste of Time, Money, Labor, and Wisdom**

People who suffer from the “No Need” Syndrome end up missing what they do need. Warnings, wisdom, and counsel that could help them make the right decisions and avoid costly mistakes are rejected. The mistakes end up wasting time, money, and work because of foolish thinking and choices. Paul spoke of this problem.

* 1 Corinthians 8:2- And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.
* Romans 1:21- Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

In the Old Testament, the nation of Israel had this attitude toward the prophets of God. The consequences were catastrophic.

* Nehemiah 9:26- Nevertheless they were disobedient, and rebelled against thee, and cast thy law behind their backs, and slew thy prophets which testified against them to turn them to thee, and they wrought great provocations.

As you look back and reflect upon your life, can you recall times when money, work, and time were wasted because you either did not seek
the counsel of another or you rejected it? Most of us have made that mistake at least once. May we listen to the caution of Paul.

*1 Corinthians 10:12- Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.*

Other folks with the “No Need” Syndrome burden themselves in other ways. By rejecting help from others, they tend to take upon themselves more than they can handle sometimes. When this happens, they can become frustrated, feisty, and physically worn out. What tasks they might accomplish may be sub-par because they are so exhausted.

### 7. It is Birthed in Comparing Yourself with Other People

The “No Need” Syndrome many times stems from people comparing themselves with others. The estimation of your comparison can leave you to conclude you are better than others and you don’t need them. They have nothing to offer you. They cannot improve your life, so you don’t need them. The Pharisee compared himself with others as he prayed at the Temple. His conclusions left him full of himself and empty of God.

*Luke 18:9-14... And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: 10 Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. 11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. 12 I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. 13 And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. 14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.*

When Absalom compared his ability to listen to judicial matters with his father’s administration, he felt he could do a much better job. He craved the attention of people and their praise. As he compared himself to his dad, he came to a point where he felt that David was needed no more.

*2 Samuel 15:2-6... And Absalom rose up early, and stood beside the way of the gate: and it was so, that when any man that had a controversy came to the king for judgment, then Absalom called unto him, and said, Of what city art thou? And he said, Thy servant is of one of the tribes of*
Israel. 3 And Absalom said unto him, See, thy matters are good and right; but there is no man deputed of the king to hear thee. 4 Absalom said moreover, Oh that I were made judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice! 5 And it was so, that when any man came nigh to him to do him obeisance, he put forth his hand, and took him, and kissed him. 6 And on this manner did Absalom to all Israel that came to the king for judgment: so Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.

8. Bad Choices are Made by Relying Upon the Wrong Things

People gripped with the “No Need” Syndrome feel they do not need anyone or anything, but sooner or later they will. Because they have gone through life rejecting what is wise and good, they tend to rely upon things or individuals that are unstable, unpredictable, unwise, or ungodly. Some put their confidence and security in money. Because they have rejected wisdom from others and God, they have developed a foolish mind set.

* Romans 1:21-22... Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. 22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.

* Proverbs 11:28- He that trusteth in his riches shall fall: but the righteous shall flourish as a branch.

* Jeremiah 48:7a- For because thou hast trusted in thy works and in thy treasures, thou shalt also be taken....

* Isaiah 31:1- Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the LORD!

In the first section, we examined at great length “Our Dependence Upon One Another.” We will now look at “Division that is Dodged.”
II. Division that is Dodged  12:25-27

That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.  26 And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.  27 Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

When those in the church family are honored and cherished, even though they are less noticeable or known, it promotes unity in the church. This kind of concern and care helps to guard the church against division or dissension. This was a serious problem in the Corinth church and it is a problem that Satan continues to use today to weaken churches.

Much of the division that exists in churches today is created by a quest for power, popularity, prestige, or prominence. It is festered by pessimism, piercing words, peevishness over unresolved offences, perversity, pride, and the poison of bitterness.

* Hebrews 12:15- Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;

* 1 Timothy 6:4-5... He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, 5 Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.

When there is unity and love in the church family, all members suffer when one suffers or is hurting. When one person is honored, all are honored because all believers are part of one body in Christ. It is impossible for us to be independent from God’s indispensable saints. We are one in Christ.

An organization in Montana offered a bounty of five thousand dollars for every wolf captured alive. Two hunters named Sam and Jed decided to head for the hills and make some money capturing wolves. Day and night they scoured the mountains and forests searching for their valuable prey. Exhausted after three days of hunting without any success, they both fell asleep.

During the night, Sam suddenly woke up to find that he and Jed were surrounded by a pack of fifty wolves, with flaming red eyes and bared teeth, snarling at the two hunters and preparing to pounce. Sam nudged Jed and said, "Hey, wake up! We're rich! We're rich!"
Sometimes when we are surrounded by what appears to be many difficulties, we may in fact be surrounded by many opportunities. This is illustrated in the Chinese language. The Chinese symbol for the word "crisis" actually combines the two words "danger" and "opportunity." When a crisis occurs, we can choose to be frightened and cowardly, or strong and courageous, and realize our crisis may be an opportunity for blessing. It's all a matter of perspective. Next time you find yourself in a jam, remember: "You're gonna be rich!"

You'll be rich from God's enabling grace that He will give to you to meet your need in your trial. You will be rich from the prayers He answers and the blessings He will bestow upon you each day. You will be rich from the opportunities to learn and grow, and to experience the power of God in your circumstances. You'll be rich from the support and prayers from other Christians because when one suffers, we all suffer. You will find that it is impossible to be independent from God's indispensable saints.

We have examined two areas so far.
* Our Dependence Upon One Another
* Division that Dodged
* The Diversity in the Church

III. The Diversity in the Church  12:28-30
And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets,thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. 29 Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? 30 Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?

To provide a balance in the body of Christ, God has equipped His church with men in several offices to build the church body. He has also equipped His people with a variety of gifts and abilities to meet the needs of the church. Some of these offices and gifts that are listed here existed at the inception of Christianity as the church was being established and the canon of the New Testament was being revealed to holy men of God by the Holy Spirit, but they no longer exist today because the church has been established and the canon of Scripture is complete.

The order of these offices and gifts reveal their importance in the church. Let’s take a look at them. The first three offices listed are those
in the church that proclaim the Word of God. They evangelize the lost and disciple believers with the Scriptures.

1. Apostles

The word “apostle” means “one sent on a mission.” The apostles included the eleven men Jesus called (without Judas Iscariot), plus others who were called apostles—such as Paul and Matthias. The qualifications for being an apostle were to have seen the risen Christ, to have been sent out by Christ to preach the gospel, and to work on behalf of the kingdom, building the foundation of the New Testament church. Paul also noted they had the ability to perform miraculous deeds in order to confirm that the Word of God that was revealed to them was true. *2 Corinthians 12:12-* Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.

An apostle was not an apostle unless he could verify it by the miracles and signs that went along with his apostleship. God revealed His truth to the apostles, who were supported by the prophets, to establish the foundation of the New Testament church. The revelation of His divine truth is now complete. All extra-biblical revelation is to be refused, whether it comes at a "charismatic" church service or from any other kind of preacher. The revelation of God’s inspired Word came through the apostles and prophets. *Ephesians 2:20-* And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;

There are no apostles today in spite of those who claim to be one. The gift of the apostle died out with the death of the Apostle John, who was the last of the apostles to die. Nobody who has seen and has been sent by the Son of God, armed with apostolic power, has been in the church since the apostolic age almost two-thousand years ago.

2. Prophets

The office of prophet was also foundational to the establishment of the church. Prophets encouraged, and exhorted believers. They sometime spoke revelation from God (Acts 11:21-28) and sometimes they simply expounded revelation already given by the apostles. They always spoke for God but did not always give a newly revealed message from God. Prophets were inspired by the Holy Spirit to make known "the apostles' doctrine."

The prophets were second to the apostles, and their message was to be judged by that of the apostles (1 Corinthians 14:37).
distinction between the two offices may have been that the apostolic message was more general and doctrinal, whereas that of the prophets was more personal and practical. Because the message of the apostles was not in circulation in all the churches, the ministry of the prophet was to pass along to the local churches truth made available to the church at large by the apostles.

Like the apostles, their office ceased to exist with the completion of the New Testament, just as the Old Testament prophets passed off the scene when that testament was finally finished, some 400 years before the time of Jesus Christ.

* 1 Corinthians 13:8- Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

3. Teachers

The work of interpreting and proclaiming the now-written Word of God was taken over by evangelists, pastor-teachers, and teachers. The purpose of apostles and prophets was to equip the church with right doctrine; the purpose of evangelists, pastor-teachers, and teachers is to equip the church for effective ministry. This office continues today.

In the New Testament, pastor-teachers were like Jewish rabbis. They studied the Scriptures and taught the local church sound doctrine. In Ephesians 4:11, Paul associated the office of teacher with that of pastor.

* Ephesians 4:11- And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

The office of teacher is not an office of special revelation, but an office of interpreting special revelation. He is called and gifted for the ministry of studying and interpreting the Word of God to the local church. They were Christians who had the gift to study, comprehend, interpret and communicate the Word of God to the local church and were responsible for nurturing the church. They needed to be trustworthy and faithful stewards of the truth of the gospel. In Paul’s day, Christians did not have their own Bibles to read, so the pastor-teachers in the local congregations continued to teach the believers God’s truth after the apostles had moved on to other cities.
4. Gifts of Miracles and Healing

As Paul continued through the list, he addressed the lesser gifts. The gift of miracles, healing, and also the ability to speak in a foreign language, are all known as the “sign” gifts. These gifts existed at the foundation of the church to give authority and authenticity to the message that was preached by the apostles and prophets. They were used especially for the purpose of convincing the Jewish people that the gospel was true because the Jews required a sign.

Those with these gifts were enabled to perform miracles and heal people. The sign gifts of miracles, healing, and tongues have ceased because the church has been established, the Jewish people as a whole have made their choice to reject Christ and the teachings of the New Testament, and the canon of Scripture is now complete. There is no need for miracles, healing, and tongues today to prove the authenticity of the Word of God. No one today has been personally empowered with these gifts for they have ceased no matter what others may claim.

God, however, still heals and performs miracles in His own time and way, but He has not empowered any Christians to perform these tasks today. Don’t be fooled by counterfeiters that claim these gifts. If they had these gifts, they would be in the hospitals and sanatoriums healing people. On the contrary, they avoid these places like the plague.

The ability to teach the Word of God was to be preferred before the ability to work miracles or heal people. After all, these two gifts, much as they might have been prized and appreciated, dealt only with the temporal and the material side of life. Those who teach the Word deal with the eternal and spiritual side of life.

5. The Gift of Helps

The gift of helps is a gift for service in the broadest sense of helping and supporting other people in day-by-day, often unnoticed, ways. It is the same gift as that of serving. This word “helps” is from the word *antilempsis* {an-ti-lëm-pe-sis}. It is an especially beautiful word, meaning “to take the burden off someone else and place it on oneself.”

People with great compassion and care are blessed with this gift. This gift doubtlessly is one of the most widely distributed of any, and is a gift that is immeasurably important in supporting those who minister and support those with other gifts. Epaphroditus was one who was gifted in this area.
The gift of helps is not glamorous or showy and, as in the Corinthian church, often is not highly prized or appreciated. But it is God's gift, and its faithful ministry is highly prized by Him and by any leader who knows the value of supporting people behind the scenes. This gift is a necessary gift if the church is to be strong and effective.

In his book, *70X7, The Freedom of Forgiveness*, David Ugsberger tells of General William Booth, the founder of the salvation Army, who had lost his eyesight. His son Bramwell was given the difficult task of telling his father there would be no recovery. "Do you mean that I am blind?" the General asked. "I hear we must contemplate that," his son replied. The father continued, "I shall never see your face again?" "No, probably not in this world." General Booth replied, "Bramwell, I have done what I could for God and for His people with my eyes. Now I shall do what I can for God without my eyes."

Years later, the Salvation Army was holding an international convention and their founder, Gen. William Booth, could not attend because of physical weakness. He cabled his convention message to them. It was one word: "OTHERS." That is a good message for us today.

6. The Gift of Government

The word "governments" is derived from the Greek word *kubernesis* (koo-ber'-nay-sis). It means "to guide" or "to steer" or "to pilot." It was used to describe a captain that pilots his ship. It refers to one who keeps a ship, or a church, on course toward its proper destination. In Proverbs 12:5 it is translated "counsels," and in Ezekiel, wise men are compared to "pilots" (27:8).

* Proverbs 12:5- The thoughts of the righteous are right: but the counsels of the wicked are deceit.
* Ezekiel 27:8- The inhabitants of Zidon and Arvad were thy mariners: thy wise men, O Tyrus, that were in thee, were thy pilots.

The gift of government is an administrative gift which is so vital for the church. It is the ability to make sound decisions and oversee the administration of a local church. Those who have the gift of government or administration have the ability to make wise decisions and to move, influence and steer others toward a purpose. The person with this gift is a steward and not the owner of those whom they lead. The church needs to be steered on a proper, sound, biblical course. Blessed is that church that has leaders who can think through the pros and cons of a decision
before it is made, and decide what is the right and proper thing to do.

So many churches make foolish decisions that get themselves into trouble and sometimes financial bondage, because of expensive, unproductive programs, too many staff personnel, or construction projects that leave the church with a massive monthly payment that they just cannot afford. One or two men gifted with "governments" are worth more to a church than a whole balcony full of people babbling in so called “tongues.”

7. The Gift of Tongues

Paul deliberately put the gift of “tongues” at the bottom of the list, because that is where it belonged. This gift was soon to be set aside altogether as no longer useful or relevant in the ministry of the church or its establishment (1 Corinthians 13:8). Paul knew this, although the Corinthians didn't in his day.

Charismatic churches in our day do not understand that the miraculous ability to preach in a foreign language or tongue has ceased. They also do not understand that the word “tongue" was a living foreign language, not a bunch of baby talk and babbling that make a person look like a fool. That may sound pretty strong, but it’s true.

Paul stated that the gift of tongues would cease. We have only to compare Ephesians 4:8-16 with this Corinthian listing of gifts (written in 55 A.D.) to see the difference. The Ephesus list of gifts was written about six years later (written in 61-62 A.D.) contains no mention of miracles, healing, or tongues. The church had grown up. There was no more need of these “sign” gifts.

Paul closes this portion with questions that demand a negative answer. Are we all apostles, prophets, teachers? Do we all have the gifts of miracles, healing, or speaking in foreign languages or interpret them? Paul gives an emphatic “No!” Charismatic churches need to take note of this verse since people are pressured to have the gift of tongues. Paul makes it clear we all do not have the same gifts.

We have examined three areas so far.

* Our Dependence Upon One Another
* Division that Dodged
* The Diversity in the Church
* Next...The Desire for Good Gifts and the Direction of Paul
IV. The Desire for Good Gifts & the Direction of Paul  

12:31

*But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.*

After listing the gifts, Paul instructs the church to covet earnestly or zealously the best gifts. These were the gifts that ministered and benefitted everyone as opposed to a bunch of babbling that did not benefit anyone. They needed to get their focus off of tongues and place it on seeking gifts that helped other people. Then Paul basically states, “Let me show you a better or more excellent way to bless others. Let me show you a better direction.”

The more excellent way is something much higher and more important than the spiritual gifts. It is a quality that is much higher than all the gifts combined. The more excellent way is something that can be possessed by every Christian. This is what the focus will be in chapter thirteen. It is the way of love and was a huge need in the divided Corinth church. It continues to be a huge need today. Unity and diversity must be balanced by maturity, and that maturity comes with loving God and other people.

* Romans 12:10- Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;*

* John 13:34-A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.*

While shopping in New York, one woman noticed a young boy shivering in the cold November weather. He was pressed against a store window looking at a pair of shoes. She asked the little boy what he was doing out in the cold and he replied, “I was asking God to give me a pair of those shoes.”

A quick glance down at the boy’s feet revealed tattered shoes that barely covered his protruding bare feet. Her arm immediately wrapped around him and she wisped him into the store. She pulled several pairs of socks from the shelves and instructed the department employee to bring the pair of shoes her young friend wanted.

He was soon walking around the shoe department with not only the shoes for which he prayed, but new, warm socks to go with them. The woman paid for everything without asking for a cent. She then turned for the door and said, “You will be a lot more comfortable now.” The little lad looked up into her eyes with an inquisitive expression and asked, “Lady, are you God’s wife?”
Beloved, when you selflessly serve and love other people, people will notice your relationship with God. They will know that there is something different about you.

* John 13:35- By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

People do not care how much you know until they know how much you care.
Chapter 13
The Language of True Love
1 Corinthians 13:1-8a

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. 2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. 3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. 4 Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, 5 Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; 6 Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; 7 Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. 8 Charity never faileth:

One of the most common words thrown around today in society is the word “love.” You will find, however, that what the world may consider to be “love” is actually lust in many situations. In the late 1960's and early 1970's, a popular phrase was “free love” which in reality was sex with no attachments and responsibilities attached to it. What the world considers to be love many times is totally different than God’s definition and description of love that are revealed here in 1 Corinthians 13. This is why this chapter is given the title “The Love Chapter.”

In the twelfth chapter, we dealt with the issue of our endowment of spiritual gifts. In the fourteenth chapter, we will be studying the exercise of our spiritual gifts. In this chapter, Paul directs our attention to the expression of our gifts by having love for others and for God.

Paul told the Corinthians in chapter twelve he would show them the better and best way to live the Christian life which is to love God and people. If we are going to behave this way, then we need to know what God considers to be love. What we might “think” is love may not match
up with God’s definition. This is why this chapter is so valuable. Let’s dig in.

I. The Essentialness of Love  13:1-3

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. 2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. 3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

We will note several areas of this passage.

A. Without Love You are Noisy  13:1

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

Paul is stating very simply here that if he had the ability to preach skillfully in different languages, to speak eloquently like the greatest orators of his day, or with the eloquence of an angel, he would be like a noisy gong or crashing cymbal if he did not have love for others. That’s it, but unfortunately, this verse has been blown out of proportion.

The phrase “tongues or languages of angels” is not a reference to a mysterious, heavenly language that men can learn if they attain a certain spiritual level. There is nothing in Scripture that indicates there is the possibility of speaking in the language of angels. In fact, any time angels communicated with men, they spoke in the language of the person they were addressing. When Abraham spoke with the angels about Sodom, they spoke to him in his own language. When the angels announced the birth of Christ, they spoke in the language of the shepherds.

It does not make any sense for people to speak in a so called “heavenly language” in a church service when speaking in their own language will suffice and communicate truth more clearly and effectively. God is not the author of confusion, but men and women are very good in creating confusion when they wrongly interpret the Scriptures.

Paul stresses that the ability to be eloquent is empty if the person does not love others. The word “charity” is used here. Because the word
has changed in meaning since the early 1600's, it reduces the impact and
the message of what God is saying here. The Greek word is “agape.”
This word is translated “love” 85 times and “charity” 28 times. When
we think of charity today, we think of giving to the poor or someone in
need. Paul is not talking about this here. In fact, people today can give
to charities or to the poor without having love for those people. This is
what government welfare does. The giving is based on political
philosophy instead of love.

The word “agape” has a much different meaning than giving to
charity or being charitable. Let me explain. In Greek there are four
words for love.
(a) Eros love means the love of a man for a woman; it is the love which
has passion in it. It is never used in the New Testament at all.
(b) Philia love is the warm love which we feel for our nearest and our
dearest; it is a thing of the heart.
(c) Storge love means “affection” and is specially used of the love of
parents and children.
(d) Agape love means “unconquerable benevolence and good will.”
Agape love does not mean a feeling of the heart, which we cannot help,
and which comes unbidden and unsought. It means that no matter what
a person may do to us by way of insult, injury, or humiliation, we will
never seek anything else but highest good of that person. It is therefore
a feeling or determination of the mind as much as of the heart. It
concerns the will of the person as much as the emotions. It describes the
deliberate effort, which we can make only with the help of God, never to
seek anything but the best even for those who seek the worst for us. To
have this kind of love, you'll need God's help!

With this kind of love, the person does not seek revenge, but instead,
will meet all injuries and rebuffs with undefeatable good will. Ouch! This
is not easy to do, is it? In point of fact, we can only have agape love when
Jesus Christ enables us to conquer our natural tendency to anger and to
bitterness, and to achieve this invincible goodwill to all men. Paul had
this kind of love and it was sincere and real. It was not hypocritical.
Without this kind of love, we become like sounding brass or gongs, and
tinkling, crashing cymbals. Why does Paul refer to these instruments
here?

In New Testament times, rites honoring the pagan, false deities
Cybele, Bacchus, and Dionysus included wild music, wine, and speaking
in disorderly, ecstatic noises that were accompanied by smashing gongs,
clanging cymbals, and blaring trumpets. The Corinthians understood very well what he was talking about because these pagan gods were worshiped in Corinth.

Paul was trying to make it clear that speaking in foreign languages or tongues, without love, has no more value than the ceremonies that honor pagan gods. Those worship services to those deities were empty, and speaking the Word in foreign tongues without love is empty, too. Without love, we become as hollow as the sound of a gong or cymbal. Apart from love, even one who speaks the truth with supernatural eloquence, becomes a bunch of noise. The next point Paul makes is without love for others, you are nothing.

B. Without Love You are Nothing 13:2
And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

The apostle paints a lofty picture here. Paul states that if a person has the gift of prophecy, if he understood all of the secrets and mysteries of God, if he understood all knowledge or had a wall of college degrees, if he had the kind of faith that could move mountains, without love to go with it, he is nothing. All of these abilities are nothing without love for people and the Lord. Jesus made it clear that without His working in our lives, we can do nothing.

* John 15:5- I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

C. Without Love, You are Needy 13:3
And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

Without love you are needy, even if you bestow all your goods to feed the poor. This word “bestow” is from the word psomizo (pso-mid'-zo). It means “to give away mouthful by mouthful or to feed by putting little bits of food into the mouth, like a bird feeding its babies.”

The efforts of a person that would give away his entire estate to care for others mouthful by mouthful are nothing and worthless if he
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gives to others out of duty instead of out of love. They profit nothing leaving the person empty of satisfaction and joy. God does not want us to give from a heart of drudgery, but from a heart of love.

*2 Corinthians 9:7- Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

Paul continues this line of thought and states that if you are willing to be martyred for Christ, such actions do not allow you to benefit or gain anything if you do not have love for God and for others. Giving away all of your possessions and your life requires great sacrifice, but without love, Paul states you are still needy. You have gained nothing!

II. The Elements of Love  13:4-7

 Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, 5 Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; 6 Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;  7 Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

If you want to know God’s definition of love, He gives us specifics here. Let’s look at each element and glean some insights.

I. Love is Patient in Difficulties vs.4

The words “suffereth long” are derived from the word makrothumeo {mak-roth-oo-meh'-o}. It is a very powerful word and means “to not lose heart; to persevere patiently and bravely in enduring trouble and misfortune; to be patient in bearing the offenses and injuries of others; to be slow to punish and slow to anger; to demonstrate self-restraint when provoked.”

When you love someone, you will have this kind of attitude toward them. The person with this trait patiently endures suffering under injustice, abuse, and persecution. That is not easy to do, but can be endured when you love that person and when you have God’s help to endure. The patience that Paul is referring to here is not patience with bad circumstances, but patience with people that may cause those circumstances. Paul states that love does not take revenge.

A classic example of someone in the Old Testament that demonstrated love with this kind of restraint was David. King Saul repeatedly tried to harm David, but David did not retaliate because Saul
was God’s anointed. David waited on God’s timing to deal with the king. During World War II, Hitler commanded all religious groups to unite so that he could control them. Among the Brethren assemblies, half complied and half refused. Those who went along with the order had a much easier time. Those who did not, faced harsh persecution. In almost every family of those who resisted, someone died in a concentration camp.

When the war was over, feelings of deep bitterness ran deep between these Christian groups and there was a great deal of tension. Finally, they decided that the situation had to be healed. Leaders from each group met at a quiet retreat. For several days, each person spent time in prayer, examining his own heart in the light of Christ's commands. Then they came together.

Francis Schaeffer, who told of the incident, asked a friend who was there, "What did you do then?" He replied, "We were just one.” As they confessed their hostility and bitterness to God and yielded to His control, the Holy Spirit created a spirit of unity among them. Love filled their hearts and dissolved their hatred.

Beloved, when love prevails among believers, especially in times of strong disagreement, it presents to the world an indisputable mark of a true follower of Jesus Christ.

* John 13:35- By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

2. Love is Pleasant or Kind vs.4

The word “kind” is from the word chresteuomai {khraste-yoo'-om-ahee}. It means “to show one’s self mild; to be kind.” It is the opposite of harshness. Love is patient and waits when one is mistreated. On the other hand, love is eager to spring into action to be kind. Kindness goes a long way with people, especially when there are conflicts, mistakes, and problems that need to be solved or forgiven. Kindness keeps our heads “cool” and helps us to think more clearly without the blur from fury and rage.

The kindness that is demonstrated from your love for people will brand their hearts and memories of you with tender thoughts. Henry Drummond said, "In the heart of Africa, among the great lakes, I have come across black men and women who remembered the only white man they ever saw before—David Livingstone: and as you cross his footsteps in that dark continent, men's faces light up as they speak of the kind
doctor who passed there years ago. They could not understand him but they felt the love that beat in his heart." What a great testimony for Christ that this missionary had for the Lord.

3. Love is not Possessed by Envy vs. 4

The word “envy” is derived from the Greek word _zeloo_ (dzay-lo'-o). It means “to be heated or boil with envy, hatred, jealousy, covetousness, or anger.” When you love someone, you will not be jealous, angry, or coveting what God has given to them.

* You will not be jealous of their _authority or position_ when you are in a less important one.
* You will not be bothered by their _attainments or possessions_, even though yours may not be as nice or as much.
* You will not be irritated by their _accolades, attention, popularity, or praise_ when you may have few friends or may not be recognized for your efforts.
* You will not be angry with their _accomplishments, abilities, or productivity_, even though you are doing the same task and not doing as much. When you love someone, you will be thrilled for them when they are blessed or excel. When you are jealous, however, your love flees from your heart and people end up being hurt.

Jealous brothers did not love Joseph. That is why they sold him into slavery. Jealous leaders of Babylon did not love or care for Daniel. That is why the conspired to get him thrown into a den of lions. Abel’s blood cried from the ground to the Lord because his jealous brother Cain did not love him.

Irish novelist and playwright Samuel Beckett received great recognition for his work, but not every one savored his accomplishments. Beckett’s marriage, in fact, was soured by his wife's jealousy of his growing fame and success as a writer.

One day in 1969, his wife Suzanne answered the telephone, listened for a moment, spoke briefly, and hung up. She then turned to Beckett and with a stricken look whispered, "What a catastrophe!" Was it a devastating personal tragedy? No, she had just learned that her husband had been awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature! Jealousy robbed her of the joy of her husband’s achievements.

James painted a pretty accurate picture of envy and its consequences.
*James 3:14-16.... But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. 15 This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. 16 For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.

4. Love Does not Promote or Vaunt Itself vs. 4

The word “vaunt” is derived from the word *perpereuomai* (*per-per-yoo'-om-ahee*). It means “to display or extol yourself; to be a show-off; to boast or brag.” Pushiness, parading so called “superiority” does not characterize the trait of love.

When you love others, you are not anxious to impress other people because your focus is not upon yourself, it is upon serving and caring for others. Love then, does not toot its own horn and talk conceitedly. When this happens, you end up criticizing or neglecting others, even though you may not intend to do this. When you exalt yourself, you leave out those who have helped you. Comments like, “I did this and you didn’t” can also come across as a criticism of others. Love does not do this!

Let me add that Paul was not beyond complimenting the Corinthians. He even asserted his own standing on occasion. Love does not mean lying about human accomplishments. Rather, it means not exalting ourselves over others as if our accomplishments were based on our own merit and ability.

All of us need to understand that if you blow up your own balloon of boasting, sooner or later, someone will pop it. According to a story in the Grand Rapids Press, the owner of a small foreign car had begun to irritate his friends by bragging incessantly about his gas mileage. So they decided on a way to get some humor out of his tireless boasting, as well as bring it to an end.

Every day one of them would sneak into the parking lot where the man kept his car and pour a few gallons of gas into the tank. Soon the braggart was recording absolutely phenomenal mileage. He was boasting of getting as much as 90 miles per gallon, and the pranksters took secret delight in his exasperation as he tried to convince people of the truthfulness of his claims. It was even more fun to watch his reaction when they stopped refilling the tank. The poor fellow couldn't figure out what had happened to his car. His bubble got popped.
5. Love is not Puffed Up or Proud vs. 4

The word “puffed up” is from the Greek word \textit{phusioo} \textit{foo-see-o'-o}. The root of this word points to a windbag. It means “to inflate, blow up, to cause to swell, to make proud.” Love does not have a swelled head or an exaggerated idea of one’s own importance. This was a problem in Corinth.

In the Corinth church, those who claimed to have the gift of speaking in foreign languages became puffed up about their gift. They felt they were some kind of super saints because of their spiritual gifts. Paul tells them that love does not do this. Love behaves with humility and does not seek self-glory. It does not overestimate one’s own importance and underestimate the value of others. Someone said, “God wisely designed the human body so that we can neither pat our own backs nor kick ourselves too easily.”

Watch out for pride. It has a way of coming out of the closet when you think you have it licked. “Pali, this bull has killed me.” So said Jose Cubero, one of Spain’s most brilliant matadors, before he lost consciousness and died. Only 21 years old, he had been enjoying a spectacular career. However, in this 1958 bullfight, Jose made a tragic mistake. He thrust his sword a final time into a bleeding, delirious bull, which then collapsed. Considering the struggle finished, Jose turned to the crowd to acknowledge the applause. The bull, however, was not dead. It rose and lunged at the unsuspecting matador, its horn piercing his back and puncturing his heart.

Beloved, just when we think we've finished off pride, just when we turn to accept the congratulations of the crowd, pride stabs us in the back. We should never consider pride dead before we are.

6. Love is Polite or Proper vs. 5

Love does not behave unseemly. The phrase “behave unseemly” is from the word \textit{aschemoneo} \textit{as-kay-mon-eh'-o}. It means “to act unbecomingly or to be rude, vulgar, or crude.” Some people think it is funny to behave this way, but love doesn’t do this. It behaves properly and is not inappropriate. It characterized by good manners, politeness, and a concern for how one’s actions affect other people. Love knows how to behave as a gentleman or as a lady.
7. Love Points its Focus on Others & Does Not Seek Its Own Way

Verse 5

Love focuses on the needs of others and not self. It does not grasp for one’s rights. It is willing to make sacrifices. In the book, Love is a Costly Thing, Dick Hills recounts an experience of selfless love that he had in another country of a lady that was lying on the ground one day. In her arms she held a tiny baby girl. Here is what he shared:

As I put a cooked sweet potato into her outstretched hand, I wondered if she would live until morning. Her strength was almost gone, but her tired eyes acknowledged my gift. The sweet potato could help so little -- but it was all I had.

Taking a bite she chewed it carefully. Then, placing her mouth over her baby's mouth, she forced the soft warm food into the tiny throat. Although the mother was starving, she used the entire potato to keep her baby alive. Exhausted from her effort, she dropped her head on the ground and closed her eyes. In a few minutes the baby was asleep. I later learned that during the night the mother's heart stopped, but her little girl lived.

Love points its focus on others. It is willing to make sacrifices, even give up one’s own life. This is what Christ did for us on the cross because He loved us.

We have examined seven elements or characteristics of love so far.

* Love is Patient in Difficulties
* Love is Pleasant or Kind
* Love is not Possessed by Envy
* Love Does not Promote or Vaunt Itself
* Love is not Puffed Up or Proud
* Love is Polite or Proper
* Love Points its Focus on Others and Does Not Seek Its Own Way

As we have gone through this list, let me ask, “How are you doing? Based on God’s list, do you demonstrate love in your life?” Let’s go to the next trait of love. Love is not provoked.

8. Love is Not Provoked vs. 5

Love is not easily provoked. Dr. John Phillips points out that in the Greek text there is no word for “easily.” The statement is absolute in the Greek. Love is not provoked. The story is that King James had a hot and quick temper and that the translators supplied the word “easily” to soften the absolute for the king.
This word “provoked” is from the word *paroxuno* (par-ox-oo'-no). It means “to arouse, burn, or be enraged with anger, to irritate, scorn, despise, provoke, or to be touchy.” This means that love does not have a quick boiling point or does not quickly flies off the handle. Paul is speaking of anger that is evil, seething, or out of control.

All anger is not evil or wrong, for anger can be a motivating factor when directed against wrongs or injustices. Love, however, refuses to be provoked into a wrong action and it does not carry a chip on its shoulder. Love is not touchy and it does not nurse a bitter heart.

Love can prevent the damage from temper tantrums and explosions of anger. You never know where anger will take you or others. For example, in the spring of 1894, the Baltimore Orioles came to Boston to play a routine baseball game against the Red Sox. But what happened that day was anything but routine.

The Orioles' John McGraw got into a fight with the Boston third baseman. Within minutes all the players from both teams had joined in the brawl. The warfare quickly spread to the grandstands. Among the fans the conflict went from bad to worse. Someone set fire to the stands and the entire ballpark burned to the ground. Not only that, but the fire spread to 107 other Boston buildings as well. Watch out for your temper.

9. Love has a Pure Mind & does not Prepare a Pile of Offenses vs. 5

Paul said that love “thinketh no evil.” True love does have a pure mind and will not fill its mind with filth. This word “thinketh,” however, carries a different meaning. It is from the word *logizomai* (log-id'-zom-ahee). It is an accounting or book-keeping term. It means “to reckon, compute, to keep an account.”

Love does not keep account of wrongs it suffers, nor does it look for opportunities to get back at others. Love does not hold grudges and nurse resentments over past offenses. Love cannot dwell in a heart like this. True love will help any person to forgive their offenders.

Newspaper columnist and preacher George Crane tells of a wife who came into his office full of hatred toward her husband. She told the preacher, "I do not only want to get rid of him, I want to get even. Before I divorce him, I want to hurt him as much as he has me."

Dr. Crane suggested an ingenious plan "Go home and act as if you really love your husband. Tell him how much he means to you. Praise him for every decent trait. Go out of your way to be as kind, considerate, and generous as possible. Spare no efforts to please him, to enjoy him.
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Make him believe you love him. After you've convinced him of your undying love and that you cannot live without him, then drop the bomb. Tell him that you're getting a divorce. That will really hurt him.

With revenge in her eyes, she smiled and exclaimed, "Beautiful, beautiful. Will he ever be surprised!" She carried out the plan with enthusiasm. For two months she showed love, kindness, listening, giving, reinforcing, sharing. When she didn't return, Crane called her, "Are you ready now to go through with the divorce?"

"Divorce?" she exclaimed. "Never! I discovered I really do love him." Her actions had changed her feelings. Her motion resulted in emotion and brought out her true love for her husband.

10. Love does not Pleasure in Injustice or Iniquity vs. 6

Love does not rejoice in iniquity or injustice. It is pure in its pleasure. It does not find pleasure in filth, perversion, dirty stories, or harm that is done to others. When you love someone, you do not find pleasure in them being harmed or hurt in any way. If something bad happens to another, love doesn't gloat and say, "See, I told you so" or "They deserved what they got!" It does not rejoice at the calamities of others, even those that oppose us.

*Proverbs 24:17- Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth:

On May 2, 1962, a dramatic advertisement appeared in the San Francisco Examiner: "I don't want my husband to die in the gas chamber for a crime he did not commit. I will therefore offer my services for 10 years as a cook, maid, or housekeeper to any leading attorney who will defend him and bring about his vindication."

One of San Francisco's greatest attorneys, Vincent Hallinan, read or heard about the ad and contacted Gladys Kidd, who had placed it. Her husband, Robert Lee Kidd, was about to be tried for the slaying of an elderly antique dealer. Kidd's fingerprints had been found on a bloodstained ornate sword in the victim's shop. During the trial, Hallinan proved that the antique dealer had not been killed by the sword, and that Kidd's fingerprints and blood on the sword got there because Kidd had once toyed with it while playfully dueling with a friend when they were both out shopping. The jury, after 11 hours, found Kidd to be not guilty. Attorney Hallinan refused Gladys Kidd's offer of 10 years' servitude. The genuine love Glayes had for her husband led to his deliverance.
11. Love is Pleased with the Truth vs. 6
Love rejoices in the truth, especially the truth of the Scriptures. Truth develops security and trust. It scatters away that which is demonic, deceiving, and destructive. This is why it is loved so much. Our love for Christ should create a thirst in our hearts to know Him and His truth. Recall the words of the psalmist and the words of Paul in Philippians 3.
* Philippians 3:10- That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;
* Psalm 119:97- O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day.

12. Love is Protective vs. 7
Paul stated that love “beareth all things.” The word “beareth” is derived from the word stego [steg'-o] which means “to cover, protect, to put a roof over something, or to conceal the errors and faults of others.” Love does not avenge wrongs that are done to you or seek revenge. Love doesn’t have the attitude, “I will make them pay for that!” Love finds ways to forgive and to forget. Our Lord did this for us when He died on the cross crying out, “Father forgive them for they know not what they do.” He shed His blood to cover our sins and protect us from the wrath of God by putting our faith in Him.

13. Love is Persuaded to Believe the Best in Others vs. 7
Paul stated that love believes all things. Love gives the benefit of the doubt to a person. It is willing and ready to believe the best about others and the best will come from any situation. That does not mean that love is gullible, that love blindly accepts everything it is told. It is, however, not quick to condemn someone. Love does not bring accusation against one until the facts are known.

14. Love has the Patience that comes from Hope vs. 7
Love is hopeful in all things. In spite of trials, difficulties, discouragement, and the feeling of failure, love keeps on going because of the strength it has from hopefulness.

15. Love is Persistent vs. 7, 8a
Love never fails, falls, or withers away. In fact this word “faileth” means “it is never hissed off the stage like a bad actor or it will never fall away like petals on a withering flower.”
Love also “endures all things.” This word “endureth” is from the Greek word *hupomeno* {hoop-om-en’-o}. It is a powerful word which means “to remain under the load; to bravely and calmly endure ill treatment.” In other words, love is persistent and strong.

Love remains under the load no matter how long it takes and no matter what else is piled on top. Love bears up courageously no matter what the suffering. It does not quit but keeps on keeping on in spite of burdens, setbacks, defeats, and pressing circumstances. Love is persistent in being gentle and kind.

On Facebook, the following story was recorded on the site called *I Love Simplicity*, which illustrates so well the gentleness and patience of love for others. A New York City Taxi driver recorded the following story:

I arrived at the address and honked the horn. After waiting a few minutes I honked again. Since this was going to be my last ride of my shift I thought about just driving away, but instead I put the car in park and walked up to the door and knocked. ‘Just a minute’, answered a frail, elderly voice. I could hear something being dragged across the floor.

After a long pause, the door opened. A small woman in her 90’s stood before me. She was wearing a print dress and a pillbox hat with a veil pinned on it, like somebody out of a 1940’s movie. By her side was a small nylon suitcase. The apartment looked as if no one had lived in it for years. All the furniture was covered with sheets. There were no clocks on the walls, no knickknacks or utensils on the counters. In the corner was a cardboard box filled with photos and glassware.

‘Would you carry my bag out to the car?’ she said. I took the suitcase to the cab, then returned to assist the woman. She took my arm and we walked slowly toward the curb. She kept thanking me for my kindness. ‘It's nothing,’ I told her. ‘I just try to treat my passengers the way I would want my mother to be treated.’

‘Oh, you're such a good boy,’ she said. When we got in the cab, she gave me an address and then asked, 'Could you drive through downtown?’ ‘It's not the shortest way,' I answered quickly. 'Oh, I don't mind,' she said. 'I'm in no hurry. I'm on my way to a hospice.’

I looked in the rear-view mirror. Her eyes were glistening. ‘I don't have any family left,’ she continued in a soft voice. ‘The doctor says I don't have very long.’ I quietly reached over and shut off the meter.

‘What route would you like me to take?’ I asked. For the next two hours, we drove through the city. She showed me the building where she
had once worked as an elevator operator. We drove through the neighborhood where she and her husband had lived when they were newlyweds. She had me pull up in front of a furniture warehouse that had once been a ballroom where she had gone dancing as a girl.

Sometimes she'd ask me to slow in front of a particular building or corner and would sit staring into the darkness, saying nothing. As the first hint of sun was creasing the horizon, she suddenly said, 'I'm tired. Let's go now.' We drove in silence to the address she had given me. It was a low building, like a small convalescent home, with a driveway that passed under a portico.

Two orderlies came out to the cab as soon as we pulled up. They were solicitous and intent, watching her every move. They must have been expecting her. I opened the trunk and took the small suitcase to the door. The woman was already seated in a wheelchair. 'How much do I owe you?' she asked, reaching into her purse.

'Nothing,' I said. 'You have to make a living,' she answered. 'There are other passengers,' I responded. Almost without thinking, I bent and gave her a hug. She held onto me tightly. 'You gave an old woman a little moment of joy,' she said. 'Thank you.' I squeezed her hand, and then walked into the dim morning light. Behind me, a door shut. It was the sound of the closing of a life.

I didn't pick up any more passengers that shift. I drove aimlessly lost in thought. For the rest of that day, I could hardly talk. What if that woman had gotten an angry driver, or one who was impatient to end his shift? What if I had refused to take the run, or had honked once, then driven away? On a quick review, I don't think that I have done anything more important in my life. We're conditioned to think that our lives revolve around great moments. But great moments often catch us unaware, beautifully wrapped in what others may consider a small one!

Beloved, don't miss out on wonderful moments in your life by failing to love other people. Solomon put it this way, “Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it...” (Song of Songs 8:7).
Chapter 14
The Arrival of Perfection
1 Corinthians 13:8-13
Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. 9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. 10 But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. 11 When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. 12 For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. 13 And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

We now come to a very difficult passage of Scripture that has spawned a great deal of debate in its meaning. There are a wide variety of opinions from good Bible scholars about the message and interpretation of this portion of Scripture. I will do my best to give you my findings, but admit, I am not going to be dogmatic because of the variety of views on this portion.

The reason this passage is so important is because of the fact that the incorrect interpretation of these verses have spawned charlatans who have fleeced God’s people by claiming new revelations from God they have received in visions and dreams. By claiming new messages from God, they have preached sermons that have created commotion and confusion in the church created by false conclusions and their contradictions with the Scriptures.

In other words, these preachers have created a mess that have left Christians looking like a bunch of idiots or crazy fools. Some are dead because they did not seek medical help, believing a preacher who claimed to have miraculous powers would heal them. Others are dead because
they drank poison or played with poisonous snakes, believing they were indestructible. When believers behave this way, how can they have any kind of credibility with an unbelieving world and reach the lost for Christ? Understanding this passage is important, so let’s dig in and try to find the truth.

I. The Passing of Prophecies, Knowledge, and Tongues  13:8
Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

The whole tenor of this chapter is the fact that love is eternal and lasting. That is why it should play such an important part of our lives. It is more durable than any spiritual gift that we might receive. In this verse, Paul informs us of the passing of prophecies, knowledge, and the termination of the miraculous gift of speaking in foreign languages. We will take our time and examine each of these points and do our best to explain what Paul is saying to us here.

A. Prophecies and Knowledge: “whether there be prophecies, they shall fail.... whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.”

Paul tells us prophecies will fail. The prophecies or predictions of future events that pertain to Christ’s kingdom, given by the divine inspiration of God would fail. Knowledge would also vanish away. This is a reference to divine knowledge or revelation given under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to the apostles. This is not a reference to knowledge in general which has exploded in these last days. This divine inspired knowledge was needed in the establishment of the New Testament church. Once the canon of Scripture was complete, divine revelation would no longer be needed in the Church Age which is from Pentecost to the Rapture.

When Paul says that prophecies will fail, does he mean that the prophecies of the Bible would not come to pass? No, to understand what he is saying, we have to understand the context and meaning of the words “fail” and “vanish away.” These are key words of the verse.

The words “fail” or “vanish away” are both derived from the exact same Greek word, katargeo {kat-arg-e'-o}. It has a variety of meanings. The correct one will have an important bearing upon understanding this verse. Other Bible teachers have stated that this word
means “a permanent ceasing,” but the definitions of this word do not necessarily indicate this is true all the time.

1. *Katargeo* means “to render something idle, inactive, delayed or set aside.”

   We see this from the two Greek words that form it. The word “kata” means “toward, through out, down.” The word *argeo*<sup>arg-eh'-o</sup> means “to be idle, to be inactive, to linger, or to delay.” This definition does not necessarily indicate a permanent condition. It allows for a temporary state. Something that is idle or inactive can be reactivated. Something that is delayed can continue later in time.

2. It also means “to cause something to come to an end or to be no longer in existence; to abolish or wipe out.”

   This definition seems to indicate a more permanent condition of something. For example, the power of death has come to an end because of Christ. We have eternal life in Christ.

   * 2 Timothy 1:10- But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel:

3. *It means “to be discharged and released from an obligation.”*

   For example, when the husband of a wife died, she was loosed from her covenant with him and free to remarry another man.

   * Romans 7:2 -For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband.

   Because of Christ, we have been released from the Old Testament Law because we have died to what controlled us. The bondage of sin has been broken which enables us to serve God, not by obeying the Law but by serving the Lord by the working of the Holy Spirit.

   * Romans 7:6- But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.

4. *It means “to be deprived of power.”*

   Our body of sin is deprived of power because of Jesus Christ. This enables us to no longer serve the power of sin.

   *Romans 6:6-Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

   Good men feel that the meaning of the word “fail” is definition number two: “to cause something to come to an end or to be no longer in
existence; to abolish or wipe out.” That definition, however, presents some problems. As we will see in a moment, based on the book of Revelation and the book of Joel, I believe the correct application and definition is number one: “to render something idle or inactive, to set aside, or to be delayed.”

I believe Paul is stating here that prophecies about the future, given to apostles by divine inspiration of the Holy Spirit, would eventually become idle, inactive, set aside or delayed for a period of time. This means that they would become active again someday. They would not be permanently abolished based on what the Apostle John told us in Revelation and the prophet Joel.

Prophecy and knowledge will return during the Tribulation period. I believe the delay or the time of inactivity began after John, the last of the apostles, finished the book of Revelation. This book was written on the Island of Patmos almost 40 years later after the writing of the book of 1 Corinthians.

As we will see later in the message, the New Testament canon of Scripture is now complete. There are no more new inspired messages from God for His church. What the Lord wants us to know for now, we have in our hands. It is found in the Bible. Nothing more is to be added or subtracted to it.

* Revelation 22:18-19...For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book:
19 And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

When the Church is removed from this earth at the Rapture, however, God will focus intently on dealing with Israel to bring her to her knees in order that she will finally recognize and turn to her Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will deal with His people for a week of years or seven years known as Daniel’s 70th week. It will be a time of tribulation to break the rebellious will of His people and open their hardened hearts to the truth. It will be a time of calamity, miracles, signs, and wonders according to the book of Revelation.

In this last seven years before Jesus returns to this earth to establish His kingdom, we are informed in the book of Revelation and in the book of Joel that divine prophecies will apparently be reactivated. For 3 ½ years, two prophets in Jerusalem will prophesy to the Jews and the world
of judgment to come and perilous events.

It is very possible these two men are Enoch and Elijah, two men that were caught up by God to Heaven and have not experienced death. God may bring them back in the future to preach to Israel. The preaching and prophesies of these powerful prophets will be used of God to confirm that their message and warnings are from God. They will be endowed with supernatural power from Heaven.

* Revelation 11:3- And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.

* Revelation 11:5-6.... And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed. 6 These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will.

The prophet Joel also told us that prophesy would be reactivated right before the visible return of Jesus Christ when He establishes His millennial kingdom.

* Joel 2:28-32... And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: 29 And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. 30 And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. 31 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come. 32 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call.

These verses do not refer to what happened at Pentecost or our day. They refer to events that take place right before the Second Coming of Christ at the end of the Tribulation. There were no blood, columns of smoke, darkening of the sun, or changing of the moon to blood associated with Pentecost, nor have any such things happened in modern times.
B. Preaching in an Unknown Foreign Language: “whether there be tongues, they shall cease...”

Paul also states that tongues, the miraculous ability to learn and speak in a living, human foreign language would cease. The word “cease” is from a different Greek word. It is the word *pauo* {pow'-o} which means “to stop or to come to an end.” The Greek voice of this word is different than the verb voice of the words “fail” or “vanisheth away.” The word for “cease” is in what is called the middle voice. Why is that important? Let me explain.

There are three voices in the Greek language which affect the meaning of the verbs.

1. **The Active Voice**
   
   This is when the subject is doing the action of a verse. For example if we said, “The mother cleans her daughter.” We would be using the active voice of the verb *katharizo*.

2. **The Passive Voice**

   This voice is used when the subject of the sentence is being acted upon by another person or thing. If we said, “The daughter is cleansed by her mother.” We would be using the passive voice.

3. **The Middle Voice**

   The middle voice is used when the subject of the sentence is doing the action upon itself. When used of the actions of people, it indicates intentional, voluntary action upon oneself. When used of inanimate objects, this voice indicates self-causing action. The cause comes from within or it is built in. If we said, “The daughter cleans herself,” we would be using the middle voice. The daughter is performing the action upon herself.

Thus, the use of the middle voice on the verb “cease” indicates that the miraculous ability to speak in foreign languages or tongues would stop by itself. It had a built-in time of termination or a limited time before it would end. When that time came, this gift would end automatically. This particular gift would stop by itself. This gift would stop before prophecies and knowledge were to become inactive.

Bible tongues, the miraculous ability to speak in a foreign language, has ceased just as Paul stated. We note several reasons for this conclusion.

1. **By the time that the book of Ephesians was written, about six years later, there was no mention of tongues in the listing of spiritual gifts.**
This is the only letter that Paul mentions tongues. There is no mention of tongues in the epistles of John, James, Peter, and Jude. Before the apostolic age was completed, tongues had already terminated.

2. **The purpose for the gift of tongues was to reach unsaved Jewish people.**

   It was to be a sign to the Jews to show them that the message being preached was of God. That’s what Paul told us. He made it clear that tongues were NOT for a sign to saved people, but for the lost.
   
   * 1 Corinthians 14:22a- Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not...

   After the destruction of the Jewish Temple, the Jewish people were scattered across the world. The minds of the Jews had been made up about Christ and the message of the apostles. They totally rejected God’s offer of salvation. The need for the gift of tongues became obsolete because they would not listen to what God had to say to them.

3. **Tongues was not a very good method of edifying people.**

   I have had the great joy to preach to Filipino and Chinese churches. If you have ever preached to people of another language, you know that it is much more difficult to preach through an interpreter. The tempo of the service is greatly slowed down and the translation may not be accurate. Some folks still find it difficult to understand, even when there is an interpreter.
   
   * 1 Corinthians 14:19- Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue.

4. **The purpose of tongues was also to confirm the authority of the apostles and their doctrine.**

   When the New Testament was completed and the apostles were gone, there was no need for this gift. The message that the Holy Spirit gave to God’s prophets and apostles is the inerrant, inspired Word of God. The Bible is its own authority.

5. **The early church fathers did not mention any use of tongues.**

   About four decades after the writing of 1 Corinthians, near the time when John wrote the book of Revelation, Clement of Rome wrote a letter to the church at Corinth. Nothing is said about tongues when problems in the church were discussed. In the second century, Justin Martyr went from one church to another, yet, he mentioned nothing about tongues in his massive writings.
Origen, a church scholar who lived during the third century, makes no mention of tongues. One of the greatest writers of the fourth century was Chrysostom. He lived from 347 to 407 A.D. When he wrote on 1 Corinthians 12, he noted that the miraculous gifts, including tongues, had not only ceased, but could not even be defined accurately. The historians and theologians of the early church unanimously agreed that tongues ceased to exist after the time of the apostles.

II. The Partiality of our Knowledge and Preaching 13:9

For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.

Paul acknowledges that he had only a partial view of the total truth of God’s divine revelation. The knowledge and prophecies of future events given to him by the Holy Spirit were accurate and true, but they were also incomplete.

At this time in the history of the early church, when this was written, many things were still unknown to the early church, and had not been revealed. God did not reveal all of His revelation of truth to one man. He did not reveal it all at one time. There was more truth that was yet to come from the Lord from men like Jude, James, Peter, and John.

God revealed His truth “in part” which means in the Greek, “bit by bit.” Paul was saying that one day, the complete revelation of God’s truth would be a reality. It would be complete with the arrival of perfection. He addresses this in the next verse.

III. Perfection’s Arrival 13:10

But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

The apostle stated when that which is “perfect” is come, then that which is partial will be done away. The phrase “done away” is from the same word for “fail” and “vanish away” in verse eight. It is the word katargeo (kat-arg-e'-o) which means “to render something idle, inactive, delayed or set aside.”

What does this verse mean? The meaning comes from understanding two words, “perfect” and “part.” The context of this passage has been on the revelation and communication of God’s inspired message. I believe the word “part” is a reference to the miraculous sign
Chapter 14. The Arrival of Perfection... 13:8-13

gifts that God used to reveal His truth to His apostles and prophets. They are the “part.”

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Paul said these gifts of prophecy and knowledge would become inactive, idle, or set aside with the arrival or the coming of that which is “perfect.” The arrival of that which is “perfect” would replace that which is “in part.” So what is Paul referring to when he speaks of that which is “perfect?”

This word “perfect” is from the Greek word teleios (tel'-i-os) which means “finished, mature, whole, complete; to reach the goal.” We know that it does not refer to a person, but to a “thing” because the neuter form of the noun “perfect” is used instead of the feminine or masculine form. This is not a reference to Christ at His second coming.

I believe the word “perfect” is a reference to the final completion of the New Testament canon of scriptures. With the completion of the New Testament, there would be no more need for the temporary sign gifts of knowledge and prophecy which only gave us truth bit by bit. These gifts provided a method for the revelation and communication of divine truth in the early church when it was in its infant years. These sign gifts, however, would be “done away.” They would be put on the shelf and become inactive, because something else that was better would replace them.

In fact, the words “done away” are in the passive voice which means that which is “in part” is being acted upon by something else. That “something else” is that which is “perfect”....the completion of the New Testament canon.

With the completion of the New Testament, Christianity had become mature and complete. God’s message for us was complete. God has given to His Church His completed Word so that all believers can know Him and His will. His completed Word is the method for the Church today to learn His truth and His message for us. There are no more new revelations of divine truth for the Church. We have God’s entire package of His truth in the Bible.
IV. The Picture of a Child  13:11

When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

Paul illustrates the passing of the sign gifts of prophecy and divine knowledge, and the maturing of the Church, by using the immaturity of a child and the maturity of an adult as an illustration. A child communicates much differently than an adult. In fact, this word child is from the Greek word *nepios* (nay'-pee-os) which means an infant or little child. This word is always linked with immaturity when it is used in the New Testament.

The temporary gifts of the spirit were like the communication of a little child. They revealed partial or incomplete understanding. When the New Testament would be perfected or complete, it would be like a person who reached the maturity of an adult. When the New Testament would be complete, it would signify that the Church was mature like a man that was grown. With the arrival of that which is “perfect,” with the completion of the New Testament canon, it would be time to set aside those temporary spiritual gifts. There would be no need for them with the perfection or completion of God’s Word. The sign gifts would be put away just as a man puts away childish things.

The words “put away” are also from the Greek word *katargeo* (kat-arg-eh'-o). The gifts of divine prophecy and divine knowledge or revelation would be set aside, become idle, or inactive. That is exactly what happened in church history just as Paul stated. They will, however, be reactivated again in the Tribulation period as God’s prophets prophesy to the nation of Israel.

V. Our Present Paleness  13:12

For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

Paul continues to paint a picture of the present condition in the church at that time by using a mirror or looking glass to drive home the same point. The sign gifts of prophecy and knowledge were like looking into a cloudy mirror. They revealed partial truth or understanding.
Mirrors were made in Corinth out of polished brass, but they did not reveal a perfect or clear image of the person who was using them. The mirror did not give a full reflection of the individual. Usually the image was darkened, cloudy, or slightly blurred.

One day, however, Paul stated there would be perfect clarity, like a person seeing his reflection perfectly, one face to another, or as Paul said “face to face.” A person that could see his reflection perfectly would be able to see himself just as other people see him. He would see what others see. He would know himself as others know him. That is what I believe he is talking about here.

When the Scriptures would be complete one day, they would provide full understanding and knowledge of that which has been blurred or partial. Paul had partial understanding or he knew in part, but one day, he would have complete clarity and understanding of God’s truth just like a person who views himself in a perfect mirror. The completion of God’s truth would give him full understanding of God, His will, and also himself. He would see himself the way God sees him with more clarity.

This brings us to some good questions that many Christians have asked through the centuries. Since the canon of Scripture is complete, how did we determine what books in the Bible are the Scriptures? How was the Bible put together? Why are some books rejected as invalid and others accepted as inspired?

* The History of the Canon of Scripture

The term “canon” is used to describe the books that are divinely inspired by the Spirit of God and therefore belong in the Bible. The difficulty in determining the biblical canon is that the Bible does not give us a list of the books that belong in the Bible. Determining the canon was a process conducted first by Jewish rabbis and scholars and later by early Christians. Ultimately, it was God, and God alone, who decided what books belonged in the biblical canon. A book of Scripture belonged in the canon from the moment God inspired its writing. It was simply a matter of God’s convincing His human followers which books should be included in the Bible.

Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the books of the Bible were collected gradually and with great care. The process whereby a book was accepted as canonical was painfully slow. Some books were evaluated for a long time before being admitted to the divine library.
The Old Testament canon of books were accumulated over a period of hundreds of years by the Jewish people themselves who discerned what was Scripture and what was not authentic. The writings of men like Moses and David, various prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel etc., were considered sacred by the very leaders who were responsible for Israel's spiritual life.

The Jews agreed that the canon of the Old Testament closed about 400 B.C. with the prophecy of Malachi. Jesus Himself, ratified the Old Testament canon by His frequent references to the Old Testament as the unbreakable Word of God. Meticulous in their efforts to preserve the sacred writings from copyist errors, the Jews counted and recounted every word on a page and every letter of every word on every page. So great was their reverence for the Word of God that when a copy of it became too old and frail to be used any longer, they actually interred it and gave it an honorable funeral.

The New Testament books were written during the last half of the first century. Most of the books were written to local churches and some were addressed to individuals. Other books were penned by various writers for a broader audience in eastern Asia (Peter), western Asia (Revelation), and Europe (Romans). Various books of the New Testament gained acceptance as they were written and circulated among churches.

The believers of the early church recognized a growing body of literature as the inspired Word of God. By the end of the first century, more than two thirds of our present New Testament was deemed as inspired. As other books of the Bible gained wider circulation, they too, were recognized as Scripture. A generation after the end of the apostolic age, every book of the New Testament had been cited as authoritative by some church father. By the time of Origen and Eusebius, doubtful books were sifted out. By 367 A.D., Athanasius could refer to a list of twenty-seven books corresponding to our New Testament.

How did they know if a book was Scripture? How did they determine this? Several criteria were used to discern a document as Scripture.

1. The book had to be written by an apostle or had to be sanctioned by an apostle.
2. The book had to be in doctrinal agreement and consistent with the Old Testament prophets, the teachings of Jesus, and the New Testament apostles.
God does not contradict Himself. Gnostic books, which are books filled with unscriptural teachings, superstitions, and foolish heresies, were rejected. They include books such as the Gospel of Mary, the Gospel of Thomas, and the Gospel of Philip which claimed that Jesus was married to Mary and that she was to be the leader of the church. These books were rejected because they contradicted other books of Scripture.

The gnostic books are not reliable books. One key reason for their unreliability is they are not eyewitness accounts of the events of the New Testament. The very earliest date of their writings are 150 A.D. which is over 100 to 120 years after the time of Christ's crucifixion. Other gnostic writings have been dated in the fourth through sixth centuries, hundreds of years after Christ. The New Testament books were written by eyewitnesses and completed before 70 A.D. except for the Gospel of John and Revelation which may have been as late as 96 A.D.

Like the gnostic books, the Apocryphal books were never admitted at all because they too, contained errors, mere legends, or suspicious details. These writings did not ring true. They did not speak with authority. King James Only advocates need to understand that the 1611 King James Version contained the Apocrypha books. My question for these advocates is, “Do you believe the Apocrypha is part of the canon of Scripture?” I hope not.

3. It had to have widespread and continuous acceptance by believers themselves.

A council or committee did not determine what was Scripture. They only ratified what was already decided by the local churches after these books were written.

4. It had to bear the mark and effect of spiritual power and truth.

It had to have evidence of high moral and spiritual values that would reflect a work of the Holy Spirit.

VI. The Preeminence of Love 13:13

And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

Paul closes out this portion of the epistle by addressing the preeminence of love. The sign gifts would become idle or set aside, but faith, hope, and love would abide. In other words, they would “remain, continue in the present, or be kept in use.”
Our faith looks back to the cross. It is the foundation of our beliefs. Our hope in Christ looks forward to the future. We look forward to the fulfillment of His promise to us of eternal life and a home in Heaven. We look forward to His return. Love is for the present. It is what sustains us each day and it is what characterizes God Himself when we truly love others for God is love. Love is what enables men to know that we are Christ’s disciples. Genuine love is what this world is crying out for in their lives.

Years ago a priest named John Powell told the story of a woman named Norma Jean Mortenson. Do any of you recognize that name? Most of you don’t, but most of you know who she is. Norma Jean's mother, Mrs. Gladys Baker, was periodically committed to a mental institution and Norma Jean spent much of her childhood in foster homes.

In one of those foster homes, when she was eight years old, one of the boarders raped her and gave her a nickel. He said, “Here, Honey. Take this and don't ever tell anyone what I did to you.” When little Norma Jean went to her foster mother to tell her what had happened she was badly beaten. She was told, “Our boarder pays good rent. Don't you ever say anything bad about him!” Norma Jean at the age of eight had learned what it was to be used, and given a nickel, and beaten for trying to express the hurt that was in her.

Norma Jean turned into a very pretty young girl and people began to notice her. Boys whistled at her and she began to enjoy that, but she always wished they would notice that she was a person too—not just a body—or a pretty face—but a person.

Then Norma Jean went to Hollywood and took a new name that you will probably recognize. It was Marilyn Monroe and the publicity people told her, “We are going to create a modern sex symbol out of you.” And this was her reaction, “A symbol? Aren't symbols things people hit together?” They said, “Honey, it doesn't matter, because we are going to make you the most smoldering sex symbol that ever hit the papers.”

Marilyn was an overnight smash success, but she kept asking, “Did you also notice I am a person? Would you please notice?” Then she was cast in the dumb blonde roles in her films. Everyone hated Marilyn Monroe. Everyone did. She would keep her crews waiting two hours on the set. She was regarded as a selfish prima donna. What they didn't know was that she was in her dressing room vomiting because she was so terrified.
Chapter 14....The Arrival of Perfection...13:8-13

Marilyn kept saying, “Will someone please notice I am a person. Please.” They didn't notice. They wouldn't take her seriously. She went through three marriages--always pleading, “Take me seriously as a person.” Everyone kept saying, “But you are a sex symbol. You can't be other than that.” Marilyn kept saying, “I want to be a person. I want to be a serious actress.”

And so on that Saturday night, at the age of 35 when all beautiful women were supposed to be on the arm of a handsome escort, Marilyn Monroe took her own life. She killed herself. When her maid found her body the next morning, she noticed the telephone was off the hook. It was dangling there beside her. Later investigations revealed that in the last moments of her life she had called a Hollywood actor and told him she had taken enough sleeping pills to kill herself.

The actor answered with the famous line of Rhett Butler, which I now edit for church, “Frankly, my dear, I don't care!” Those were the last words she heard. She dropped the phone and left it dangling. Claire Booth Luce in a very sensitive article asked, “What really killed Marilyn Monroe, the love goddess who never found any love?”

She said that she thought the dangling telephone was the symbol of Marilyn Monroe's whole life. She died because she never got through to anyone who understood her. I say she died because she did not know the love of Christ. She had no faith, she had no hope, and she had no love because she did not know the Lord. May the Lord help us to love people and to see them as He sees them. Of these three, faith, hope, and love, the greatest and most important is love.
Chapter 15
Paul Addresses the Issue of Tongues
1 Corinthians 14

There is a great deal of confusion today about the matter of tongues because churches who have embraced this issue have failed to adhere to the teachings of Scripture, especially this chapter. The Apostle Paul gave us very specific directions and guidelines about this matter and what he felt about tongues and preaching when the two were compared. It is the failure of churches today to follow these directions that has created confusion in the church.

Paul addresses this issue because the “tongues” issue became a problem in the church. People began to practice counterfeit tongues. In other words, they were not speaking in an existing foreign language. They were behaving like pagans that worshiped their idols.

The worship of pagan idols in the Greek and Roman religions consisted of frenzied, ecstatic utterances. Worshipers would dance and drink themselves into an uncontrolled condition with no moral or conscious restraints, resulting in perversion and sexual orgies. All restraints were removed. They believed this condition brought them closer to their gods because their spirits left their bodies to commune with their gods. The babbling and excited speech was believed by them to be a supernatural language of their god.

The believers in Corinth began to copy the pagan practice of babbling speech, claiming it was a heavenly language. The services turned into an emotional frenzy characterized by absolute chaos and confusion as everyone wanted to share their so called “message from God,” all at the same time. It was not a time of building up one another, but a time of bedlam. Such behavior still exists in many churches today.
I. The Desire for the Right Spiritual Gifts  14:1

Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy.

Paul begins by instructing all of us about our priorities in serving the Lord. He tells us to “follow” after love or charity. Notice this is listed first and is to be a very important part of the Christian life.

The word “follow” is an intense word. It is from the word dioko ({dee-o'-ko}) which means “to run after or chase after something in order to catch it; to eagerly search for something; to reach a goal.” God wants us to focus and pursue love, to catch it, and make it a part of our lives.

To do this, we will need to get our attention off of ourselves.

Why would we need to chase after love in the first place? The answer is the fact that love does not come easy for people because they tend to be focused upon themselves instead of others. Selfishness squelches love.

Paul continues and states that we should have a deep concern or earnestly desire God’s spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophesying or speaking and preaching to others the truths of God’s Word. This word is in the plural form, indicating that it was Paul’s desire that the entire church have this ability. Paul mentions this gift because it is the one that builds up the church. It strengthens other believers. You may not be a preacher, but you can still share with people the truths of the Bible that will reach them for Christ or encourage them to grow in the Lord.

II. The Denseness from Tongues & the Discernment from Preaching  14:2-3

For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries.  

When a person is speaking in an unknown language or is uttering sounds that no one understands, he is not speaking or communicating with others because they cannot understand him. They are dense to the message. What he is saying is a mystery because he is not understood. He is speaking to himself or his own spirit,
not in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The word "unknown" in this verse does not occur in the Greek text. The translators inserted it to express their understanding of this phenomenon—a language unknown among men, not human, not understandable, a fabricated language that was not properly a language at all!

On the other hand, those who preach or prophesy, clearly speak to men for their benefit. They strengthen, encourage, and comfort others. Preaching builds character in people. It is tender and comforting to those that are hurting or grieving. Preaching is practical because it can be understood.

The use of languages that cannot be understood have no benefit at all. It does not make any sense at all for Christians in a church service to babble a bunch of sounds in the name of praise and worship to God when no one understands what they are saying. How is God glorified and honored when no one knows that is what you are doing? If you are going to worship, praise, and honor God, then do it in a language that people can understand so they will know that is what you are doing. Duh!!

When we look through the Bible, we find no record of any believer speaking to the Lord in anything but a known, intelligible language. When we look at Jesus, we find no record of Him speaking in tongues at all, but in His own language. In fact, it was the Lord Himself that warned against praying in vain repetitions which included the indiscernible gibberish of heathen tongues which were characterized by meaningless sounds that were repeatedly uttered.

*Matthew 6:7- But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.*

If you will think about it, if speaking in a heavenly tongue was a real language taught and inspired by the Holy Spirit, then everyone who possessed this gift would be able to understand one another without the services of an interpreter, but that is not the case at all. Why? Because such a divine language does not exist. It is a bunch of babble!

If you want to test a person’s ability to speak in a heavenly tongue and if people in the service claim to interpret the message, such as three or four people, then on the spur of the moment, have those four interpreters, without speaking with the other interpreters or sitting next to them, confidentially write down on paper what was exactly said in that “tongue” and compare their notes with the other interpreters. You will
find that none of them will agree.

III. The Difference between Tongues and Preaching 14:4

He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church.

Paul points out the difference between speaking in an unknown language and preaching. Prophesying or preaching edifies the church. The word “edifies” is from the Greek word oikodomeo (oik-od-om-e'-o) which means “to build, restore, repair, promote growth, wisdom, or holiness.” SOUND biblical preaching does this. It exhorts, encourages, and comforts. These are the elements of balanced preaching.

Preaching that is watered down or unscriptural does not build up anybody. It just entertains or takes up time. The entire purpose of ministry with people is to strengthen them and build them up, not glorify yourself. Whether you sing or preach, your motive is to bless others, not exalt yourself and say, “Look at me!”

IV. The Desirability for Preaching 14:5

I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying.

Paul was not against the genuine gift of the Holy Spirit of being able to miraculously preach in a foreign language. Paul did not deny that the gift of tongues existed in the early church, that it was a valid gift, that it had a definite reason for existing, and that it was a worthwhile gift. He wished they all had that ability. This was not a command, however. He was showing that he did not hate this gift. It would enable them to share the gospel with those who were lost who spoke a different language.

What he desired more, however, was that they all would preach or speak the Word of God in an understandable language. Paul said this to show that tongues are inferior to preaching or prophesying. The person who preaches is greater in his effectiveness for Christ than the one that speaks in an unknown language, unless that person interprets what he says for the church. When he interprets the language he is speaking, he then is preaching and the entire church is benefitted from his message. Bible tongues was never to be used unless someone was properly
interpreting the language that was being spoken.

Beloved, the way to build a solid church is not through entertainment, but through evangelism and the exposition of Scripture. So many churches have drifted away from Bible preaching because they don’t believe it will pack their pews. Preaching has been replaced with drama skits and hour-long music programs with no preaching at all or just a few moments of sharing the Word of God. Music and even skits are fine, as long as they don’t become substitutes for Bible preaching.

We have examined so far:
* The Desire for the Right Spiritual Gifts
* The Denseness from Tongues and the Discernment from Preaching
* The Difference between Tongues and Preaching
* The Desirability for Preaching
* Next...The Destitute Benefit of Speaking in an Unknown Language

V. The Destitute Benefit of Speaking in an Unknown Language 14:6

*Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine?*

Paul saw no benefit from preaching in a language that no one understood. He did, however, acknowledge the benefit of revealing God’s inspired word to them. The key point is the importance of understanding. God wants us to understand the preaching. He also wants us to understand His Word. This is where we find great benefit from some of the quality, modern translations of scripture today.

Beloved, it was the desire of the translators of the King James Version that the Scriptures be in the current language of the people reading the Word. They wanted God’s Word to be understood. They would NOT be in agreement with the teaching that the King James is the only Bible to be used by the English-speaking people. If they did not believe this, then why should we?

On page 8 of the Letter from the Translators to the Reader in the 1611 King James, the King James translators talk about making new, up-to-date translations. They ask, "Who would have ever thought that was a fault? To amend it where he saw cause?" Then they say, "That is our business. The difference that appears between our translation and our often correcting of them is the thing that we are especially charged with."
It is the translator’s business to continually update the language, not because God’s Word is outdated, but because the English language changes. The English language has changed some in our lifetime. Translators are not supposed to make one translation and go into retirement. It is their business to make accurate translations and keep them updated in the current language of the day. That is the reason the King James translators immediately started to revise the 1611 edition and came out with another in 1613 and another in 1629 (when they left out the Apocrypha.) These men would be in favor of getting the Bible into the language that people used and understood.

The translators also said the Bible should be in the common vernacular of the people (Page 11). The King James translators said on page 11, "But we desire that the Scripture may speak like itself, as in the language, that it may be understood even of the very vulgar."

They had just said how they avoided language that "darken the sense." The translators were clear, they wanted to put the Scripture in the vernacular of the person on the street. They wanted the language to be so simple and up to date it could be understood by "even the very vulgar" (common, simple or uneducated). They would certainly be supportive of the good, accurate, modern English versions today.

I have found tremendous benefit and understanding from using them in my studies every week including the New American Standard, the English Standard Version, and the NET Bible produced by the Biblical Studies Foundation. The translation of the Greek and Hebrew text of these Bible translations are very good. When people attack them, they do not understand that they are attacking the Scriptures. They are attacking God’s Word. This is why I speak up about this issue because they are attacking the Word of God they claim to love and believe.

Foreign translations of God’s Word are not the same as the King James, but they are still God’s Word though different. The same truth holds for quality modern English translations of Scripture that use the language of our day. Like the King James, they are translations of Scripture.

Should we discard the King James? Heavens no, just don’t attack the other good translations of Scripture and the foreign translations of God’s Word. Such attacks create confusion here in the states and abroad.
VI. The Distinctness of the Message is Important 14:7-9

And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped? {sounds: or, tunes}  
* For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle? *  
* So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air. *

Paul continues to emphasize the distinctness of the message by using musical instruments as an illustration to make his point. The Corinthians would appreciate these illustrations because their city contained one of the great ancient music halls that seated about 20,000 people.

The clarity of music of a harp or flute is determined by playing the right notes, chords, key, volume, and timing to produce the music. If various kinds of instruments are to play together there must be a score which tells each one when to sound and when to be silent. There has to be a conductor who rules over all. If everyone in the orchestra plays what they want when they want, then you have pandemonium. The sounds from the orchestra are a bunch of noise. If you have ever heard an orchestra warm up, then you know what I mean.

If the bugler does not play a distinct tune on his horn, his message to the troops is obscured. Buglers sent signals to the army by the sounds of the trumpet including assemble, charge, retreat, take no prisoners in battle, wake up, or retire for the night. In the same manner, if the words from your tongue are unclear, then how will others know what you are trying to say? You will be speaking to the air. This would do nothing but create confusion, and God, beloved, is not the author of confusion.

VII. The Diversity of Languages & Difficulty in Understanding 14:10-11

There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification.  
11 Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me.

Paul acknowledges that there are many kinds of voices or languages in the world. According to the Wycliffe Bible
Translators’ International Linguistic Center in Dallas, Texas, there are more than 5,000 known language groups in the world. These languages are all made up of various kinds of sounds, not one of which is unintelligible to those who speak them. Each language has its own words and meanings. If it doesn’t have meaning, then it is not a language at all and not a form of communication.

If you do not know the language, then to those who speak it, you will be considered a barbarian or foreigner. The word “barbarian” is from the word barbaros [bar'-bar-os] which means “one who speaks a foreign or strange language which is not understood by another; one whose speech is rude, rough and harsh.” In Greek society, anyone who did not know the Greek language was considered a barbarian.

VIII. The Diligent Effort to Strengthen the Church 14:12

Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church.

The apostle challenges the church that if they are to be eager or zealous of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, then they should be eager to continually and habitually seek the gifts that will strengthen the entire church. That is their purpose in the first place and is to be our purpose, too.

We are to seek to “excel” in building up one another. The word “excel” is a great word. It is the word perisseuo [per-is-syoo'-o] which means “to have enough or an abundance for yourself that will overflow and satisfy the needs of others.” We are challenged to strengthen one another all throughout the Bible.

* Luke 22:32- But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.
* 2 Corinthians 1:4-Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.
* Hebrews 12:12- Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees;
* Galatians 6:1- Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.
* Hebrews 3:13- But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.
Never underestimate the power of encouragement. For example, it wasn't like Scott Kregel to give up. He was a battler, a dedicated athlete who spent hour after hour perfecting his free throw and jump shot during the hot summer months of 1987. But just before fall practice, everything changed. A serious car accident left Scott in a coma for several days. When he awoke, a long rehabilitation process lay ahead of him.

Like most patients with closed head injuries, Scott balked at doing the slow, tedious work that was required to get him back to normal, such as stringing beads. What high school junior would enjoy that?

Tom Martin, Scott's basketball coach at the Christian school he attended, had an idea. Coach Martin told Scott that he would reserve a spot on the varsity for him, if he would cooperate with his therapist and show progress in the tasks he was asked to do.

Tom's wife Cindy spent many hours with Scott, encouraging him to keep going. Within 2 months, Scott was riding off the basketball court on his teammates' shoulders. He had made nine straight free throws to clinch a triple-overtime league victory. It was a remarkable testimony of the power of encouragement.

We have examined eight areas so far:
* The Desire for the Right Spiritual Gifts
* The Denseness from Tongues and the Discernment from Preaching
* The Difference between Tongues and Preaching
* The Desirability for Preaching
* The Destitute Benefit of Speaking in an Unknown Language
* The Distinctness of the Message is Important
* The Diversity of Languages & Difficulty in Understanding
* The Diligent Effort to Strengthen the Church

Next... The Desire for Understanding and Clarity in Praying and Singing

**IX. The Desire for Understanding and Clarity in Praying and Singing 14:13-17**

Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret. 14 For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful. 15 What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also. 16 Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth
Paul teaches that any person that speaks in a foreign tongue or language should pray for the ability to interpret the words that he is speaking. If a person is praying in a foreign language, he has an attitude of prayer in his spirit, but he does not have a clue what he is saying. What good is that? To resolve the problem, Paul states that you should pray in words that you understand. The same principle applies for singing, too.

Others cannot benefit from your prayers, your praise, and your singing if they do not understand what you are saying. How can they agree with you in prayer and say “Amen” which means “so be it,” if they don’t know what you are praying? What Paul is saying here is downright common sense, yet, many charismatic churches today have chosen to conduct their services in a way that leave people empty and confused because they don’t know what is being said or what in the world is going on in the service.

Paul acknowledged his dexterity or ability to speak in foreign languages. Yet, in the church service, he made it very clear he would rather speak five distinct, understandable words to the ones listening to him, than to speak ten-thousand words that no one could understand. That makes a whole lot of sense.

Let me add right here that as a preacher or teacher, it is important that you use words that people can understand. Using five-dollar words to impress people with your vocabulary does not benefit anyone. Use words in your sermons that people can understand and make your messages practical where people can put Bible truths into practice in their lives.
XI. Deliberation about Your Thinking 14:20

Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men.

Deliberation or caution about our thoughts is offered by the apostle here. Paul tells us to not be childish or immature in our thinking or reasoning. In other words, grow up! If they don’t grow up, they will be unteachable and not learn what they need to know to be their best for Christ.

Immaturity has been part of the problem in Corinth, especially when it came to speaking with words that no one understood and their selfish, arrogant attitudes. Their immaturity created inconsistency, indifference, irritability, iniquity, and inconsiderate behavior. Immaturity spawns strife, selfishness, extreme sensitivity, and sensuality.

When it comes to malice, depravity, viciousness, or that which is wicked or evil, we are to be as babies. In other words, we are to be ignorant and innocent about wickedness, and have maturity about spiritual matters. Paul taught this same principle to the Roman believers.

* Romans 16:19- For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil.

XII. The Design for Tongues and Preaching 14:21-22

In the law it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord. 22 Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe.

These believers needed to get some common sense about this matter of tongues and what they were doing in the church. Paul proceeds to explain to them why this gift existed in the church. It was actually a sign of God’s judgment upon the nation of Israel. The apostle looks back to the Old Testament to provide the foundation for his statement.

About 800 years before the prophet Isaiah appeared on the time line, God issued a warning in the Law through the prophet Moses.
*Deuteronomy 28:49-* The LORD shall bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flieth; a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand:

The Lord would bring this judgement because His people would be rebellious. The strange language of their conquerors would be a judgement from God. That judgement did come through the Assyrian army. God’s people would not listen to Isaiah the prophet and judgment came after they were warned.

*Isaiah 28:11-12...* For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people. 12 To whom he said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear.

They would not listen to Isaiah in their own language, so God sent the Assyrians to conquer Israel because of their rebellion. The Jews would have to listen to a language they did not comprehend. The foreign tongue of their enemies would ring in their ears because of their hard hearts and unbelief. The presence of this "tongue" was evidence of God's judgment on the nation.

The Lord would rather speak to His own people through His prophets in their own language they could understand, but their repeated disobedience made this impossible. Around 100 years after the ministry of Isaiah, Jeremiah warned of judgment, too.

*Jeremiah 5:15-* Lo, I will bring a nation upon you from far, O house of Israel, saith the LORD: it is a mighty nation, it is an ancient nation, a nation whose language thou knowest not, neither understandest what they say.

Babylon ransacked Judah and the people were led away into captivity, having to again listen to the language of their enemies for 70 years. The foreign tongue was a judgment because of their unbelief.

It is astonishing how seldom tongues are mentioned in the New Testament scriptures. Apart from 1 Corinthians 12-14, where the whole subject is doctrinally examined and put in its proper perspective, it is mentioned elsewhere only in the book of Acts only three times. Moreover, each time it was mentioned, some form of Jewish unbelief was involved.

Paul states clearly that tongues were for a sign, not for Christians, but for unbelievers, especially unbelieving Jews that required a sign. The gift of tongues was given as a sign to lead unbelievers into an understanding of the presence of the Holy Spirit in preaching and
teaching. Biblical tongues enabled a person to understand the gospel in his own language if he was a foreigner. Preaching or prophesying builds up those who are believers and helps them to grow in Christ.

The gift of tongues existed at the birth of the early church because the Jews had rejected Christ as their Messiah, yet, God gave them another opportunity to repent through the ministry of the apostles. Three thousand did repent on the day of Pentecost as they heard the Gospel in their own languages, but the Jewish people, as a whole, became harder through their resistance, rebellion, and further unbelief of which they were reminded on that day.

* Acts 2:36 -Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.

Judgment finally did come. In 70 A.D., the Jewish Temple and Jerusalem were wiped out by the Roman army just as Jesus prophesied. Over one million Jews died under the Roman siege and thousands were taken into slavery. By the time Jerusalem was destroyed, the gift of tongues had ceased.

Paul understood that if the people of God will not obey what is spoken in their own language, they definitely will not obey what is spoken in a foreign language. Tongues were a sign of judgment to come and in 70 A.D., it came. The reason this gift ceased is because judgment arrived. The purpose of tongues ended when that to which it pointed ended. God would now work through His church, both saved Jews and Gentiles, instead of Israel, to spread His truth.

* Galatians 3:28- There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

**XIII. Disorder or Distinctness in the Worship Service**

14:23-25

*If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad? 24 But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: 25 And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.
Paul presents a scenario here about the response of unbelievers or those who are ungifted if they come into the church and hear everyone speaking in an a bunch of gibberish and if they hear preaching in their own language.

The chaos, confusion, and pandemonium created by everyone speaking in unrecognizable languages or sounds will cause them to think that the people in the church are nuts, mad, in a frenzied rage, or out of their minds, and rightly so. An unbeliever, Gentile or Jew would go away from such a service thinking it was just another wild and meaningless ritual, much like those of paganism. Bible tongues were to be understood, not to cause bewilderment. This is what happened at Pentecost.

*Acts 2:11- Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.*

If these same unbelievers come into the church and they listen to the preaching and testimonies of the believers, the Spirit of God can use their words to bring conviction of sin, turn them to Christ, cause them to worship the Lord, and acknowledge the presence of the Lord in the lives of the church family. God’s method of worship is not through disorder, but through a distinct, orderly message and method.

Conviction is a by-product of the working of the Holy Spirit who takes the preaching of God’s Word to speak to a person’s heart. This is why it is so important to preach the Word.

*Hebrews 4:12- For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

If you are unwilling to study the Word of God and preach it, then let someone else pastor the church. I know that is blunt, but I intended it to be blunt. You are not helping anyone if you are lazy in your study of the Bible and goofing off in the pulpit. Don’t waste people’s time by your shallowness in the pulpit. If God called you to preach, then preach His Word! Make sure that what you are preaching is accurate, that it is biblical, that it is true, and not some tradition or fad of man. Check your facts, especially about matters that happened in history. I have found that there is a great deal that has been said today about the past, that does not match with what actually happened in the past. Truth must take precedence over pet traditions.
Chapter 15...Paul Addresses the Tongues Issue...14:1-40

* 2 Timothy 3:16-17... All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: 17 That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.

We have examined these areas so far in chapter fourteen.

* The Desire for the Right Spiritual Gifts
* The Denseness from Tongues and the Discernment from Preaching
* The Difference between Tongues and Preaching
* The Desirability for Preaching
* The Destitute Benefit of Speaking in an Unknown Language
* The Distinctness of the Message is Important
* The Diversity of Languages & Difficulty in Understanding
* The Diligent Effort to Strengthen the Church
* The Desire for Understanding and Clarity in Praying and Singing
* The Dexterity and Distinctness of Paul
* Deliberation about Your Thinking
* The Design for Tongues and Preaching
* Disorder or Distinctness in the Worship Service
* Next.... The Directives for Order in the Service

XIV. The Directives for Order in the Church Service

14:26-33

How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying. 27 If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret. 28 But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God. 29 Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge. 30 If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace. 31 For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted. 32 And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. 33 For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.

Pandemonium should not characterize a church service, neither should deadness. Just because the service is done decently and orderly does not mean that the Lord will be hindered in working in the hearts of God’s people. That’s not true at all. The Corinthian church
was characterized by chaos and Paul endeavored to put a stop to it. God’s people were behaving like the pagans in the worship of their gods, so Paul provided directives for the church.

Whatever is done in the church, whether it singing, teaching a lesson, giving a testimony, or preaching a message, everything should have a purpose for strengthening believers to help them mature in Christ. The purpose of the church is not for entertainment, but for edifying believers and evangelizing the lost.

The word “edify” is from the Greek word oikodome (oik-od-om-ay’). This word literally means “to build a house.” Figuratively, the word refers to improving, growing, or maturing. We are all called by God to build up one another, especially those who are pastors, teachers, and evangelists. When you strengthen other believers, you are strengthening the church.

* 1 Thessalonians 5:11-Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.

* Ephesians 4:11-12... And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

If any person did speak in an unknown language, Paul made it clear that there must be one interpreter so the church would understand the message. In the Greek construction, “one” is in the emphatic position, indicating that a single person is involved in interpretation. If there was no interpreter present, then the person speaking in the unknown language was to remain silent.

Paul also added that not more than three should speak in a foreign language, and when they spoke, they were not to speak at the same time. They were to take turns one at a time, unlike many of the charismatic services today where many people are talking at the same time and no one is paying attention to what the others are saying. The church service is not to be characterized by an “everyman for himself” attitude. We are to minister to one another.

Paul continued and stated that when two or three preached, those who were listening should evaluate, discern, or weigh what has been said. If someone was speaking, and another person had a message from the Lord, then the service was to be conducted with order. The first person should conclude his message, and the next person could then get up to share his message. One person was to speak at a time so that
everyone could learn and be comforted, encouraged, and strengthened. God is not the author of confusion. If a church service is characterized by chaos, confusion, and pandemonium, mark it down, it is not of God.

XV. Directions for the Women in the Church 14:34-35

*Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law.* 35 *And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.*

Paul commands women in the church never to speak in tongues and never to interrupt a preacher. The word for *silence* here is a strong one. It is *sigao*. It means "absolute silence." This does not mean that women cannot speak in the church. This issue has already been addressed in chapter eleven where women, under the leadership of the godly men or the pastor, were permitted to teach other women or children in the church. Under the direction of the pastor, they could share a testimony for Christ. If a lady had a question about something that was preached, Paul instructed her to ask her husband at home.

XVI. The Drawing of Some Final Conclusions 14:36-40

*What? came the word of God out from you? or came it unto you only? 37 If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord. 38 But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant. 39 Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues. 40 Let all things be done decently and in order.*

Paul draws everything to a conclusion in this portion by first asking some questions. Sarcastically he asks, “Do you think the Word of God started with you? Do you think you are the only ones to receive His Word?” The apostle tells them that if anyone believes he is a prophet of God or is spiritual, then he should recognize the fact that what they have been told by Paul is a commandment from the Lord Himself by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. A person that does NOT acknowledge this, is not to be recognized or given any attention at all. He is not a prophet and he is not spiritual. Paul’s authority as an apostle had to be embraced.
He continues and tells them again to earnestly desire to preach or prophesy, and at the same time they were NOT to forbid anyone from speaking in foreign languages. If they were going to do this, however, they were to conduct themselves in a proper, orderly manner.

*The world says,*

“*Show me and I’ll believe you!*”

*Christ says,*

“*Believe Me, and I’ll show you!*”
Chapter 16
By the Grace of God, I Am What I Am
1 Corinthians 15:1-11

Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; 2 By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. 3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; 4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: 5 And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: 6 After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. 7 After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. 8 And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. 9 For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. 10 But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. 11 Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed.

Ben Patterson shared the following story in the April 13, 2004 edition of Leadership Journal. It was entitled "Resurrection and Pandemonium." He records the events that took place in the jungles of East Asia. Imagine the mystery and delight of not just hearing, but seeing the story of Jesus for the first time, almost as an eyewitness. That's what happened to a tribe in the jungles of East Asia when missionaries showed them The Jesus Film.

Not only had these people never heard of Jesus, they had never seen a motion picture. Then, on one unforgettable evening, they saw it all, the Gospel in their own language, visible and real. Imagine again how it felt to see this good man, Jesus Christ, who healed the sick and was adored
by children, held without a trial, beaten and scourged without mercy to a bloody pulp by jeering soldiers and mobs.

As they watched this, the people came unglued. They stood up and began to shout at the cruel men on the screen, demanding that this outrage stop. When nothing happened, they attacked the missionary running the projector. Perhaps he was responsible for this injustice!

The missionary was forced to stop the film and explain to these people that the story wasn't over yet. There was more to come. Consequently, they settled back onto the ground, holding their angry emotions in tenuous check. Needless to say, they were very upset.

Then came the Crucifixion, and again, the people could not hold back. They began to weep and wail with such loud grief that, once again, the film had to be stopped. The missionary again tried to calm them down, explaining that the story still wasn't over. There was more to come. So they composed themselves and sat down to see what happened next with intense attention. They were glued to the screen. It was clear they were very upset about what they were seeing.

Then came the Resurrection, and pandemonium broke out this time, but for a different reason. The gathering had spontaneously erupted into a party. The noise now was of jubilation, and it was absolutely deafening. The people were dancing and slapping each other on the back. Christ is risen! Christ is risen! He's alive! He's alive!

Again the missionary had to shut off the projector; this time he didn't tell them to calm down and wait for what was next. All that was supposed to happen—in the story and in their lives—was happening. They rejoiced in the truth that the Lord Jesus Christ is a living Savior and trusted in Him! This is the reason the Macedonian Christians rejoiced in their trials. They had a living Savior living within them.

Beloved, rejoice! He lives in you, too, if you have put your faith in Him. You and I have a lot to be thankful for and shout about! He is risen! He is alive! Because He is alive and conquered death, He has proved that He has the power to change our lives and give to us eternal life.

The resurrection is the key focus of the fifteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians, making these 58 verses extremely valuable to the tenets of Christianity. Because the resurrection is so vital to our faith, it has come under the barrage of unbelief from skeptics, scoffers, and the like. Their attacks are like crashing waves of the sea that slap the face of majestic mountains, but to no avail. The mountains do not move and neither does the doctrine of the resurrection.
The Resurrection is mentioned 104 times in the New Testament. It is the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and the Declaration of Independence of Christianity. It is our Rock of Gibraltar and the Waterloo of Infidelity, Liberalism, and Atheism. Men that have tried to disprove the resurrection have come to embrace it after studying the issue.

Dr. Phillips mentioned that years ago, two men, Lord Lyttleton and Gilbert West, both confirmed skeptics, met in England to lay plans to demolish Christianity, once and for all. These two men agreed that Christianity rested on two major premises—the resurrection of Christ and the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. They felt that if they could undermine these two things, they thought, they could destroy the Christian religion.

Gilbert West undertook the task to disprove the Resurrection, and Lord Lyttleton agreed to take on the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. They agreed to separate for a period of time, pursue their studies, assemble their arguments, and meet again later to review their progress.

What happened is one of the romances of the faith. Both men were converted while looking for evidence to support their claims and both men wrote their books to prove the accuracy of the New Testament narrative. Gilbert West became the author of a book on the resurrection of Christ, a classic in its day, and Lord Lyttleton championed the conversion of Saul of Tarsus.

**The Resurrection is...**
* the **foundation** of our faith,
* the **focal point** of our fervency,
* the **focus** of our faithfulness and flourishing growth,
* the **fundamental fact** of our fellowship with God and our future with Him,
* the **footing** of our fortitude and going forward for Christ,
* the **fire** in our hearts and **fuel** for our zeal.

If there was no Resurrection...
* the **facts** of the gospel would be false,
* our **faith** would be flimsy and floppy,
* our **fear** would be flourishing,
* our **future** would be foggy and floundering,
* our **faithfulness** would falter and fail,
* **foolishness** and **futility** would characterize the deaths of martyrs and missionaries who died for Christ in foreign lands. We, of all men, would be most miserable.
Thank God, however, for the tenacious, triumphant truth of the resurrection which gives us stability, serenity, and satisfaction. It is the resurrection power of Jesus Christ that transforms our lives by His saving grace. Paul had a passion to know more of this resurrection power in his own personal life.

* Philippians 3:10- That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;

* Ephesians 1:19-20... And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,

20 Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places.

The power of God and His wonderful grace conforms the believer into the image of Christ. Paul put it this way, “By the grace of God, I am what I am.” Thank God for His grace and the resurrection of Christ.

Beloved, the sign of Christianity is not the Cross, but the empty tomb. Christians have the only living originator of faith. Buddha is dead. Brahma of the Hindu religion is dead. Mohammed of the Muslim faith is dead. He died at Medina on June 8, 632, at the age of 61, and his tomb there is visited yearly by tens of thousands of Muslims. But they come to mourn his death, not to celebrate his resurrection. All these men are DEAD!

We, however, serve a living Savior! The whole fabric of Christianity rests upon Christ's resurrection. The power that raised Christ from the dead is the same power that transforms the life of the Christian, making him more like Christ each day. Let’s see what Paul has to say about this important truth.


Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; 2 By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

Paul begins this portion by reminding these Christians of the truth of the gospel that he has preached to them in the past and they have believed. He wants them to be clear about this issue because evidently it was under attack, especially the truth of the resurrection. The truth of the resurrection was not something that Paul conjured up in his imagination. It was an event that really happened and an event that we
are all to be sharing with other people.

Paul addresses a very important issue in the second verse. It is the issue of vain or useless faith. In Paul’s day, as in our day, there were people who made a profession of faith, but did not have a possession of faith in Christ. They had the knowledge of Christ in their heads, but did not truly believe in their hearts. They had the same kind of faith that demons possess. You say, “What do you mean?” I mean that demons believe in God, but their head knowledge of God does not save them.

*James 2:19- Thou believest that there is one God; thou dost well: the devils also believe, and tremble.

People with head knowledge may talk about their faith in the Lord without ever trusting in Him for salvation. This is why they struggle in being faithful to the Lord, obeying and loving His Word, and living a consistent Christian life. They have never been born again. They do not possess or keep in memory what Paul preached. Eventually they forsake the Lord, His Word, and association with other believers. A person’s attitude toward the Word of God and church, reveals volumes of what is going on in his heart and his attitude toward the Lord Jesus Christ.

*1 John 2:19- They went out from us, but they were not of us: for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

*John 8:31-Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; *2 John 1:9- Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.

There will be many that will stand in judgment before Christ one day who possess right now a fake faith. They believe their good works will save them, but will find out one day after their death that they will not enter Heaven because they had a fake faith that was useless. They believed in vain. They had head knowledge, but not heart knowledge of Christ.

*Matthew 7:22-23....Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? 23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

Do you have a head knowledge of Christ or a heart knowledge of Him? If you are not sure, the Bible urges all of us to examine our own
hearts to see what we truly believe about the Lord. If Christ is not in your heart, then you fail the test of being a genuine Christian.

* 2 Corinthians 13:5-Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?

Beloved, what is the use of going through life trying to fool God or other people? When it comes to faith in Christ, you cannot fool Him. If you truly want to go to Heaven when you die, you will have to put your faith in Him for your salvation. That is the only way you can be prepared for death.

Do you know what Thanatology is? It is the study of death. There is a growing fascination with the topic of death. What was taboo to talk about is now openly discussed and researched. The first time this course was offered at Harvard, a class that was meant for only twenty students was packed with 200 students. Topics like grief, immortality, suicide, and euthanasia are extremely popular on high school and college campuses. There is a great interest in after-life phenomena. This is where the Bible offers truth and reality about this topic. The Bible offers comfort to those who are saved and horror to those who are lost.

The Bible makes it clear that death will come to you and me if Jesus tarries. From Genesis to Revelation, the death knell sounds. You have an appointment with death. The question is, "What happens after you die?"

* Psalm 89:48—What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death? shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave? Selah.

* Psalm 90:10—The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.

* Romans 5:12—Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:

* Hebrews 9:27—And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:

There is no such thing as re-incarnation. It is appointed unto men ONCE to die, then they will spend eternity either in Heaven or Hell. Everyone has eternal life because every person has a soul. The real issue is not, "Do I have eternal life?" The real issue is "Where will I spend my eternal life? Where will I spend eternity?"

If you are without Christ, your most exciting moments are basically behind you. If you are saved, your most exciting moments are still in
front of you. We have so much to look forward to as Christians.

The resurrection enables us to see Him who is invisible. The hope and truth of the resurrection gave peace to John and Betty Stam. As John and Betty Stam, early missionaries to China, were led to certain execution by their communist captors, someone asked, "Where are you going?" His reply was, "I don't know where the guards are going, but we are going to Heaven." Shortly thereafter, the communist soldiers beheaded John and Betty in the streets of the city. They saw Him who was invisible and now are in Christ’s presence because of His promise of eternal life.

II. The Definition of the Gospel 15:3-4

For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; 4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

Paul delivered or passed on to these Christians what was the most important issue that had been passed on to him. It was the fact that Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again. His death was foretold in the Old Testament Scriptures in chapters like Psalm 22, 69, and Isaiah 53.

The sacrifices of the Jews pointed to the Lord. From the lamb without blemish being sacrificed for sins, to the brazen serpent on the pole that brought healing if they looked upon it, they pointed to Jesus Christ.

The hope of the resurrection is referred to in a number of passages in the Scriptures.
* Psalm 16:9, 10...Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.
* Daniel 12:2-3... And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. [3] And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.
* Job 19:25-27... For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: [26] And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: [27] Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though
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my reins be consumed within me.

During the earthly ministry of Christ, He told the disciples that He was going to be put to death, but would rise three days later. Everyone but the disciples seemed to remember this statement.

* Matthew 16:21—From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.

Belief in the risen Christ gives one hope of the resurrection to come. Winston Churchill chose to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, Churchill arranged his own funeral. There were stately hymns in St. Paul's Cathedral and an impressive liturgy, but at the end of the service, Churchill had an unusual event planned. When they said the benediction, a bugler high in the dome of St. Paul's Cathedral on one side played Taps, the universal signal that the day is over. There was a long pause. Then a bugler on the other side played Reveille, the military wake-up call.

It was Churchill's way of communicating that, while we say "Good night" here, it's "Good morning" up there. Now why could he do that? The answer is, "He believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who said 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me though he were dead, yet shall he live.'"

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2).

III. The Disciples are Witnesses of His Resurrection  15:5-8

And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve:  6 After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.  7 After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.  8 And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.

After Christ arose, He was first seen by Peter. We do not know the exact time and place this happened. Even though Peter had forsaken the Lord, Christ did not forsake him. It is possible the
Lord appeared to Peter first because he needed to see the Lord the most because of his denial.

Jesus was also seen by the other disciples and then by 500 other believers. We do not know the identity of these folks. There were adequate witnesses to His resurrection that continued to live almost twenty years after the resurrection when 1 Corinthians was written. Some of these believers, however, had gone home to be with the Lord which is expressed by the term “asleep.” The use of this metaphor for death refers to the body, not to the soul of the believer. It pictures for us a condition of rest, and implies that the Christian goes on living even when his body lies in the cemetery. Just as bodily sleep is a living, temporary condition, so is death itself.

Jesus was also seen by James, which is believed to be the half-brother of the Lord who originally was a skeptic, but eventually trusted in Christ. James became a key leader in the church at Jerusalem and was also the author of the wonderful epistle of James.

Paul was one of the last of the apostles to see Christ several years after His resurrection and ascension. Christ appeared to believers in that forty day period after His resurrection, but when He appeared to Saul, (who became Paul), He appeared to a hard-hearted unbeliever on the road to Damascus.

Paul refers to this appearance of Christ as “one born out of due time.” This phrase is derived from the Greek word ektroma [ek-tro-mah] which usually referred to an abortion, a miscarriage, a premature or an ill-timed birth. Paul’s salvation experience was an ill-timed birth in the sense that he was saved too late to have been one of the twelve disciples. Yet, the Lord appeared to him after His resurrection and ascension, and by faith, he trusted Jesus Christ as his Savior just like everyone else. He was a witness of the risen Lord.

IV. The Diffidence of Paul about His Destructive Past 15:9
For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.
In diffidence or humility, Paul claims to be the least of the apostles. He felt he was not even worthy to be called one because of his persecution of Christians. The images of people he put to death most likely were engraved into his memories. Paul was not an arrogant, cocky man. If he was, God would not have used him. He grieved over his past before he was saved, yet, he did not let his past overwhelm and defeat him.

Philippians 3:13-14...Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, 14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

To achieve what God wants us to do, there are some things we must forget. Paul mentions “forgetting those things which are behind.” This phrase is in the present tense indicating that Paul kept on forgetting. This word “forgetting” does not mean obliterating the memories of the past, but a conscious refusal to let the things of the past consume his attention and hinder his spiritual growth. Forgetting the things behind does not mean erasing the sins of the past. It means to break the power and influence of the past by living for the future and not letting our weights of victories and failures slow us down.

In a race, the runner’s progress is hindered if he keeps looking back. The runner’s stride is broken; he can trip or lose his balance too. Looking back gets his focus off the finish line and on his opponent. This is what happens when we dwell on the success and failures of the past.

We either rest on some accomplishment as though we have arrived, or else we live in a sagging spirit of regret over past failures. This kind of thinking hinders us from being what God wants us to be and doing what God’s will is for our lives. God wants us to forget and press onward with the determination that each day will find us more like Christ.

Never look back on your yesterdays in such a way that it slows your progress. Paul forgot what was behind and reached forth to those things before him. He was pressing for the prize of the high calling of God. At the end of the race the successful runner was called up from the floor to the elevated bema seat where he was rewarded by the judge. I believe Paul was looking forward to the Lord’s “Well Done!” Are you? Honor comes from obeying God’s Word and doing your best for Christ.

2 Timothy 4:6-8... For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. [7] I have fought a good fight, I have finished
my course, I have kept the faith: [8] Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

**V. The Difference that God’s Grace Makes**  **15:10**

*But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.*

In spite of Paul’s past, he focused on the grace of God that made him the man that God wanted him to be. Beloved, we are what we are by God’s grace and working in our lives. All of our blessings and accomplishments we owe to Him. His resurrection power changes a person from a sinner to a saint, from being gripped by vices to a victorious believer. He can take a man who has hit rock bottom and lift him up to the top of the mountain. He can pull him from the gutter of despair to the glory of God’s delight.

Paul said that God’s grace was not in vain. He labored for the Lord more abundantly than others. Dr. Phillips points out that Paul was the man who, traveling at the rate of some seventeen to twenty miles a day, covered some 5,580 miles on foot and some 6,770 miles by sea to take the gospel to the untold millions of the world. In the space of some twenty years or less, Paul evangelized along a line of some 1,500 miles all the way from Antioch to Illyricum.

I believe the remorse over his past was a motivating factor to do his very best for Christ and reach as many for the Lord as he could. Everything that Paul accomplished was because of God’s grace working in his life.

What does grace do? When we look at the Bible, we find that God provided grace for every area of our lives. He gives grace for salvation, for service, and for suffering.

**A. Grace For Salvation**

**I. Grace for Salvation includes Exonerating Grace**

* Ephesians 1:7—*In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;*

* Titus 3:7—*That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.*

* Romans 3:24—*Being justified freely by his grace through the
2. **Grace for Salvation includes Emancipating and Expatiating Grace**
   
   Along the same line as exonerating grace, we find that God saves us and atones for our sins.

   * Ephesians 2:8, 9—For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.

   If you went to your neighbor's house and mowed his lawn, what would you think if you saw him get out and mow it again right after you left? It would not be necessary because the work was already done! Right!? The work of salvation is already done, too! It was completed on the cross. Jesus cried, "It is finished!" It is foolish for someone to try to work their way to Heaven or earn their way because the work of salvation is already done!

   It was the summer of 1994, and things were not going well for Marcio da Silva. This cupid struck artist from Brazil was broken hearted over the breakup with his sweetheart Katia. They had been dating for four years. He decided to try to impress her with a gesture of devotion by attaching portions of a car tire to his knee caps and crawling for nine miles to her home in Santos, Brazil. It took this twenty-one year old young man fourteen hours to reach the house.

   Unfortunately, she was not there for she was not impressed and did not want to see him. People try to do the same thing with God. They try to impress God with their good deeds and works in order to get themselves into Heaven. Beloved, God is not impressed because He has already paid the price by giving His son Jesus to die for our sins.

3. **Grace for Salvation includes Endowing or Entering Grace**

   * Hebrews 4:16—Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

   Approaching the throne of kings in Bible days required permission. Without the consent of the king could mean possible death for the person approaching the throne. Because of grace we qualify to come before God and His throne of grace. We have access into God's presence because of Jesus Christ. He is our high priest (Heb. 4:15).

**B. Grace For Service**

1. **Grace for Service includes Energizing or Enabling Grace**
2 Corinthians 9:8—And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:

God's grace is adequate, acceptable, and ample for all our needs. Notice the ALL'S... all grace, all sufficiency or adequate resources within, all things, and EVERY good work. Regardless of how difficult our circumstances, a person who wants to give can do so in dependence upon God. Grace gave Paul great confidence and contentment. He reflected his confidence in Philippians 4.

Philippians 4:13—I can do all things through Christ which strengthened me.

The word "strengtheneth" means to “empower or enable” (1 Timothy. 1:12). God gives us a strength that will not rot, rust, or ruin because its roots are in Christ. He enables and energizes us to serve Him. If we do less under God's grace than we do under God's law, it is a DISGRACE. We have no excuse for not serving the Lord and making our lives count for Him because His grace energizes us for service. Along the same line we also have empowering grace.

2. Grace for Service includes Empowering Grace

1 Corinthians 15:10—But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

It is the grace of God that molds us and makes us into the image of Christ. His grace empowers us to live like Him and to live for Him.

1 Corinthians 3:10—According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.

God has given us grace to serve and to build our lives. There is a saving grace for sinners and a serving grace for Christians.

Philippians 2:13—For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

God's grace gives us the power and desire to do God's will. The will of God will never lead you to a place where the grace of God cannot keep you.

3. Grace for Service includes Edifying Grace

Titus 2:11, 12—For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath
appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;

The grace of God edifies us by teaching us to say "No" to that which is sinful. D.L. Moody said, "The Law tells me how crooked I am. Grace comes along and straightens me out." Grace brings about the change in our life as a Christian and makes us like Christ. No matter how sinful our past has been, God's grace can bring cleansing and change in our lives.

The year was 1910, and the place was the Lone Star state, the state of TEXAS. Mordecai Ham was leading a revival meeting when during the service, a man stood up and began to shout with great enthusiasm, "Saved! Saved! Saved!"

This man had killed four men and never dreamed that God could care for him. He was so overwhelmed by the love, mercy, and grace of God that he just had to let everyone know about it. The people were moved at the meeting, especially the musician Jack Scofield. Pondering what happened that night, he penned the words of that popular song "Saved! Saved! Saved!" the next afternoon. Yes, beloved, God's grace can save and change the vilest of sinners.

4. Grace for Service includes Exhorting Grace
* Acts 11:23—Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.

It is not easy to preach. Grace is needed to challenge and exhort others. Grace is needed because it can be very humiliating and hurtful when you are reproached, resisted, or rejected for preaching the truth. God's grace enables us to preach the Word. God gives us grace for salvation, for serving, and for suffering.

C. Grace For Suffering
1. Grace for Suffering includes Efficient Grace and Enough of It
* 2 Corinthians 12:9—And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Grace is God's provision for our every need when we need it. There is never a shortage of His grace. It is sufficient. He supplies for all our
ministries and needs. Our sufficiency is of God (2 Cor. 3:5). Many of our blessings come to us through the transformation of our trials instead of the substitution of our sufferings. When we ask for pain to be removed, we are asking for a substitution. There is nothing wrong with our asking God for health in place of sickness or deliverance from our pain.

God, however, does not always make substitutions. In Paul's case, He met his need by transformation. God did not remove the affliction. Instead, He gave him grace in order that the affliction would work for Paul, not against him. Paul's affliction developed faith, strength, power and reliance upon the Lord. He said, "When I am weak THEN I am strong." Grace enabled him to rely upon God.

God's grace turns tragedy into triumph; fear into a forward faith; worry into work. He turns burdens into opportunities to build character. He turns life sinking sorrow into opportunities to rise above our circumstances in faith and joy.

Grace changes our outlook to uplook. It gives us peace and rest. It is grace that gives peace to parents that have lost a child in death or to a wife who now is a widow. Grace gives a calm when the doctors says you have cancer, leukemia, or a fatal disease. Grace gives confidence when you are rejected or resented by the world. Grace gives courage when you are dying or being persecuted for Christ.

2. Grace for Suffering includes Establishing Grace

* Hebrews 13:9—Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein.

The word "established" in this passage means stabilized or firm. In 2 Peter it is translated "sure." We have a sure word of prophecy. God's grace gives us stability and “sure footedness” in our lives when life is shaky and slippery. God's grace is stronger than all our circumstances. He gives stability when we are shaken by a tragedy, death, disappointment, or rejection. God's grace helps us to just keep on keeping on.

3. Grace for Suffering includes Encouraging Grace

* Titus 2:13—Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ;

The grace of God gives us hope about the future. We are looking for the blessed hope of Christ's return.
4. Grace for Suffering includes Essential Grace
* Hebrews 4:16—Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.
   God has grace to help us when we need the help.

5. Grace for Suffering includes Exuberant Grace
* Romans 5:20—Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound:
   The wonder and might of God's grace is focused upon here. The word "abound" means to overflow. No matter how great human sin becomes, God's grace overflows beyond it and abundantly exceeds it.
* The grace of God eclipses, excels, and exceeds our evil and errors.
* It is fathomless and flourishes beyond our faults, flaws, frailty, and failures.
* It thrives and transcends our transgressions and trespasses.
* The grace of God is inexhaustible, innumerable, interminable, and imperishable. Where sin abounds, grace much more abounds!

VI. The Deduction of the People 15:11
Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed.

The Corinthians responded to the preaching of the gospel by believing in the Lord. Have you made the same decision? Have you put your faith in Christ?

According to the Chicago Tribune, on February 21, 1995, Jeanne Calment of Aries, France, celebrated her 120th birthday. She was verifiably the oldest person in the world and had become somewhat of a celebrity in France. France's minister of health came to her birthday party. Three books had been written about her.

Medical scientists have researched her life to try to discover the secret of her longevity. They found that for years she ate two pounds of chocolate a week. She cooked with olive oil. She took vigorous walks and even rode her bike through the streets of Aries until she was 100. At age 110 she said with good humor, "I had to wait 110 years to become famous. I intend to enjoy it as long as possible."

But by age 120 she was confined to a wheelchair. "I see badly," she said, "I hear badly, I can't feel anything, but everything's fine." Someone
asked Calment what kind of future she expected. Still displaying her good
humor, she replied, "A very short one."

She lived a few more years and died on August 4, 1997 at the age of
122 years and 164 days. Jeanne spoke for all of us. Even if we are young
and have a hundred years to live, the body has limits, and even a long life
is short. James said, “Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow.
For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time,
and then vanisheth away” (James 4:14). Have you put your faith in the
resurrected Christ and received His saving grace?
Chapter 17
The Dilemma of a Dead Christ
1 Corinthians 15:12-19

Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? 13 But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: 14 And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. 15 Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. 16 For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: 17 And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. 18 Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. 19 If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

For hundreds of years before Christopher Columbus was born, the motto of the country of Spain was *ne plus ultra*. This is Latin for "no more beyond." You see, the Spaniards believed that they'd already discovered everything worth discovering. One of the most beautiful monuments to Christopher Columbus today is a statue in Spain of a huge lion with the words *ne plus ultra* underneath it. However, the lion is eating the first word *ne*. All that can be read is "more beyond." This was Columbus's greatest legacy. He proved that there was more beyond.

Now beloved, Jesus, too, has shown us that there is more beyond. Like the lion of the Columbus monument, eating the word *ne*, the Lion of the tribe of Judah erased the notion that death was the end of everything. It is through the death of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary, and His resurrection from the dead, we can all say with assurance, that for the Christian, there is *plus ultra*, —there is "more beyond!"
In this chapter, Paul has been dealing with the confusion in the Corinth church about the resurrection of Christ and believers. There was evidently a great deal of doubt or confusion about this matter in Paul’s day. The resurrection of Christ was under constant attack from errant explanations.

Several explanations have been used to explain the empty tomb of Jesus. One is the disciples stole the body of Jesus. Soldiers were bribed to say this.

*Matthew 28:11-15... Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and shewed unto the chief priests all the things that were done. [12] And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, [13] Saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. [14] And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. [15] So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.*

The question we ask here is, “How could they steal the body of Jesus when it was guarded?” If the Temple guard was used, then Jesus’ body was guarded by very disciplined men. If a guard was found asleep, he was beaten and burned with his clothes. These men were forbidden to sit down or lean against anything while on duty.

It was believed that the Roman guards were used to guard the tomb. This would involve four men that would change shifts every four hours while all the other guards rested. We know the tomb had to be empty. Why would the guards be bribed if it was occupied? The tomb was sealed with a cord of clay on both ends with a sign stating "Don't touch by order of Rome!" The body of Jesus was protected by Rome and the wrath of Roman law. To break the seal meant automatic execution. The person was crucified upside down.

Another excuse given for the empty tomb was Jewish authorities moved the body. If so, why? The empty tomb would only give credibility to what they were trying to undermine and discredit. They hated the message of Christ. If Jewish authorities had the body of Christ, they would parade his body in the streets to discredit the disciples. They did not and could not do this because they did not have His body.

A very popular explanation by skeptics is what is known as the “Swoon Theory.” This says that Jesus fainted on the cross and revived in the cool tomb. He fainted from exhaustion and loss of blood. This theory appeared at the end of the 18th century. If this was true, then
answers need to be provided for a number of questions.
* How did Jesus survive three days without food, water, and medical attention?
* How did He survive being wrapped in spice-laden grave clothes? How did He breathe? How did He get them off? The 100 pounds of spices would harden the wrapping, and the limbs were wrapped next to the body. Are you also telling me no one saw Him breathing when they wrapped Him?
* Where did He get the strength to move the stone which weighed around 3400 pounds and overcome the Roman guards? He was terribly weak from the crucifixion. He went through six trials, was beaten horribly to the point that He couldn't carry the wooden cross-bar of the cross. Huge spikes were nailed into His wrists and feet. The Bible makes it clear that when he was examined by four Romans soldiers who had years of experience, they clearly pronounced Him dead and thrust a spear into His side to make sure that He was dead. There was no doubt about it, but He still arose three days later. Yet, there were people in the Corinth church that doubted this.

In this portion, Paul addresses the dilemma and destructive consequences if Christ had not risen from the dead. He makes it quite clear that our lives and this very world would be turned upside down and inside out.

* **If Christ Be Not Risen.....**
  * The **portals** of churches would be closed like locked doors of bankrupt businesses.
  * The **parchments** of Scripture would provoke scorn not serenity, bitterness not blessing, cynicism not confidence, frustration not faith, trepidation not trust, and doubt not dependence on God.
  * Our **prayers**, like morning mist over peaceful ponds, would barely get off the ground or be offered at all.
  * The **promises** of God would be like torn leather buckets laced with leaky holes.
  * The **power** for victory over sin would be waning and weak like frayed, twisted ropes rotted by time.
  * Our **prospects** or hopes for the future would fade like fallen leaves withered by winter winds.
  * Our **pleasure** would be flimsy like a house with no foundation and built on sinking sand.
* Our peace would be unstable like bobbing driftwood carried by swift currents through river rapids and cascading waterfalls.

The entire fabric of the history of the world would be completely altered if Christ had not risen from the grave. The hope, help, happiness, and harmony that people enjoy today because of Jesus Christ would be greatly diminished, demolished, or abolished. This entire world would be in dire dilemma if Christ was dead. Paul explains very clearly what the consequences would be. Notice verse twelve.

I. The Denial of the Resurrection of the Dead  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?

There were people in the church that were refuting the resurrection of those who were dead. Why would they do this? One key answer was the fact they were being swayed by the beliefs of Greek society. When Paul preached in Athens, some mocked him when he spoke of the resurrection because the Greeks did not believe in it.

*Acts 17:32a- And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked...*

The Greeks considered that everything that was spiritual was good, and everything that was physical was evil. To them, a resurrected body would be disgusting. They longed for their souls to be freed from the shackles of their bodies and graves. The last thing they would want after their deaths would be a resurrected body. This is why they mocked, jeered, or sneered at Paul in Athens.

If there were Jewish members in the church that had been part of the Sadducees, they may have had their doubts about the resurrection, too. The Sadducees did not believe in it, while the Pharisees did.

II. The Dilemma of a Dead Christ  15:13-19

But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen:  14 And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.  15 Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not.  16 For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised:  17 And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.  18 Then they also which are fallen asleep in
Paul makes very clear the tragic consequences of a dead Christ. The repercussions are horrific. Here are seven he gave to us.

1. The Perception or Reality that Christ is Dead 15:13, 16
   “But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen. 16 For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised. ”
   If there is no resurrection, then Christ is dead. If this was true, the repercussions of this would be devastating like tsunami waves that sweep the streets of coastal cities. Our lives would be swept of serenity, satisfaction, and strength. How would we really live life day by day and what would be the purpose for living if Christ was dead. His resurrection is what gives life meaning and a reason to live.

   Most people want to live at any cost. Twenty-seven people are banking on the idea that modern science will someday find or engineer a fountain of youth. Those twenty-seven people, all deceased, are "patients" of the Alcor Life Extension Institute in Scottsdale, Arizona, where their bodies—or merely their heads!—have been frozen in liquid nitrogen at minus 320 degrees Fahrenheit awaiting the day when medical science discovers a way to make death and aging a thing of the past.

   Ten of the patients paid $120,000 to have their entire body frozen. Seventeen of the patients paid $50,000 to have only their head frozen, hoping that molecular technology will one day be able to grow a whole new body from their head or its cells. It sounds like science fiction, but it's called cryonics.

   As you can imagine, cryonics has its share of critics and skeptics. And of course, Stephen Bridge, president of Alcor, cautions, "We have to tell [people] that we don't even really know if it will work yet." Nevertheless Thomas Donaldson, a fifty-year-old member of Alcor who hasn't yet taken advantage of its services, brushed aside the naysayers and explained to a reporter why he's willing to give cryonics a try: "For some strange reason, I like being alive.... I don't want to die. Okay, guys?"

   For those folks, like Mr. Donaldson, who like being alive, God has some great news. Jesus Christ has risen from the dead with an eternal, resurrection body. He has conquered death. All those who believe in Jesus will someday be raised from the dead with an eternal, resurrection body. Jesus is the only sure hope of eternal life. If there was no
resurrection, however, this hope would be shot to pieces.

2. The Preaching of the Gospel would be Pointless 15:14a

“And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain....”

If Christ had not risen from the grave, then our preaching would be a joke. It would be vain. The word “vain” is from the Greek word *kenos* (*ken-os*) which means “empty, hollow, devoid of the truth and spiritual value.” The Gospel would not be the Gospel because it would not have any good news. Going to church would be a waste of time on Sundays if Christ was not risen. In fact, there probably would be no more churches if Christ had not risen. His death would be just another death like all others. It would prove that He was powerless to give life and conquer death. The resurrection is what takes the bad news of His death and turns it into good news. Without it, we are hopeless.

3. We Would Have a Purposeless Faith 15:14b, 17a

“And if Christ be not risen.... your faith is also vain. 17 And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain...”

A third dilemma of a dead Christ is a faith that would be empty and powerless. Our faith would have no meaning at all and no purpose. For what reason would we put our faith in Christ in the first place if He had not arose from the grave. His claim to be God would be refuted by His inability to rise from His own death. He would be no different than any other person.

4. The Pretending & Prevarication of Prophets and Preachers 15:15

“Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not.”

If Christ did not rise from the grave, then the disciples and apostles would be a bunch of liars, frauds, fakes, and hypocrites. Their actions would be the biggest coverup in the history of the world. Jesus Himself would have been dishonest because He claimed to have the power to raise us up from the grave.

* John 6:44-No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.
* John 11:25-Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:
The Apostle Paul assured us that the dead in Christ would rise from the grave at the Rapture of the Church.

* 1 Thessalonians 4:16- For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

Let me add that what was preached by the disciples was and still is true. What has been recorded in the Scriptures is true. The apostles and Christians of the past have not been martyred for the Lord to preserve a lie, but to propagate truth, even if it meant the loss of their lives.

5. The Predicament of Being Lost in Sin 15:17b

“And if Christ be not raised, .... ye are yet in your sins.”

Another dilemma of a dead Christ would be the fact that we would still be lost in our sins. We would have no hope for Heaven at all. The price for our sins would be death. Hell would be our destiny.

* Romans 6:23a- For the wages of sin is death...

6. Past Believers Have Perished Forever 15:18

“They also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.”

If Christ had not risen, then we would never see loved ones again that have died. Death would be a permanent “Good-bye,” not a “Good night.” Funerals would be catastrophic and overwhelming, crushing blows to us. This characterizes the funerals of those without Christ today, but not the funerals of Christians. We are saddened by the death of loved ones, but rejoice for those who have gone on before us because they are with the Lord now. To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. That TRUTH, that FACT comforts us. We will be reunited with saved loved ones again one day.

7. Our Plight is Pitiful and Pathetic 15:19

“If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.”

If our hope in Christ is only for our earthly life, of all men we should be pitied the most. Our rug would be pulled out from beneath us if Christ had not risen from the grave. Our whole world would basically cave in and we would be truly miserable. The reason many people are miserable today is because they do not have the risen Savior in their hearts. He is the ONE that makes the difference in a person’s life. His power and presence in us....
Chapter 17... The Dilemma of a Dead Christ... 15:12-19

* transforms our trials and troubles into triumph,
* conforms us into the character and image of Jesus Christ,
* informs us of iniquity when we stray from doing what is right,
* reforms our rebellious attitude by His redemption into righteousness and submission to His will.
* performs His promise to us to cleanse and conquer sin and to give us eternal life at death.

In the late 1960s, while expecting their third child, Bill and Gloria Gaither were going through a rather traumatic time in their lives. Bill was recovering his strength from a bout with mononucleosis. They, along with their church, were the objects of accusation and belittlement. Gloria was experiencing a time of torment, including fear of the future and of bringing children into such a crazy, mixed-up world. The drug culture was in full swing, the cities were seething with racial tension, and the God-is-dead pronouncement had giggled its way all through our educational system.

On New Year’s Eve, as Gloria sat alone in a darkened living room, tormented, and fearful, the Lord sent a calm and peaceful rest to her. The power of the resurrection of Christ seemed to affirm itself in her life once again. Gloria remembers the realization that "it was LIFE, conquering death, in the regularity of my day." The joy seemed to overcome and take precedent over frightening human circumstances. From this personal bout with darkness, a song came forth from the Gaither’s hearts.

*Because He lives*
*I can face tomorrow!*
*Because He lives*
*All fear is gone!*
*Because I know*
*He holds the future,*
*And life is worth the living*
*JUST BECAUSE HE LIVES!*

Thank the Lord we do not have to deal with the dilemma of a dead Christ because He lives!
Chapter 18
Great News for a
Gloomy World
1 Corinthians 15:20-28

But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. 21 For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. 23 But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.
24 Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. 25 For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. 27 For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. 28 And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.

It is interesting to speak with other pastors about the circumstances they face in their churches. One common thread that seems to surface frequently among those folks that create problems in the church is the fact that they are so gloomy and glum. They have lost the joy of their salvation. They profess to know Christ as their Savior, but consistently show up in church with their chins dragging on the floor and howl like coyotes, “Woe is me!” Nothing is good. Nothing is right. Nothing will make them happy or content.

They are miserable because they have chosen to be miserable, and in their misery they set out to make life miserable for everyone else. I am not talking about those who are hurting from trials they are facing right now. I am talking about folks that refuse to be content with life, with God, with His provisions and blessings.
As Christians, we have every reason to be consistently rejoicing. Paul told us from a prison cell, “Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice” (Philippians 4:4).

In fact, Paul lists several reasons for rejoicing right here in this portion of 1 Corinthians 15. He provides great news for a gloomy world. In the preceding verses, Paul painted a gloomy picture for all of us, IF Christ had not risen from the grave. We would all be miserable if this was true. He begins this portion by assuring the world that Christ indeed has risen from the dead. This is great news for a gloomy world. Notice verse 20.

### I. The Cause for Rejoicing 15:20

*But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.*

The marvelous, magnificent, momentous, and monumental news for the last 2000 years for this world is “Christ is risen from the dead!” The word “risen” is in the perfect tense which means He has risen once and for all and will not need to repeat it. He is risen for good! This ought to make us tout, sprout, and shout, not pout, doubt, flout, or spout off in dismay. Now is Christ risen from the dead!

*Now is Christ Risen from the Dead*
*Betrayed by friends who pledged loyalty and devotion,*
*Badgered and belittled by a crowd filled with commotion,*
*Butchered and bloodied by soldiers without compassion,*

**But Now Christ is Risen from the Dead!**

*B Buried in a tomb with intense emotion,*
*B Broken hearts were left in the wake of Christ’s destruction,*
*B The burden of death hovered three days, leaving friends in desperation,*

**But Now Christ is Risen from the Dead!**

*B Bitter men may scoff and scorn this truth, raising their objections,*
*B Bent on their rebellion they lie and form their obstructions,*
*B Bursting with joy, however, we can proclaim with conviction,*

**But Now Christ is Risen from the Dead!**
Paul stated that Christ is the firstfruit of them that sleep. What does he mean by this? It means a great deal and is important to all Christians. In the Old Testament, before the Jewish people could harvest all of their crops from the fields, they were to bring a symbolic sample of the harvest to the priests in the Temple as an offering to the Lord.

This offering was called the firstfruit offering and was to demonstrate the attitude of the person making the offering that all that he had belonged to the Lord and the Lord was a priority in his life. He was first in his heart. This offering demonstrated his gratefulness to God. It was the first installment of the entire harvest that was to follow.

* Leviticus 23:10-Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest:

It is interesting to note that the first Sunday after the Passover was the same Sunday that Christ arose from the grave. This Sunday began the Jewish Feast of the Firstfruits. Christ, the Firstfruit, arose on the day of the Feast of Firstfruit which is known to us as Easter Sunday. The firstfruits offering symbolized the beginning of better and greater things to come.

When the Lord Jesus Christ arose from the dead, He was the firstfruits of the resurrections to come in the future of believers who have put their faith in Christ for their salvation. This resurrection speaks of permanent resurrection. Jesus was not the first to rise from the dead in the Bible. The Bible gives a number of examples of people who were brought back to life such as Lazarus, but these folks did die again. Christ was the first to rise from the grave and never die again. His resurrection from the dead guarantees our resurrection, because He conquered death. His resurrection requires our resurrection, because His resurrection was part of the larger resurrection of God's redeemed.

To Christians, death is only "sleep." The body is at rest, but the soul is at home with the Lord in Heaven. This is what happens to a Christian when he or she dies. Your saved loved ones are with the Lord right now according to the Bible. They are not sulking, sobbing, selfish, snooty, or sneezing! Amen! They are with our wonderful Savior!

* Philippians 1:21-23... For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. 22 But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. 23 For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to
depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:

* 2 Corinthians 5:6-8...Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord:  7 (For we walk by faith, not by sight:)  8 We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.

The word “present” is a great word. It is from the word endemeo (en-day-meh'-o) which means “to be among one's own people, to dwell in one’s own country, to stay at home.” This is what we will do when we die. We will go to our heavenly home where we belong and stay at home. This world is not our home. We are just passing through.

At our resurrection, our bodies will be "awakened" and glorified. We will be like Christ with our glorified body. This is great news for a gloomy world if people will go ahead and put their faith in Jesus Christ for eternal life. Their hopelessness will be replaced with hope. Their despair will be diminished by delight.

We have seen the cause for rejoicing. Now we will look at the channel of death and resurrection. Notice verses 21-22.

II. The Channel of Death and Resurrection  15:21-22

For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.  22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

Because of the sin of Adam when he disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden, death came into this world.

* Romans 5:12- Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:
* Romans 5:19a- For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners...

The bad news for the world is all men are sinners and all are condemned to physical death and spiritual death. The great news for a gloomy world is there is salvation and eternal life in Jesus Christ.

* Romans 3:23- For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God:
* Romans 6:23- For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.
* In Adam all Die, in Christ All Will be Made Alive

1. In Adam there was the corruption of creation, cursed by Adam’s sin. In Christ, there will be the renovation of creation someday.

2. In Adam, there was the disruption of God’s perfect will for mankind. In Christ, there is the revitalization of dedication to God will.

3. In Adam, there was the destruction of close fellowship with God. In Christ, there is reconciliation with God and access to His throne of grace.

4. In Adam, there was the interruption of God’s richest blessings. In Christ, we will enjoy God’s remuneration and reward for service to Him.

5. In Adam, man has an addiction and craving to be as God. In Christ, His regeneration of our souls will make us like God one day.

6. In Adam, man is consumed with the exaltation of himself. In Christ, our realization of Christ’s deity will cause us to exalt Him.

7. In Adam, we have the introduction of death. In Christ, we enjoy the restoration of life after death.

8. In Adam, there was confusion in the order and unity of the home. In Christ, there is reformation in God’s chain of command for the home.

In Christ, all will be made alive. The reference to “all” is to believers only, not to the entire world. People who do not know Christ as their Savior belong to Satan and are condemned to Hell if they die without the Lord.

* John 8:44- Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

* John 3:36- He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

* John 3:18- He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

Only those who have put their faith in Jesus Christ for their salvation will enjoy eternal life in Heaven. The good news for a gloomy world is the fact that in Christ, a person can enjoy hope, happiness, holiness, and a home for eternity in Heaven.
III. The Chronology of Resurrection  

* Romans 5:19- For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.
* Galatians 3:26- For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.

Every man has his own order. What is Paul talking about here? He is talking about the order of different resurrections. Not everyone is resurrected at the same time according to the Bible. Christ is the firstfruit of the first resurrection or the resurrection of life, which has several parts.

The second part is the resurrection of believers saved since Pentecost or what is known as the Church Age. This resurrection of believers will occur at the Rapture of the Church when Christ comes for His bride. This could happen today! If it does, you get a spanking, brand-new body for all eternity. That’s good news for a gloomy world if people will trust in Him.

* 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17... For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

The next group to be resurrected will be the two witnesses that preach in Jerusalem during the Tribulation period. Then believers who are saved during the seven year tribulation period which follows the Rapture of the Church will be resurrected. Many will be saved in this time and die for their faith in Christ. They will be resurrected at the end of the Tribulation to live and reign during the Millennial Reign of Christ.

* Revelation 20:4- And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

At the end of the Tribulation period there will also be a resurrection of the Old Testament saints based on the promise of the prophet Daniel.
Chapter 18...Great News for a Gloomy World...15:20-28

Daniel 12:2 - And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

People will be born during the one-thousand year reign of Christ. Some will die and it is very possible that they will be resurrected immediately. In other words, they will pass from a physical state to a glorified state right away.

The second resurrection is the resurrection of the unsaved. They will be resurrected at the end of the millennial reign of Christ for the purpose of being sentenced to an eternal Hell. This is known as the resurrection to damnation and the second death. It will take place at the Great White Throne Judgment where ONLY unsaved people will be judged. This is bad news for a world that refuses to trust in Christ for salvation. Nobody in the first resurrection will be lost. Nobody in the second resurrection will be saved.

John 5:29 - And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.

Revelation 20:11-15 - And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. 12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. 13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. 14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. 15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

Revelation 21:8 - But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.

Christians today look forward to the return of Christ because they will receive their new, glorified bodies and eternal life. The resurrection of Christ is great news for a gloomy world. It is the blessed hope of all who will put their faith in Jesus.

Titus 2:13 - Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;
Beloved, the return of Jesus Christ at the Rapture is very near. The signs laid out for us in the Bible and current world events indicate its nearness. The instability in the European economy indicates the foundation is laid for a one world money system that will be implemented by the Anti-Christ in the Tribulation period. In May, 2012, the Greek banking system was on the verge of collapsing and is still very unstable. Their failure would create a domino crash in the world economy, including the United States.

Tension remains high in Israel. Iran is vowing to blow the Jewish state to kingdom come. Iran is on the verge of developing a nuclear bomb. In Gaza, Hamas hounds the southern border of Israel with their missiles. The new change in leadership in Egypt also provides new threats to Israel. On the northern border Hezbolla in Lebanon has a force of ten thousand men who are trained to send 50,000 missiles into all areas of Israel. There is also the Syrian threat in the north. It has an army of a half-million men and the largest arsenal of biological and chemical weapons in the world. War may break out in the Middle East at any time. It is a powder keg. In spite of these threats, the Jews continue to return to their land as Ezekiel prophesied. There are almost six million Jews in Israel today.

Major earthquakes continue to rock the planet. A leading earthquake scientist has warned that the planet could be cracking up after a series of massive quakes that took place within a 48 hour period. On April 15, 2012, expert Gheorghe Marmureanu, from Romania's National Institute of Earth Physics, said that 39 quakes had hit the globe within two days. The series started with two massive quakes in Indonesia on April 11, 2012 measuring 8.6 and 8.2 on the Richter scale rapidly followed by three more only slightly smaller in Mexico within hours.

Marmureanu said, "There is no doubt that something is seriously wrong. There have been too many strong earthquakes." In the Indonesia area, there should be only one big quake in this part of Asia every 500 years. Since 2004, they have had three over 8.0 on the Richter scale.

Plagues like the "Bird Flu" continue to haunt the earth with a 60% fatality rate. There are 5000 viruses that are documented today. We know little or nothing about 96% of them. Catastrophic calamities and pestilence continue to afflict the world at a greater rate of speed.

In 2004, a 9.0 earthquake spawned a tsunami that killed one quarter of a million people. In 2005, Hurricane Wilma was the most intense hurricane recorded in the Atlantic Ocean. In 2006, Australia sweltered
under the worst drought in 1000 years. In 2011, an earthquake and tidal wave sparked a nuclear disaster in Japan which continues to loom as a threat today. That incident is not over yet.

Just within the last two decades, nine out of the ten costliest insurance events have taken place in the history of our country. Three out of the four largest tornado outbreaks that have occurred in America have occurred over the last twenty years. According to FEMA, nine out of the top ten natural disasters in American history have taken place.

We are also seeing the rise of Muslim influence in the world. One fourth of the world practices Islam now. Ezekiel 38 and 39 indicates a Muslim coalition will join with Russia to invade Israel one day to take her treasures or wealth which would include the vast oil finds of an estimated 1.4 billion barrels and 6.7 trillion cubic feet of natural gas recently discovered off the coast of the city of Haifa, and the abundance of food that the Jews are producing from their land.

The United Nations is also rising in world power. It is driving toward making itself the central government of the world and has declared the entire earth a “global commons” under ITS rule. Plans have been made to control world commerce, which include power to tax nations and form a world currency. We can see that the pieces of the puzzle are coming together. This is good news for a gloomy world if people will turn to Christ. It is bad news if they reject Him.

IV. The Consummation of Christ’s Rule 15:24-25, 27-28

Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. 25 For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.... 27 For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. 28 And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.

When the Lord Jesus Christ returns to this earth again, He will defeat the Anti-Christ (the Beast) and his forces at Armageddon. The Anti-Christ will be cast alive into the Lake of Fire. Jesus then will establish His kingdom on earth for 1000 years, ruling from Jerusalem where He will and must reign.
* For Satan to be defeated and bound, He must reign.
* For the world to be at peace, He must reign.
* For the prophecies of Scripture to be fulfilled, He must reign.
* For righteousness and justice to thrive on earth, He must reign.
* For the curse on creation to be lifted, He must reign.

The reign of Christ will be a time of peace and prosperity on earth, yet, there will be some who will have to be ruled with a rod of iron because there will be people in the Millennial kingdom that will not have a glorified body, but a body just like ours with a sinful nature.

Multitudes will be born during this time. The life-span of a person in the Millennium will be greatly increased. Babies will no longer die being just a few days old. A person who lives to be 100 will no longer be considered to be old. Only those who are cursed will die young.

* Isaiah 65:20- There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed.

These people born in the Millennium will have a sin nature just like you and me. No open rebellion will be tolerated, but there will still be sin and rebellion in the hearts of those who are enemies of Christ.

* Revelation 12:5- And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.
* Revelation 19:15- And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

Satan will be confined to a bottomless pit during Christ’s reign on earth, but then, he will be freed by the Lord from this pit at the end of the 1000 years to make war with Christ and the saints. Why? Jesus will give those born in the Millennium a choice to follow Him or Satan. The Great Deceiver will fool millions into following Him. Satan and his followers will be defeated and cast into the Lake of Fire for eternity. That’s good news for a gloomy world that will trust in Him.

* Revelation 19:19-20... And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. 20 And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire
burning with brimstone.

* Revelation 20:1-3... And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. 2 And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, 3And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.

* Revelation 20: 7-10... And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, 8 And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. 9 And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. 10 And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

When Satan is destroyed in the Lake of Fire, and all opposition to God is eliminated, Christ’s mediatorial reign will finally be completed and come to an end, and a new Heaven and new earth will be established.

* 2 Peter 3:13- Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

* Revelation 21:1- And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

According to Paul, Jesus will willingly turn over this restored world to God the Father who sent His Son into the world to redeem it and recover it. Just as the Holy Spirit of God was given to honor the Son of God, the Son of God was here to honor God the Father. It was Christ’s passion to do His Father’s will, not His own. He came as a servant to fulfill the task that God the Father had given to Him. He yielded to His Father’s will to show His love for Him.

* John 14:31- But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence.

* John 4:34- Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.

* John 6:38- For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.
* John 8:29- And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him.
* John 9:4- I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.
* 1 Corinthians 11:3- But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.

All things will be brought under the subjection of the Lord. The word “all” however, does not include God the Father Himself who gave Christ His authority. Christ’s authority was given to Him by God the Father.
* Matthew 28:18- And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.
* John 5:27- And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man.

Paul states that Jesus will subject Himself willingly to God the Father and reign with Him for all eternity so that the Father will be glorified and be all in all. Until that day, this world groans for redemption from the curse of sin.
* Romans 8:21-22... Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.

V. The Conquering of Death 15:26
The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.

Death reigns supreme over the human race and has done so since Adam sinned in the Garden of Eden. Its power makes it arrogant, selfish, and rude, barging into our lives unannounced and unwelcome, taking those we love and cherish so much.

Only two men have escaped its clutches, Enoch and Elijah. In spite of men’s efforts to escape death or prolong its victory over them, they still succumb to its power. Before the Genesis Flood, death had to be patient because men lived such long lives. Methuselah, the oldest man who ever lived, ended up living 969 years. That’s a lot of birthday candles. Since the Flood, however, man’s life span has been severely shortened. Rarely, do people live to be over 100 today. Most die in their 70's or 80's if they live a long life.
Moses said in Psalm 90:10, “The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.”

Death’s grip may be delayed, but not conquered. Men face an appointment with it that will be kept when it is their time. Are you ready for your appointment? Do you know Jesus Christ as your Savior?

* Hebrews 9:27- And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:

Paul tells us that our enemy “Death” will be finally defeated and destroyed one day. God’s people will have the last laugh. That which they feared, they will fear no more. The resurrection of Christ was the turning point and the Rapture of the Church will be the reality of God’s promise to us.

Many Christians will be spared of the sting of death at the Rapture which could be today. Their bodies will be changed when Christ returns. Those who have gone home to be with the Lord will be resurrected with their new bodies. In fact, the Lord gave us a prelude to the resurrection when He arose from the grave. When He arose, there were believers that arose from the dead, too.

* Matthew 27:52-53... And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, 53 And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.

When Christ returns, the grave will no longer be the bed of the believer. When Jesus returns at the Rapture, every grave of a Christian will have a “Vacancy” sign on it. The grave is not the final address of God’s redeemed children. Hallelujah! That is good news for a gloomy world that will trust in the Lord.

The enemy “Death” which intimidates, foments our fears, haunts us in our nightmares, and plucks our loved ones from our sides like a grasping thief, will finally be destroyed. There will be no more funerals, no more sorrow and broken hearts for believers after they are resurrected. Death will be destroyed, abolished, or brought to nothing when Christians receive their glorified bodies. Both Isaiah and Hosea saw this day coming. They saw the defeat of death.

* Isaiah 25:8- He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it.
Chapter 18...Great News for a Gloomy World...15:20-28

* Hosea 13:14- I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.

Christ became flesh and blood because we are flesh and blood. By being robed in human flesh, He could die for us and thus, break the power of Satan who had the power of death.

* Hebrews 2:14-Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;

Because of the resurrection of Christ, the power of death is broken. One recent summer, a bee was drawn into the open window of a car traveling down the road. The bee was upset, and so was a boy in the car, who had previously suffered a severe reaction from a bee sting. But before things got out of hand, the boy's father caught the bee in his hand and tossed it back out the window. Then he pulled the car over to comfort his son. The boy, however, was now desperately worried that his father would die from the bee sting. "Oh, no," said the father, showing him that his hand was only slightly swollen. "The sting won't hurt me like it would you, so I took the sting for you." And that is just what Jesus did for us. He took the sting of death for us, and now that sting is gone.

Paul put it this way, "So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. 55 O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? 56 The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:54-57).

This is great news for a gloomy world that will put their faith in Christ! Because of what Christ has done, because He arose from the grave, death and the grave have been defeated. When we are resurrected, there will be no more dying and no more digging graves again for the believer. Death will have lost its power. That’s great news for any Christian who is gloomy.
Chapter 19
The Impact of the Resurrection
1 Corinthians 15:29-34

Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead? 30 And why stand we in jeopardy every hour? 31 I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. 32 If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die. 33 Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners. 34 Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame.

Everyday you are confronted with the lifestyles of people that we see at work, school, in the neighborhood, or at home. It doesn’t take very long to realize that some people don’t behave, act, or talk the same way you do. You will also find that living differently than the crowd is not an easy thing to do.

What a person truly believes is going to determine how he or she behaves. Your beliefs affect your behavior and attitude. Your doctrine affects your deportment. If you do not base your morals and lifestyle on the Scriptures, if you do not acknowledge His authority or recognize God’s standards of what is right and wrong, then you will most likely see nothing wrong with adultery, shacking up with a man or a woman, homosexuality, drunkenness, drug abuse, lying, stealing, cheating, etc.

Remove the restraints of the Bible and a person is capable of doing just about any kind of perversion he wants to do. His philosophy in life will be to eat, drink, and be merry. Live for now and don’t worry about tomorrow.

If you know Christ as your Savior and believe the Bible is the Word of God, then you will avoid living an ungodly life or condone wicked
living because Christians that love God want to obey His Word and honor Him with their lives. If that is not a concern of yours, it is very possible you have never been saved. You have a profession, but not a possession of Christ in your heart. In fact, it was Paul who said, “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves” (2 Corinthians 13:5a).

What people believe about the Bible and the Lord is definitely going to affect the way that they live. Accepting or rejecting the boundaries of the Scriptures is going to shape how you act, how you think, how you dress, where you go, what you put into your body, how you behave with the opposite sex, and yes, the same sex, and how you view yourself and others. Your beliefs will determine your behavior. This is why it is so vital that you read the Bible each day and put it into practice.

With this in mind, we want to contemplate the impact and the influence of the doctrine of the resurrection. The resurrection is not a Bible doctrine that we cherish and consider to be important just at Easter time. This cardinal doctrine of the Bible impacts the Christian every single day.

Without the resurrection, Christianity becomes a flimsy house of cards that crashes at the breath of the wind. Without the resurrection, Christianity is a well without water, it is a bucket full of holes, it is a cupboard with no food, or a bed with no pillows or blankets. Without the resurrection, Christianity is empty like all the other world religions. It would offer no hope or comfort, and without that hope, our lives would be drastically different.

The resurrection of Christ has an eternal impact upon us. Because of the resurrection of Jesus we will spend eternity in a place where there are no graves, tears will be wiped away, hearts will never be broken again, sin will not tempt us, love will never fail, pain will never pester us, souls will never sorrow, night will never come, and death will never rear its ugly head again into our lives anymore. Hallelujah for the resurrection!

In this portion of chapter 15, Paul addresses the influence and impact of the resurrection of our lives. It is the motivating factor behind our decision to put our faith in Christ and to serve Him with all our hearts. Notice verse 29.
I. The Wish to Be Saved 15:29

Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?

This verse is not advocating baptism for dead people which was a practice of heretical cults in history and continues to be practiced today by the Mormon church. Such beliefs totally contradict the teachings of the Bible. Salvation is by faith in Jesus Christ alone.

* Ephesians 2:8-9... For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.

Each person must make his own personal choice about the Lord. You cannot be saved for someone else or by the decision of someone else. Being baptized for someone else has no merit with God either. In fact, the purpose of scriptural baptism is not to wash away sins. When babies are baptized by a priest or preacher, they get wet. That’s it. Their sins are not washed away.

Baptism does not save a person. Christ does that. Baptism by immersion is an act of obedience to the Lord. If you have trusted Christ as your Savior, the Bible commands that you are to follow the Lord in “believers baptism.” It is not an option. People who have truly been born again will happily follow the Lord in believer’s baptism because they want others to know that Jesus Christ is their Savior. Those who are unwilling to be baptized after they are saved need to take a good look at their hearts and see if they have truly been born again.

Baptism is an outward picture of what has taken place inwardly in your heart. It is a picture of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. As the believer is immersed under the water, it pictures the death to his old life and is a reminder of the death and burial of Christ. As he is raised up out of the water, it pictures the resurrection of Christ and the believer’s new life in Christ because of Christ’s resurrection power to cleanse us of our sins and give us victory over temptations. The Christian is a new creature in Christ.

* Romans 6:3-4... Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? 4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.
The resurrection of Jesus Christ creates a desire or wish for people to put their faith in Christ and be saved. The fact that Christians will have eternal life, rise from the grave, and be reunited with saved loved ones are strong motivations to trust in the Lord for eternal life. I believe that is what Paul is talking about here in spite of the 200 different interpretations to this controversial verse.

The phrase “baptized for the dead” has created much confusion. The word “for” in this verse is the Greek word huper (hip-er’). It can also be translated “because of” which would be a better translation here of the word huper. I believe Paul is referring to people who were being saved and baptized because of the testimony and influence of believers who had gone home to be with the Lord. Even today, multitudes of husbands, wives, and children have put their faith in Christ after the death of a Christian loved one because they want to be reunited with them one day in Heaven. The faithful testimony of believers who have died has been used by the Lord to speak to the hearts of others that needed the Lord. They were saved because of the lives of Christians who died.

Paul makes it clear here that if there was no resurrection of the Lord, then baptism would have no meaning at all because baptism is a picture of the resurrection. Without the resurrection, all the things that we do as Christians in our churches would be a total waste of time. As you can see, the resurrection is an extremely important truth.

Not only does the resurrection create a wish to be saved, it also creates a willing desire to sacrifice and suffer for Jesus Christ.

II. The Willing Desire to Sacrifice and Suffer for Christ

15:30-32

And why stand we in jeopardy every hour? 31 I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. 32 If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die.

Why are dedicated Christians who serve the Lord willing to endure hardship, poverty, mocking, jeering, persecution, torture, and even death? Why were men like Ignatius, Justin, Origen, and Polycarp willing to be martyred for Christ by Roman caesars? Why were Christians willing to be turned into human torches for Nero’s parties? Why were they willing to be sewn up in animal skins and thrown to wild
dogs? Why were they willing to be thrown into the arena and eaten by lions?

All throughout history, Christians have willingly put their lives on the line for Jesus Christ. During the Middle Ages, Christians were martyred by the thousands by the papacy. At one time, in the Soviet Union, 88 percent of all Russian Orthodox churches were closed and 400 leaders of unregistered Baptist churches were in prison. It has been estimated that of 66 million people killed in the Soviet Union between 1917 and 1953, half were Christians.

In China, countless thousands were driven from their homes, imprisoned, or executed during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). Why are Christians willing to sacrifice and suffer for the Lord? The answer is the resurrection. Believers have been willing to sacrifice and suffer for Christ because they knew to be absent from the body was to be present with the Lord. They would live with the Lord for eternity.

The hope of getting to see the Lord one day and see Him face to face was a motivating factor behind Paul’s dedication to the Lord. Paul talked about the fact that his life was in constant jeopardy or danger. He said, “I die daily” which meant that he risked his life daily for Christ. He faced one trial after another. In Lystra, he was stoned and left for dead (Acts 14:19-20). In Ephesus, Demetrius the silversmith incited a mob against Paul (Acts 19:23-34). The fighting with beast in Ephesus may be a reference to this incident. The people were behaving like beasts. In Jerusalem, the Jews mobbed Paul in the temple and tried to kill him (Acts 21:31). They also schemed to assassinate him (Acts 23:12-15). The apostle faced constant threats.

Paul protested against those who denied the resurrection. To deny it would make the service, the sacrifices, and the suffering of believers a total waste and something that was foolish. Paul made it clear that if Christ did not rise from the dead, all these sacrificial acts are irrelevant. There is no purpose in witnessing, there is no purpose in working for Christ, there is no purpose in enduring hardship for Him if He did not rise from the dead and we would not see Him one day.

He stated that if Christ did not rise from the grave, you might as well live for now and live it up because death ends it all. These were the sentiments of the backsliders in Israel in Isaiah’s day. Isaiah said in Isaiah 22:13, “And behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen, and killing sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine: let us eat and drink; for to morrow we shall die.”
Unfortunately, many Christians have adopted this philosophy in their lives. They are carnal and worldly. Beloved, we are not to be living a wild, worldly lifestyle of sensuality and drunkenness. We are to be living for the Lord.

Not only does the resurrection create a wish to be saved, not only does it create a willing desire to sacrifice and suffer for Jesus Christ, but it also creates the want to be saintly.

III. The Want to be Saintly  15:33-34

Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners. 34 Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame.

The resurrection of Christ is a motivation for us to live godly lives. Why? Because we know that first of all, Jesus Christ could come today. Godly Christians want to be found living for Him and not living in sin.

* 1 John 3:2-3...Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. 3 And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

Secondly, dedicated believers live a godly life because they know that all Christians will face the Lord one day and give an account of their lives.

* Matthew 12:36- But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.

* Romans 14:12- So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

* 2 Corinthians 5:10- For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

If you desire to live a godly life, Paul provides some principles to help you to live this way. First of all he warns us not to deceive ourselves. The word “deceived” is from the Greek word planao {plan-ah’-o}. It means “to be led astray or from the right path; to wander from the truth or to be led into error or sin.” Many times, if people drift away from the Lord or fall into sin, it is the influence of a friend that is at the heart of the matter.
Paul warns that evil communications corrupt good manners. What does this mean? The word “communications” is from the word *homilia* (hom-il-ee'-ah) which means “the companionship or association of people; lectures or sermons.” The wrong crowd can influence you to do wrong things. Don’t deceive yourself into thinking that they will not influence you. They will if you hang around them long enough. This is why we are warned to not keep company with wicked people.

* 1 Corinthians 5:9,11...I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators...11 But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.

* Proverbs 24:1- Be not thou envious against evil men, neither desire to be with them.

* Exodus 23:2a-Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil...

Preaching that is unscriptural will also corrupt your manners or your morals. It does matter what church you attend. Not all churches are the same. In fact, many have become entertainment centers with lots of singing, but very little preaching of the Bible. The lack of Bible preaching in our pulpits today has created a generation of ignorant Christians who know very little about what God has to say about living a godly life and about what is right and wrong to do.

Paul continued to encourage us to be godly by admonishing us to awake to righteousness. The word “awake” means “to become sober-minded or to come to your senses.” We are to come to our senses about living in sin and stop it. Don’t flirt with wickedness. Stay as far away as you can from it.

* Proverbs 4:14-15... Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. 15 Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away.

Because of the carnality of these believers, there were evidently people in the church that had no knowledge of the Lord at all or they had no knowledge or understanding of the resurrection. Paul rebuked them for their carnality and for tolerating the false ideas of some about the resurrection.

Beloved, when Christians are living a carnal, worldly life, they are not concerned about the souls of men and in reaching them for Christ. When false teaching is allowed to permeate the church, then it creates ignorance about what is true. This is what happened in Corinth.
Let me ask, “Have you shared the gospel with unsaved family members and friends? If you witnessed to them about the Lord, would they listen to you or would they laugh at you because your lifestyle is so wild and worldly?” If there are traits in your life that are hurting your Christian testimony, why not get your life right with the Lord and others today and make your life count for Christ with the little time you have left to live for Him.
Chapter 20
The End of the Old Comes Before the Beginning of the New
1 Corinthians 15:35-49

But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? 36 Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die; 37 And that which thou sowest, thou sOWest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: 38 But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body. 39 All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds. 40 There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. 41 There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. 42 So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: 43 It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. 44 And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. 45 Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. 46 The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. 47 As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. 48 And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.
Our lives are full of questions sometimes that are important to us. When I was a boy, my common questions were, “What is for supper?” or “I wonder what I am getting for Christmas?” or “I wonder if that girl likes me?” In my teenage years I often asked, “What is for supper?” I wonder who I will marry someday? I wonder what she looks like? I wonder where she lives right now?” Boy, what a blessing to have the veil lifted and to have those answers. She is wonderful!

After I married Linda I asked, “I wonder how many kids will we have? What will they be like?” The answers have been such a blessing. Seven great kids! After we started having our children and they started getting married, I pondered, “I wonder what my grandchildren will be like? How many will we have?” The answers continue to come. The present standing count is three with two more in the oven. Grandchildren are one of the fun parts of being a grandpa or grandma. (I still feel like a teenager though.)

As I continue to get older and death is closer on the horizon of my life, I ask, “I wonder what Heaven is going to be like? I wonder what Jesus looks like? What are my friends doing right now that have gone home to be with the Lord?” Do you ever think about these kinds of things like me?

In this portion, Paul addresses some questions that people continue to ask today.

* How is the Lord going to resurrect the dead, especially when they have been burned up, blown up, or eaten up by sharks at the sea?
* What is our body in Heaven going to be like?

Paul provides the answer to these questions and he shows to us that there must be an end to the old before there is a beginning of the new. Let’s begin by taking a look at verses 35 through 37.

### I. Curiosity About our Resurrection Bodies 15:35-37

*But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? 36 Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: 37 And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain:*

How is God going to raise the dead? What kind of body will they have? God’s ability to resurrect the bodies of the dead
should not be an issue that should cause us to entertain thoughts of doubt. Good grief, HE made us from the dust of the earth. He created the universe out of nothing. When it comes to resurrecting us...no problem! He is God! Hello!

* Jeremiah 32:27- Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me?
* Acts 26:8- Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?

The apostle states that there must be an end of the old before there can be the beginning of the new. In order to be resurrected, we must die first. The death of the believer leads to the eternal life of the believer. Paul illustrates this truth from the field of farming or gardening. What a person plants into the ground is not the final product. What is sown is the seed of that final product, not the final product itself. That is what Paul is talking about in verse 37 when he says, “And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain.” The plant is not sown into the ground.

Corn seeds produce corn. Wheat produces wheat. Whatever it is, the original seed must die and decompose in order to be resurrected into new life. When death takes place in that seed, then the new plant is brought to life by the warmth, energy, and power of the sun.

* John 12:24-Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.

In order to bring forth the fruit of salvation of the souls of men, our Lord had to die on the cross. There had to be an end of the old before the beginning of the new. If we are to have a new, resurrected body, we must die, or our bodies must be transformed by Christ at the Rapture. That is the event that will lead to our new, glorified body.

* 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17... For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

We must also die another way if we are to be fruitful. We must also die to “self” if we are to be fruitful in our service for the Lord Jesus Christ. We must die to our selfish will and make the Lord’s will the goal or focus of our lives. The seed in the ground teaches this truth. That
seed loses its identity in order to become a fruitful, blossoming plant. The principle is the same: the end of the old before the beginning of the new.

Most kingdoms do anything they can to protect their king. This is the unspoken premise of the game of chess, for example. When the king falls, the kingdom is lost. Therefore, the king must be protected at all costs.

Another notable example comes from the Allied invasion of Normandy on D-Day, June 6, 1944. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill desperately wanted to join the expeditionary forces and watch the invasion of France from the bridge of a battleship in the English Channel. U.S. General Dwight David Eisenhower was desperate to stop him, for fear that the Prime Minister might be killed in battle. When it became apparent that Churchill would not be dissuaded, Eisenhower appealed to a higher authority: King George VI.

King George went and told Churchill that if it was the Prime Minister's duty to witness the invasion, he could only conclude that it was also his own duty as king to join him on the battleship. At this point Churchill reluctantly agreed to back down, for he knew that he could never expose the King of England to such danger.

King Jesus did exactly the opposite. With royal courage He surrendered His body to be crucified. On the cross He offered a king's ransom: His life for our lives. He would die for all the wrong things that we have ever done and would do, completely atoning for all our sins. The crown of thorns that was meant to make a mockery of His royal claims actually proclaimed His kingly dignity, even in death. He surrendered His life that we might have life.

* John 12:25- He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.

Beloved, Paul reminds us here that we see illustrations of the resurrection every single day in the plant world. The world of nature speaks volumes about our God if we are willing to pay attention.

* Romans 1:19-20... Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them: for God hath shewed it unto them. 20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:
II. Creation’s Differences   15:38-41

*But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body.*  
39 *All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds.*  
40 *There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another.*  
41 *There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory.*  

Paul illustrated the difference in our earthly bodies and heavenly bodies by again referring to the world of nature. There is a difference between humans, beasts, fish, and birds. There are more than 30,000 kinds of fish today and more than 9000 kinds of birds. None are alike. The earth has more than 800,000 kinds of insects, more than 6,000 kinds of reptiles, more than 3,000 kinds of amphibians, and more than 5,000 kinds of mammals. Not one is alike.

There are differences between the sun, moon, and stars. Stars produce their own light while planets reflect light. Stars are different based on their size and temperatures. It is their temperature that gives them their color. Some are orange, yellow, blue, or white. They are all different and unique.

Dr. Phillips points out that the building blocks of life are amino acids. There are over six hundred octodecillion combinations of them. That is the number 600 followed by 108 zeroes. That is a big number. Every plant, person, puppy, parakeet, poppy, parrot, panther, peacock, pigeon, pig, polar bear, possum, poodle, porpoise, piranha, or polar bear has its own special combination of amino acids. Not one is alike in each species.

More than one thousand species of plants and five thousand forms of grass exist today. Yet, each one is different. God gives every plant its own body, characteristics or shape. There are no identical plants. Each one is different even though the plant is of the same plant species.

Beloved, no one will be like you in Heaven just as no one is like you now. Even identical twins have their differences. You are an original masterpiece of God. That makes you pretty special and valuable. When God made you, He made NO mistakes. What we might consider to be flaws are actually blessings and we don’t even know it.
Consider the story of Petra Anderson. MyFoxDC posted a story on July 24, 2012 about Petra Anderson. She was shot in the head during the Aurora movie theater “Batman Massacre.” This young lady was shot four times: three times in the arm and once in the head. A shotgun buckshot pellet entered through her nose, up the back of her cranium and into the back of her skull. Yet, she is having an amazing recovery to these injuries inflicted upon her by the gunman, James Holmes, because of the way God created her.

Petra has a rare brain condition that she did not even know she had. Pastor Brad Strait wrote in his blog: "It seems as if the bullet traveled through Petra's brain without hitting any significant brain areas.”

The doctor explained that Petra's brain has had from birth a small "defect" in it. It is a tiny channel of fluid running through her skull, like a tiny vein through marble, or a small hole in an oak board, winding from front to rear. Only a CAT scan would catch it, and Petra would have never noticed it. But in Petra's case, the shotgun buck shot, maybe even the size used for deer hunting, entered her brain at the exact point of this defect.

Like a marble through a small tube, the defect channeled the bullet from Petra's nose through her brain. It turned slightly several times, and came to rest at the rear of her brain. And in the process, the bullet missed all the vital areas of the brain. In many ways, it almost missed the brain itself.

Doctors had been worried that Miss Anderson's injuries could impair her speech, motor and cognitive abilities. But it appears that her brain suffered very little damage and it appears she is likely to make a full recovery and is already walking and talking. Her mother Kim said, “I believe that she was not only protected by God, but that she was actually prepared for it.”

David’s words are so fitting here. He said in Psalm 18:30a, “As for God, his way is perfect...” Beloved, God made no mistakes when He made you. You are different for a reason. Whatever good or bad has come into your life, understand that God makes no mistakes. His way is perfect.

Paul continues and points out that just as the seed develops into a plant, our earthly bodies will be different from our resurrected bodies. People ask, “What will they be like?” and Paul explains. The glorified body that you receive from the Lord is going to be much different than the earthly body you have now. Can I hear an “Amen!” You will not
lose your identity and your uniqueness. You will, however, have a much different kind of body.

Jesus was recognized after His resurrection once He revealed Himself to others. His body was much different, however. His lifeless, beaten body that was placed into the tomb was much different than the body that came out of the tomb. The Lord was able to travel swiftly from one point to another without the restriction of physical laws. He popped up out of nowhere and disappeared at will. He was able to pass through doors and walls.

*Luke 24:31* - And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight.

*John 20:19* - Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.

* 1 John 3:2 - Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

III. The Changes in Our Bodies  15:42-44

So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption:  43 It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power:  44 It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.

Just as a seed changes into a plant, our bodies will be changed too, after death. It is interesting to note that Paul refers to the death of the believer as being sown or planted into the ground to be raised again just like a flower or tree. Our earthly bodies are corrupt and sinful, but our spiritual bodies will be incorruptible. They will be without sin and blemish.

Our earthly bodies struggle with sin and dishonor, but our new body will be raised in glory. Our earthly bodies are planted into the graves of the earth because they are weak, short, and fragile. Most of us will not
live to be 100 years old or near it.

* Ecclesiastes 3:20-All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again.
* Psalm 103:14-16... For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust. 15 As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. 16 For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more.
* James 4:13-14... Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: 14 Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.

We are fragile and will die if Jesus tarries, but because of the salvation of Jesus Christ we will be raised in power and receive a spiritual body. The limitations that we have to deal with right now with our earthly bodies will be gone and we will be equipped with a glorified body that can serve and worship the Lord for all eternity. Wow!!!

IV. The Contrast Between Christ and Adam 15:45-49

And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. 46 Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. 47 The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. 48 As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. 49 And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

Paul closes this portion of answering the question, “How are the dead raised?” by contrasting Adam with Jesus. Adam’s body was earthly though good. It was ruined by his sin which brought his banishment from the Garden of Eden and his eventual death. He had to be banished so that he would not eat of the Tree of Life and live forever in a state of sin. He had the choice to eat from that tree, but instead, he chose to eat of the tree that God forbade.

* Genesis 3:22-23... And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: 23 Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground
from whence he was taken.

Christ was the forerunner of our spiritual bodies. His resurrection was a taste of what was to come in the lives of those who have trusted in Him. Adam was of this earth, while Christ was of Heaven. As the descendants of Adam have a natural body, the descendants of Christ who have been spiritually born again will have a spiritual body one day. I like what Erich Sauer said, “So the graveyards of man become the seed plots of resurrection, and the cemeteries of the people of God become through the heavenly dew, the resurrection fields of the promised perfection.”

Paul looked forward to his spiritual body in Heaven, expressing his passion in Philippians 1:23, “For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better”

The word “desire” means “to crave or lust.” Paul was craving to go to Heaven. In fact, the word “depart” was a nautical term. It meant “to unloose” and was used to describe the loosing or the removal of the moorings of a ship on the dock and to take up the anchor. Paul was ready to set sail for Heaven and desired to see the Savior. Are you? Do you know Christ as your Savior? Are you living for Him? Whether it is salvation or service to Christ, realize that the end of the old must come before the beginning of the new.
Chapter 21
Some Great Things
Worth Shouting
About
1 Corinthians 15:50-58
Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the
kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. 51
Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be
changed, 52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last
trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised
incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 53 For this corruptible must
put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 So
when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal
shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying
that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. 55 O death, where is
thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? 56 The sting of death is sin;
and the strength of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, which
giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. 58 Therefore, my
beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the
work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain
in the Lord.

This week I have been watching the 2012 Summer Olympics
in London on the television. I love the competition of these
great athletes. The other night, the men’s gymnastic team competition
was won by China and the British team won the bronze medal. What was
so interesting was the two different responses of the teams. The British
team was excited and they were jumping up and down. They were
thrilled to be able to just earn a medal in this difficult event.

On the other hand, the team from China was very subdued as if it
was business as usual. There was no excitement or jumping for joy at all.
I know folks from China can get excited because I have seen them behave this way. I have some dear Chinese Christian friends.

Beloved, victory in anything should cause us to shout and rejoice. As Christians, we have a great deal to shout about. Paul discusses those things in this portion of 1 Corinthians.

Dr. MacArthur shared a story that someone has written about a preacher of the old school, but speaks as boldly as ever. This preacher is not popular, though the world is his parish and he travels every part of the globe and speaks in every language. He visits the poor, calls upon the rich, preaches to people of every religion and no religion, and the subject of his sermons are always the same.

He is an eloquent preacher, often stirring feelings which no other preacher could, and bringing tears to eyes that never weep. Concerning his arguments, none are able to refute, nor is there any heart that has remained unmoved by the force of his appeals. He shatters life with his message. Most people hate him; everyone fears him. What is his name? It is Death. Every tombstone is his pulpit, every newspaper prints his text, and someday every one of you will be his sermon.

If Jesus does tarry, we will be the focus of Death one day. The writer of the book of Hebrews said in Hebrews 9:27, “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.” We will keep our appointment with death, even though we don’t know the time of the appointment. We won’t be late. We will be on time. Our earthly life will end, but the book on our lives will not be closed. We will just start another chapter that will last for eternity as we go home to be with our wonderful Lord in Heaven. That’s worth shouting about!

I don’t know if Benjamin Franklin was a Christian or not. I do know he believed in the resurrection. He wrote his own epitaph and left instructions to have it engraved on his tombstone in the cemetery of Christ’s Church in Philadelphia. It says, “The body of Franklin, printer, like the cover of an old book, its contents torn out and stripped of its lettering and gilding, lies here food for worms. But the work will not be lost, for it will appear once more in a new and more elegant edition, revised and corrected by the Author.” If Ben Franklin had trusted Jesus Christ as his Savior, he will be resurrected with a new body one day and so will you! That’s worth shouting about!

As we dig into this passage, we will find several wonderful things worth shouting about.
Our Change to Come
The Conquering of Death
The Crucialness of Our Service for Christ

Let’s begin. Notice verse 50.

I. The Restrictions in Heaven  15:50
Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.

Your body physically renews itself every seven years. As the years pass, it gets cut, scraped, beaten, broken, bandaged, burnt and it begins to wobble, weaken, and warp. This earthly shell that our Lord has provided for us has limitations. It is not designed for Heaven. This earthly body cannot live eternally. Our mortal body of flesh and blood, our corrupt body which has a sin nature cannot inherit the kingdom of God. That is why it essential you put your faith in Jesus Christ and seek His forgiveness and cleansing from sin. Jesus stressed this to Nicodemus in John 3:3 and told him, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

Our Lord is holy and will not allow sin in His presence. By putting your faith in Christ, His blood atones or covers your sins. This is why you are allowed into Heaven. When God sees you, He doesn’t see your sin, but the blood of His son. This is what John was talking about in 1 John 4:10 when he said, “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” By putting your faith in Christ, the Lord will give you an incorruptible body when He returns which will enable you to live eternally. That’s worth shouting about!

II. The Rapid Change at the Rapture  15:51-52
Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

Paul addresses one of the great mysteries of the ages. There have been many. For example, how did God create the universe out of nothing? How could a virgin give birth to the Son of God? Another mystery is addressed in these verses which Sherlock
Holmes would not be able to explain except by the deduction, “It’s elementary dear Watson. This is God’s doing.”

When Christ returns at the Rapture, the bodies of living Christians will be immediately changed. In other words, there will be Christians that will not pass through the valley of death. The apostle explains what is to come by using the motto of our babies in the nursery, “We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed!” Amen!

Dr. Phillips stated that his friend was preaching on this verse years ago, before the advent of tape recorders. A lady in the audience took down his message in shorthand and then typed it up and mailed copies to various friends. A copy eventually came his way and he was both annoyed and amused to see that she had made a ludicrous typing mistake. In the sentence "We shall all be changed," she had, unfortunately, left out the letter “C”, so it read "We shall all be hanged!"

Praise the Lord, God is not going to hang us. He is going to snatch us up to Heaven and so shall we ever be with the Lord. That’s something worth shouting about!

Paul explains why we shall not all sleep or die. He says we will be changed. What does he mean...“changed”? The word “changed” is from the word *allasso* {al-las’-so} which means “to transform or to exchange one thing for another.” It is formed from the word *allos* which means “another of the same kind.” We will continue to keep our identity, but our bodies will be transformed by the Lord into incorruptible, glorified, spiritual bodies. This is evidently what the Lord did to Enoch and Elijah. We will exchange our earthly bodies for a heavenly one. That’s something worth shouting about!

How long is all this going to take? Paul states that it will be extremely rapid. It will happen in a “moment.” This word “moment” is derived from the Greek word *atomos* {at’-om-os} which forms our English word “atom.” It means “something that cannot be cut in two or divided; in a moment of time.” This word “moment” implies that smallest, minutest measure of time. That is pretty fast.

Paul continues to talk about the speed of our transformation by using the speed of the blink of an eye. The human eye blinks on the average once every five seconds, 17,000 times a day, or 6.25 million times per year. We will be changed in “the twinkling of an eye.”

The word “twinkling” means “extremely rapid movement; to hurl.” Of all the visible parts of your body, nothing is faster than the blink of your eye which is 150 milliseconds. To help you understand that, one
second is divided into 1000 milliseconds. So 150 milliseconds is flying. That’s moving at Ford Mustang speed! Ha! Your body will changed faster than this if Jesus should come today. You speed freaks should be excited about that!

Your present body which is fragile, fading, floppy, fleeting, and frail will be transformed into a body that will be enduring, eternal, everlasting, indestructible, immutable, and incorruptible. Woo! Hoo! That something to shout about! The apostle states this will take place at the last trump. Paul talked about this also in the letter to the Thessalonians.

* 1 Thessalonians 4:14-17... For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. 15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. 16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

During the Civil War a group of soldiers had to spend a winter night without tents in an open field. During the night it snowed several inches, and at dawn the chaplain reported a strange sight. The snow-covered soldiers looked like the mounds of new graves, and when the bugle sounded reveille a man immediately rose from each mound of snow dramatically reminding the chaplain of this passage. When the last trumpet sounds, we shall be changed.

The trumpet or shofar, which was a ram’s horn, was used for several reasons in Bible days.

1. The Call to Assemble for Worship (Numbers 10:2)

When we are raptured, we will be assembled to worship in His presence face to face. What a great reunion day that will be.

2. The Call to Advance for a March or an Attack

When the Pillar of Cloud moved, then the trumpets were blown to notify the people to move and follow the Lord (Numbers 10:2). We too, are to be following the Lord in our lives. One day, the trump of God will sound at the Rapture of the Church and we will literally be on the move. We will meet the Lord in the air and forever, we will be following Him for eternity.
3. **The Call of Alarm** (Numbers 10:5-7)

Trumpets were sounded to warn of an attack or impending danger. The trump of God will sound to announce the attack of Christ against Satan. He will come to claim His bride, the Church, from this wicked world. In fact, the words “caught up” in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 are from the Greek word *harpazo* (har-pad’-zo) which means “to seize or carry off by force.”

Christ may have to carry believers off by force for several reasons. First, he may be opposed by Satan when He returns. Secondly, He may have to snatch us because some believers are so carnal and worldly that their roots run deep into this world. He may have to yank us out like a gardener yanks weeds out of the ground. Thirdly, He may snatch us because world conditions or dangers, such as nuclear war, may demand our removal with haste.

4. **The Call of Absolute Joy and Rejoicing** (Numbers 10:10)

There were times of great joy and gladness on the various Festival occasions. During these feasts, the people rejoiced together before the Lord. The Rapture will be a time of great rejoicing for Christians.

5. **The Call to Announce the Beginning of Months** (Leviticus 23:24)

The beginning of months and feasts were announced by a trumpet. The last trump will announce the end of the Church Age as all believers are removed from this planet and the beginning of the Tribulation Period where God spues forth His judgment on this earth like never before. While judgment is taking place on the earth, we will be enjoying fellowship with one another at the feast of the marriage supper of the Lamb.

* Revelation 19:9- And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.
* John 14:3- And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

Our responsibility now is to serve Christ daily and to look for His return each day. His return is certain. Notice repeatedly that Paul says these things SHALL happen. You can take it to the bank. The certainty of His coming, living for Him each day, and enjoying His blessings are things worth shouting about.

* Titus 2:13- Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.
III. The Reversal of a Regime 15:53-54
For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

Since the Garden of Eden, Death has pretty much had its own way. Of the billions that have been born into this world, only two people, Enoch and Elijah, have escaped its bony fingers. When Christ arose from the grave, the regime of death began its end.

* Romans 6:9- Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.

When Jesus returns at the Rapture and our bodies are transformed into our resurrected bodies, the regime of Death will be shattered. Paul states that Victory will have its best meal. Death will be swallowed up! The word “swallowed” here means “to gulp down, devour, or destroy.” At the Rapture, Death will have a Jaws attack. It will be gobbled up and destroyed like a great white shark devouring a seal. The sentiments of the prophet of Isaiah will be fulfilled.

* Isaiah 25:8a- He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces....

All the damage, destruction, despair, darkness, and depression that death has caused to Christians will be completely overturned at the Rapture. Death’s work, domination, and regime will be reversed as believers rise in victory because of the power of the Lord Jesus Christ. Yes, death interrupts our lives, but it will not have the final say in the life of the Christian. Christ has the last word.

* Romans 5:17- For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ. The change in our bodies and the conquering of death are things worth shouting about!

IV. Relevant Questions and the Rigors of Death 15:55-56
O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? 56 The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.

Paul reflects the basic sentiments of the prophet Hosea in Hosea 13:14, “I will ransom them from the power of the
grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.” Paul is voicing some questions of jubilation. Where is your sting Death? Where is your victory Grave? Death and its earthly cradles have been dethroned, disarmed, and defanged. That’s something worth shouting about!

The sting of death is sin. Sin is what leads to death.

* Romans 5:12- Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:

The stinger of sin was left in Christ who took our sins upon Himself because the law demanded death for sin. The strength of sin is the law which reveals our sinfulness and reveals our need for Christ.

* Galatians 3:24-25....Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. 25 But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.

* Galatians 3:13- Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:

When Jesus arose from the grave, He removed death’s power and fulfilled the law. This may be part of the meaning of Christ’s final words, “It is finished.” People continue to face death everyday, but its power has been broken in the lives of believers. That’s worth shouting about!

V. The Rejoicing Over our Victory in Christ  15:57

But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

In jubilation, Paul is praising God for the victory we have over death because of the Lord Jesus Christ. Men like Handel have tried to capture this jubilation in his musical masterpiece “The Messiah.” I love the “Hallelujah Chorus.” We have much to be thankful for because the Lord continually gives us the victory over temptation, sin, and death through the power of Jesus Christ. That’s worth shouting about!
VI. The Reminder to Be Faithful and the Relevance of Our Service to Christ 15:58

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

Paul lists a third reason here why we have a reason to shout. He speaks about the crucialness of our service to Christ. Our labor for Christ is not in vain or empty. It is not a waste of time, energy, and money. For this reason, we are to be steadfast unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. What does this mean?

The word “steadfast” means “to be seated.” In other words, we are to be resting and settled about the truth of the resurrection and the other great doctrines of the Bible. We are to be immovable, too. In other words, we are to be firm, not unstable and wishy washy about our beliefs about the Lord and His Word. We are not to be shaken by trials and quit. When it comes to serving Christ, we are to be on the move, serving Him day by day. Your labor for Christ is not in vain. He will reward His servants, so be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

* Be Steadfast, Unmoveable, Always Abounding in the Work of the Lord
* When weary from defeat, dejection, depression, or a death, be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.
* When worried about problems from the past, predicaments in the present, and prospects in the future, be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.
* When weakened like a frayed rope rotted by the sands of time, be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.
* When wobbly and aged like a rickety, old bridge over a deep cavern, be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.
* When worn like a steal beam corroded by rust and pressure, be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

Realize beloved, we possess some great things worth shouting about!
Chapter 22
Back From the Future
1 Corinthians 16:1-12

Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. 2 Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come. 3 And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem. 4 And if it be meet that I go also, they shall go with me. 5 Now I will come unto you, when I shall pass through Macedonia: for I do pass through Macedonia. 6 And it may be that I will abide, yea, and winter with you, that ye may bring me on my journey whithersoever I go. 7 For I will not see you now by the way; but I trust to tarry a while with you, if the Lord permit. 8 But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost. 9 For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries. 10 Now if Timotheus come, see that he may be with you without fear: for he worketh the work of the Lord, as I also do. 11 Let no man therefore despise him: but conduct him forth in peace, that he may come unto me: for I look for him with the brethren. 12 As touching our brother Apollos, I greatly desired him to come unto you with the brethren: but his will was not at all to come at this time; but he will come when he shall have convenient time.

The fifteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians is one of the great, inspirational chapters of the entire Bible. In that chapter, Paul took us into the future, teaching us about the resurrection of our bodies, and the Rapture, where Christ will remove all believers from this planet in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. That event could happen today. Wouldn’t that be great!
Chapter 22...Back From the Future...16:1-12

In chapter sixteen, he shifts gears and brings us back from the future. He goes from the resurrection and the Rapture to the “reality of the redeemed.” In fact, he started shifting those gears toward the end of the fifteenth chapter when he instructed us to be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. He continues that train of thought in this portion. Paul gives us practical instructions for living in the NOW. This is where we struggle. It’s easy to think about Heaven. It is a battle, however, living day by day, being yielded to the Lord, and wrestling with our flesh.

Many Christians are alive, but they are not really living. Their lives are filled with dead, worthless things that clutter their lives and crowd out Christ. They have no time for God, for church, or for the Bible. Many Christians also have good attitudes, but they live in the past. They rest upon past accomplishments and feel it is time to retire from serving Christ. Beloved, when it comes to the matter of living for God, He does not want us to retire, but to retread. No matter what your age, you are not to quit or goof off in your dedication to Christ.

We are not to live in the past and we are not to live in the future. One man put it this way when he said to his friend: "Say, you look depressed. What are you thinking about?" "My future," was the quick answer. "What makes it look so hopeless?" "My past." Thank God, our future is full of hope because of Christ, but we are not in Heaven, yet. Like the Ever-Ready bunny, we are still ticking for now.

Beloved, we are to live in the NOW. The writer of Hebrews stated in 3:15a, “Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts...” The time and the opportunity to serve Christ is today. Yesterday is gone, and tomorrow is not here, yet. For this reason, the apostle brings us back from the future and provides for us biblical principles about sacrifice, service, steadfastness, and the sweetness of Christ’s love.

Paul gave us a peek at the future to help us to practice Bible truths in the present. We are not to be bumps of bitterness, stumps of selfishness, and lumps of laziness. We are to be learning character, loving Christ, living with consistency and conviction for the Lord, and longing for His coming. So let’s see what Paul has to say to us now as he brings us back from the future.
I. Spiritual Sacrifices 16:1-4

Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. 2 Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come. 3 And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem. 4 And if it be meet that I go also, they shall go with me.

The church in Jerusalem was going through some very dire times. The economic strain of overpopulation from the Jewish feasts held in Jerusalem, a famine in the region, and the fury of persecution and imprisonment had been taking their tolls on the believers in this city. They were struggling financially.

To assist this church and to help develop unity between Jewish and Gentile believers, Paul had been taking love offerings or a “collection” for the believers in Jerusalem. The Gentile Christians in other regions such as Macedonia and Achaia had benefitted from the spiritual blessings they received from the Christians in Jerusalem and felt it was only right to help them in their time of need.

*Romans 15:26-27... For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem. 27 It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things.*

Paul gave the Corinthians an opportunity to give, too.

Practical principles about giving are given here. For those that are new in our church, I address the issue of giving in our church when it comes up in the Bible in our studies. I do not pressure people to give. I do not put them on guilt trips. I do not take pledges. I do not have stewardship campaigns in our church, even though there is nothing wrong with them. In fact, I as the pastor don’t even look at what you give. I don’t have a clue. I have chosen not to know. Other pastors do, and that’s fine, but I don’t. That is between you and God. I want our folks to clearly know that my friendship with them is not based on what they give. I don’t have pastor pets. I love all of our folks.

If there is a need, I tell you about the need and leave the rest up to you and the Lord. When it is time to take the offering, I don’t spend five to ten minutes begging for money. I don’t beg and will not beg. Most of
the time, I will basically say this, “It’s time to take the offering. If you have not had an opportunity to give today, we invite you to do so now. Let’s pray.” That’s it. The rest is between you and the Lord. If you don’t want to give to Him a portion of His blessings to you, that is between you and Him, not me. God did not call me to be your financial babysitter. As your pastor, I will teach you biblical principles about giving and it’s up to you to put them into practice. You in turn will reap what you sow.

Here in this portion, the apostle shows us that giving is an important part of our worship to the Lord. Our gifts to the Lord are like spiritual sacrifices to Him. Peter said, “Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 2:5).

Beloved, your offerings to the Lord are an expression of your gratitude and love for Him. The most important thing you can give to Him is first of all, yourself. When God has your heart, He has you. This was the case with the believers in Macedonia. Paul said of them, “And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God” (2 Corinthians 8:5).

When God has your heart, you won’t live an ungodly life. When He has you, then giving to Him is done with a heart of gratitude and generosity, not with a grudging, gloomy spirit. When God has your heart, your faith in the area of giving can flourish. Sacrificial giving to God and to others in need will be easy and joyful. You will find that as you grow in giving, you grow in your blessings, too. I love those blessings! They encourage me and make the Christian life very exciting. Lord, keep those blessings coming! Amen! Don’t you feel the same way? Listen, you reap the consequences of your giving. It is a law of Scripture.

*Luke 6:38- Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.

If the measure of your giving is small, your reaping will be small. If it is great, then your reaping will be great. The widow that gave two mites or pennies did not give a large portion of money, but her measure or her percentage was great because she gave ALL that she had. That is why the Lord pointed her out to us and we continue to read about her life and example.

On the other hand, greed and selfishness will not lead to God’s blessings because those traits stem from a heart that is not surrendered to
the Lord. It is as simple as that. Giving leads to getting and hoarding or selfishness leads to hollowness. Whatever, you do you reap what you sow.

* Proverbs 11:24- There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty.
* Ecclesiastes 11:1- Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days.

There were once two young men working their way through Leland Stanford University. Their funds got desperately low, and the idea came to one of them to engage Paderewski, the famous pianist, for a piano recital and devote the profits to their board and tuition. The great pianist's manager asked for a guarantee of two thousand dollars.

The students, undaunted, proceeded to stage the concert. They worked hard, only to find that the concert had raised only sixteen hundred dollars. After the concert, the students sought the great artist and told him of their efforts and results. They gave him the entire sixteen hundred dollars, and accompanied it with a promissory note for four hundred dollars, explaining that they would earn the amount at the earliest possible moment and send the money to him.

"No," replied Paderewski, "that won't do." Then tearing the note to shreds, he returned the money and said to them: "Now, take out of this sixteen hundred dollars all of your expenses, and keep for each of you 10 percent of the balance for your work, and let me have the rest."

The years rolled by--years of fortune and destiny. Paderewski had become the Premier of Poland. The devastating war came, and Paderewski was striving with might and man to feed the starving thousands of his beloved Poland. There was only one man in the world who could help Paderewski and his people. His name was Herbert Hoover. In 1918, thousands of tons of food began to come into Poland for distribution by the Polish premier.

After the starving people were fed, Paderewski journeyed to Paris to thank Herbert Hoover for the relief sent him. "That's all right, Mr. Paderewski," was Mr. Hoover's reply. "Besides, you don't remember it, but you helped me once when I was a student at college and I was in a hole." God blessed Paderewski’s generosity and He blessed Hoover’s generosity, too. He went on to be the 31st President of the United States in 1929.

Generosity toward the Lord and others in need will lead to joy and God’s blessings. That’s what the Lord told us.
*Proverbs 3:9-10... Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: 10 So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.

I don’t know about you, but I want my barns to be full. God told you and me how to do this. I believe His word is true and His way does work. I have seen this over and over again. He has kept His promises to me personally for over 41 years and counting and He has kept His promises to this church since 1965 when it was started. This is a giving church and God has blessed it abundantly. It is known all over the United States and the world because of its love for God and His Word.

What does Paul say about giving in this portion of 1 Corinthians? He calls the offering here for the Jerusalem saints a “collection.” This word is derived from the Greek word logeia {log-ee'-ah} which is money gathered for the relief of the poor. It was a special love offering. Paul had other Greek words which he used to describe our giving in other epistles.

In 16:3, the offering is called “liberality” which is from the word charis {khar'-ece}. The word “charis” is the word for grace. This kind of giving is an expression of gratitude for the grace of God. It is a gift that freely given to the Lord because of all that He has done.

Another word for an offering is the word “distribution.” In 2 Corinthians 9:13, Paul spoke about the liberal distribution of the Corinthian believers and how it brought glory to God. The word “distribution” is from the word koinonia {koy-nohn-ee'-ah}. The word has the idea of fellowship which involves partnership and participation.

As believers in this church family, we have fellowship with one another as we partner together and participate in this ministry to reach people for Christ and help them grow. One area of expression of our fellowship and partnership is in our giving to support this ministry. We are also partners with our missionaries. We participate in their ministries by our giving to missions and praying for them. Let me encourage you to support our missionaries if you are not already doing so by giving an offering above your tithes to “Missions” each week.

In collecting this offering for the Jews in Jerusalem, Paul provides some basic principles in giving to the Lord that we can put into practice today. The apostle told them to set aside money for this love offering every Sunday so that the offering would be ready when he finally arrived. Their giving then was to be systematic or regular. Everyone was to “lay by him in store.” They were to store up this gift until the day of Paul’s
arrival.

The word “store” here is from the word *thesaurizo* (thay-sow-rid'-zo). This word forms our English word “thesaurus” which is a collection or treasury of words. These believers were to bring to the church their offering for this collection and save it until Paul arrived.

In the same manner, we are to give to the Lord systematically or regularly our tithes and offerings to the Lord as an expression of our gratefulness to Him for His blessings. This is done on Sunday. As you give to the Lord, you need to realize you are storing up treasure. Your treasure is in Heaven.

* Matthew 6:19-20... Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: 20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

When it comes to giving, we are to come *back from the future.* What do you mean Pastor? I have met folks through the years that say, “When I make a bunch of money someday, get an inheritance, win the lottery or sweepstakes, I will give the Lord a bunch.” They are living in the future. You can’t give what you do not have or dream you will have. God wants us to give based on what we have right now. This is called “reality giving.” It is giving that is done *back from the future.*

Our giving is to be according to the way that God has prospered us now. If the Lord blesses you more, you have a greater ability to give more to Him if that is the desire of your heart. There are many believers that have that desire. They are not asking, “What can I keep?” but “What can I give?” They have learned the joy of giving and they are reaping what they have sown. Understand that your giving is not in vain and you cannot out-give God. Malachi gave us a warning about our finances and a wonderful promise.

* Malachi 3:8-10.... Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. 9 Ye are cursed with a curse; for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. 10 Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

Folks who have a desire to give to God and His work are careful to not overextend themselves financially or put themselves in financial...
bondage by purchasing things they cannot afford. When this happens, they handcuff themselves in their ability to give. Someone put it this way, “When your outgo exceeds your income, then your upkeep is your downfall.”

Our example for generous giving is the Lord Himself. He does not ask us to do something He has not done Himself. In fact, His example is summed up in John 3:16.

* For God.....the greatest lover.
* So Loved......the greatest degree.
* The World....the greatest number.
* That He Gave....the greatest act.
* His Only Begotten Son....the greatest gift.
* That Whosoever...the greatest invitation.
* Believeth in Him.....the greatest simplicity.
* Should Not Perish....the greatest deliverance.
* But......the greatest difference.
* Have......the greatest certainty.
* Everlasting Life......the greatest possession.

Have you received His gift? Have you put your faith in Him? Does He have your heart?

In the first section, we looked at spiritual sacrifices. Now we will examine the strategy of Paul and his sensitivity to God’s leading in his life.

II. The Strategy of Paul and His Sensitivity to God’s Leading   16:5-8

Now I will come unto you, when I shall pass through Macedonia: for I do pass through Macedonia. 6 And it may be that I will abide, yea, and winter with you, that ye may bring me on my journey whithersoever I go. 7 For I will not see you now by the way; but I trust to tarry a while with you, if the Lord permit. 8 But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost.

Paul’s plan or strategy was to visit Corinth when he would pass through the province of Macedonia. In fact, he hoped to be able to stay with them through the winter until he was ready for his next journey if that was God’s will for his life. He did not want the visit to Corinth to be a short one. Until he arrived, he planned to stay in the city of Ephesus until the feast of Pentecost.
Notice the phrase, “If the Lord permit.” Many times, people live in the future and don’t realize it. We all at one time or another have said, “I’m going to do this. I’m going to do that. I’m going here or there.” In essence, we are in a way living in the future. Yet, there are no guarantees that we will do what we plan to do.

Planning is good. Planning is great. Planning is smart and an important part of being organized, getting things done, and reaching goals. Realize, however, that plans change unexpectedly. The weather changes, people get sick, accidents happen, things break down, financial setbacks occur, and doors of opportunity do close. The list is endless. For reasons like these we need to be willing to adjust when our plans are unexpectedly adjusted.

For most of his life, David Livingstone wanted to be a missionary to the nation of China. Even in his senior, aged years, he longed to have the opportunity to go there and try to reach the Chinese for Christ, but God sent him instead to Africa. In Africa, he worked and died opening up that great continent to mission work, much as William Carey had done in country of India.

Livingstone never went to the place where he personally wanted to go, but he served the Lord willingly and bore much fruit where God put him. He had a great burden for China, but because his priority was to do the will of God in his life, he was flexible and willing to adjust his plans.

We need to realize, beloved, that first of all, God has bigger plans for you than what you have for yourself. Secondly, we can only fulfill our plans if the Lord allows us to do so. That is living that is back from the future and in the surprises of the present. Paul, Solomon, Jeremiah, and James all talked about those surprises and unexpected turn of events.

* James 4:13-16...Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: 14 Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. 15 For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that. 16 But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil.

* Proverbs 19:21-There are many devices in a man’s heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand. Man has many plans, but God’s purpose will prevail.

* Lamentations 3:37- Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not?
* 1 Corinthians 4:19a- But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will....
* Hebrews 6:3- And this will we do, if God permit.
* Proverbs 16:9- A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps.
* Proverbs 27:1- Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.

Being flexible in changing your plans is not an indication that you are disorganized or of weak character. On the contrary, it demonstrates a spirit of humility. When the believer says, “Lord, I want to do, and will do your will above my own, he or she demonstrates humility, yieldedness, and submission to the Lord’s leading. Jesus Himself told us that He came to do God the Father’s will. Is the attitude of your heart, “Lord, I want to do your will?”
* Psalm 143:10- Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God: thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness.

In the first section, we looked at spiritual sacrifices. Secondly, we looked at the strategy of Paul and his sensitivity to God’s leading in his life. The third area we will study is in verse 9, the service of Paul and His struggles.

III. The Service of Paul and His Struggles  16:9
For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries.

Paul stayed in Ephesus and did not travel to Corinth right away because God had opened a huge door of opportunity to do a great work for God in Ephesus in spite of the many people who were opposing him. The opportunity was there and he wanted to take full advantage of it. Opportunities, especially in serving Christ, are like hazy diamonds that are brought to a glimmering sparkle when we polish them by our prayers, attention, hard work, sacrifice, and labor.

Paul had the opportunity to reach people for Christ and he did not want to blow it. The timing to depart was NOT at hand. He wanted to stay in Ephesus, in spite of the opposition that he faced from those in sexual perversion, idolaters, demon and Satan worshipers, religious and racial bigots. Yet, God continued to get the victory.
* Acts 19:18-20...And many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds. 19 Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they
counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver.  
20 So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.

Beloved, any time you do something for the Lord, you are going to face opposition sooner or later, but God will prevail. While attending a university in Scotland, God called John Paton to missionary work in the New Hebrides. After his graduation, the Patons sailed to the southwest Pacific and began work among the people on the island of Tanna. This was a dangerous task for these folks were cannibals.

A few months after their arrival, John’s wife and baby son died. For several nights, John slept on the graves of his family to prevent the cannibals from digging up the bodies and eating them. John labored for four years, but did not see one convert, so he made the decision to leave.

Many years later, John had another son by another marriage. This son resumed the work on Tanna and eventually saw the entire island come to know Jesus Christ as their Savior. When the elder Paton revisited the island, the man who was the chief of the former cannibals asked John Paton a powerful question, “Who was the great army that surrounded your hut every night when you first came among us many years ago?”

Beloved, God's angels had protected the Patons. They did not even know what was going on around them. Thank God for His protecting care.

* Psalm 91:11- For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.
* Psalm 34:7- The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.

Because of his faithful work for Christ and that of his son, when John left the New Hebrides for the last time, after ministering on another island as well, it is reported that he said with tearful eyes, "I don't know of one native on these islands who has not made a profession of faith in Jesus Christ.”

Thank the Lord, He enables us to conquer our fears and the opposition that we might face at times. Thank God for His protecting grace.

* Romans 8:35-37... Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. 37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.
God used Paul in great ways because he was faithful in doing little things. The Lord continued to entrust him with greater opportunities as he continued to show his faithfulness. The fact that he would not quit after he was stoned in Lystra and went through many other hardships demonstrated that he meant business for God. He gave us a menu of misery in Second Corinthians which revealed the hardships he faced but also his character and resolve. The man just would not quit.

* 2 Corinthians 11:23-27... Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. 24 Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. 25 Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; 26 In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; 27 In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in fasting oft, in cold and nakedness.

God opens our doors of opportunity. It is our responsibility to go through those doors He opens for us.

* Revelation 3:7-And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;

God will continue to give you greater opportunities and responsibilities in serving Him as you are faithful in the little things. Jesus Himself said in Luke 16:10a, “He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much....” Have you ever heard of two men in the New Testament known as Philip and Stephen? God used both men in a great way.

Because of Philip’s faithfulness, the gospel eventually made it into Africa. He told the Ethiopian eunuch about the Lord. Stephen was used by God to speak to the heart of Saul when he was martyred for Christ. Later, Saul did get saved and his name was changed to Paul the apostle.

Both Stephen and Philip started out in their service for Christ by doing practical, quiet work in feeding the widows in the church at Jerusalem. They were deacons or waiters who became effective preachers for the Lord because they were faithful. Are you faithful? I wonder what could God do with you and through you if you would walk through the doors of opportunity to serve Him and reach others for
IV. Sentiments about Servants of the Savior  16:10-12

Now if Timotheus come, see that he may be with you without fear: for he worketh the work of the Lord, as I also do. 11 Let no man therefore despise him: but conduct him forth in peace, that he may come unto me: for I look for him with the brethren. 12 As touching our brother Apollos, I greatly desired him to come unto you with the brethren: but his will was not at all to come at this time; but he will come when he shall have convenient time.

Paul focuses his attention now on Timothy and Apollos. He instructs the Corinth church to take it easy on young Timothy. Paul knows these people and that they are very strong-willed. He tells them to let Timothy serve without fear, without harassment, without intimidation, without disrespect. Why? Timothy is doing the same work for the Lord as Paul. His position demands respect even though his age may be different. He is not to be despised which means that Timothy’s ministry was not to be considered as insignificant, unimportant, or ignored just because of his youth.

If every church would heed these words, many pastors would stay much longer in their churches. Why are we surprised that 1500 pastors are leaving the ministry for good every single month in this nation when they have to deal with turmoil, taunting, and tribulation in their churches from their people?

Beloved, just because a pastor may be young does not mean he is ignorant. If that pastor is spending time in God’s Word, seeking God’s direction, living a godly life, and is getting wisdom from God and wise men, he is most likely going to make good decisions. I have known elderly Christians through my years that thought they were pretty smart, but in reality, they were fools because they tried to undermind the work of the ministry and the pastor. Paul did not want that to happen to Timothy.

Paul wanted Apollos to go to Corinth to minister to the church. Apollos, however, did not feel that it was God’s will to come at the present time, but would come at a more convenient time. At that time, Apollos was reaching people for Christ in Greece.
Acts 18:24-28... And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus. 25 This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John. 26 And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly. 27 And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace: 28 For he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publickly, shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ.

God was using Apollos in Ephesus, but he may have been reluctant to go to Corinth for the present time because of the division in the Corinth church which included him. Apollos did not spark the division, but there were people that were followers of him. His arrival at the present time may have caused further problems which he probably felt needed to be avoided until issues could be resolved in the church. Apollos was following the Lord’s leading, not Paul’s leading, even though Paul was an apostle. Each Christian needs to know what GOD wants him to do.

Writing about God's sure guidance, British pastor Frank W. Boreham recounted a time when a preacher visited his home in New Zealand. Being young and inexperienced, Boreham sought the counsel of his guest. He said that one morning they were sitting on the veranda, looking out over the golden plains to the purple sunlit mountains. He asked the preacher, "Can a man be sure that in the hour of perplexity he will be rightly led by God? Can he feel secure against making a false step?" "I am certain of it," exclaimed the preacher, "if he will but give God time! As long as you live, remember that. Give God time!"

Beloved, have you given time to work in your life? Do you give the Lord the time of day? Is He a part of your schedule or are you living in the future saying, “I will live for the Lord when I am older, but not now.” If that is your attitude, you need to get back from the future and live for Him now. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 6:2, “Now is the accepted time. Now is the day of salvation.” Make your life count for Christ today. Don’t miss the opportunities on your path to reach others for Christ.

Dr. Jimmy Allen, the former pastor of First Baptist Church in San Antonio, Texas said, “We missed him. Our chance to change things came and passed and we did not know it was there.” A dark-skinned little boy
sat through Sunday School classes for three years at First Baptist Church, but some one missed him. His name was Sirhan Sirhan.

That little boy grew up and at age of 24 he shot and killed Senator Robert Kennedy. In a welter of words and the shudder of grief throughout our nation, the persistent thought keeps recurring, “Someone missed him.” May the Lord help us all to reach others for Him. May they not slip through our fingers. May we come back from the future and live our lives for Him today.
Chapter 23
Get Off Your Cell Phone!

1 Corinthians 16:13a
“Watch ye...”

On July 31st, 2012, a video was released on the television news of a Philadelphia man that fell onto a set of lowered train tracks while he was talking on his cell phone. He was so distracted and unaware of what he was doing that he fell and was knocked unconscious by his fall. Fortunately, there were no trains headed to the station at that time, but it was late at night and no one was around to save him. He eventually awoke and moved to safety, but it could have been much worse.

In January 2011, a woman was captured on mall security cameras as she walked right into a fountain at a mall because she was distracted by her cell phone. Then in April, a man unknowingly put himself in a life-threatening situation when he was so distracted by texting on his phone to his boss that he nearly ran into a bear that had wandered into a suburban California neighborhood.

All of these folks have one thing in common. They were all distracted and not alert to what they were doing. You and I have to deal with them on the highway all the time as they talk on their phones and weave back and forth from one lane to another.

I mention these examples because the actions of these folks are an illustration of many Christians today who are not paying attention to what they are doing and what is going on around them. Spiritually speaking, you could say they are on their cell phone. They are not alert or watching what is going on around them.

If there ever was a time to be alert to what is going on around you, it is now. Signs of the Rapture of the church are at hand. Jesus is coming! His coming is close! The political situation in America is dire, beloved, and demands that we be alert.
If our nation does not change its course within the next year, the America we know will be a memory of the past. The path of socialism we are on right now will lead to spiritual and economic bankruptcy. Sooner or later, we are going to run out of money or the dollar will be worthless because it is being over-printed. Government leaders that are pushing for the acceptance of homosexual marriages and more abortions are inviting God’s judgment upon our nation like never before.

If we do not change our path as a nation, financially and spiritually, we are heading for a major crash that will thrust the entire planet into economic chaos. The reckless spending in Washington is calling for the chickens who will come home to roost. If this happens, Christian ministries will be extremely damaged.

If people have no money because they have lost their jobs, or because their dollars are worthless, how are they going to support the ministries of their church and their missionaries? Missionaries will have to come home from foreign fields. Ministries in the church will be hampered. Don’t tell me that what is going on in Washington or Springfield will not have an impact on the church. Wake up beloved. Get off your cell phone! If you don’t see what is happening, you have fallen on the train tracks and the train is coming. It is going to run over you.

With these thoughts as a background, in the closing passage of 1 Corinthians, Paul offers some final thoughts and admonitions to the believers in Corinth that are applicable to us today. In verses 13 and 14, he admonishes them to be alert, to be absolute and anchored in the faith, to be adults in their spiritual growth, to be arduous or strong, and to be affectionate or loving.

In this message, we are focusing our attention on being alert. Paul said, “Watch ye.” This word “watch” is from the word *gregoreuo* {gray-gor-yoo'-o}. It means “to watch, to give strict attention to something; to be awake; to be vigilant.” We are to be spiritually wide awake and alert to what is going on around us! If Paul lived in our day, he might say to us, “Get off your cell phone!”

Because they were distracted and not paying spiritual attention to what was going on in their lives, the believers at Corinth encountered a number of problems.
1. Division (ch.1)
2. Depravity (ch. 5)
3. Dissentious Disputes (ch.6)
4. Divorce (ch.7)
5. They were Devoured with Self-indulgence (ch. 10)
6. They had a Distant and Disinterested attitude toward Others (ch.10)
7. Dissipation and Disorderliness about Spiritual Gifts (12-14)

If these things can happen in Corinth, they can happen in our lives if we don’t spiritually speaking, get off of our cell phones, or if we are not alert. Making the right choices in our lives is heavily linked to our ability to be attentive, alert, and cautious to what is going on around us.

Some people are like the ostrich. Their head is in the ground symbolically speaking and they are oblivious to what is going on around them. Many Christians are spiritually asleep to the realities of the eternal destinies of people they rub shoulders with and to their responsibilities as ambassadors of Jesus Christ. If anyone should know what is going on in the world and also have answers and solutions that plague men and women, it should be Christians.

Opportunities arise everyday where we can be used of the Lord, but many miss those opportunities because of their lack of alertness. It is the alert person who is aware of that which is taking place around him so he can have the right responses.

In sixteenth-century Italy the military call "Alla erta!" meant "To the look out!" The French adapted this command as "a l'airte" which later became its own word *alerte*. The English word was derived from this French word. Alertness is a key quality of leadership since both alertness and leadership involve seeing needs and opportunities before others do and knowing how to respond to them.

The quality of alertness is very valuable and can be used to help people in need and even save their lives. For example, did you know that in WW 1 the pheasant and parrot were used as a form of radar because of their qualities of alertness? The French kept parrots in the Eiffel Tower as an early warning system against enemy attack. These birds could hear enemy aircraft long before they arrived.

Pheasants were used not only for their keen hearing, but they could also detect the slightest vibrations in the earth from the footsteps of soldiers or cannon fire. When God created the ear hole of the pheasant, He covered it with small feathers called auriculars which are uniquely designed to protect the bird's ears from air turbulence without obstructing the birds hearing. The result is one very alert bird! We are to be alert like the pheasant.
God used 300 men in Gideon’s army because they were alert. This trait made them different than other men as Gideon prepared for battle against overwhelming odds.

* Judges 7:6- And the number of them that lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, were three hundred men: but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water.

Beloved, the Christian that is alert and watchful:

* Is Observant about Obeying God’s commands
* Is Mindful about missing good opportunities
* Guards against greed
* Is Focused on faith in God, forward growth, and the future consequences of his present choices.
* Is Diligent about his decisions and guards against discouragement and depression.
* Is Watchful against wickedness and waywardness, and keeps his eyes on the Word and will of God.
* Is Aware of apathy in his life and a rotten attitude.
* Is Heedful in helping others in need
* Is Perceptive of pride and past failures
* Is Conscious of the consequences of his conversation, and the counsel and correction from others.
* Is Vigilant against vice and vanity in his life.

When we look through the Bible, we find that God wants us to get off our cell phone concerning a number of important matters. We are to be watchful and alert to some very important issues.

**I. Be Alert to the Second Coming of Christ**

* 2 Peter 3:10-12... But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. 11 Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, 12 Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?

* Matthew 25:13—Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

* Matthew 24:42- Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.
1 Peter 4:7—But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.

Peter said, "Watch unto prayer." The word "watch" is derived from the Greek word nepho (nay'-fo). It means "to be calm, serene, and collected in spirit; to be alert or watchful." This verb is in the imperative mood in the Greek language which means this is a command from the Lord.

There is a difference between waiting for the return of the Lord and watching for it. The difference between these terms is illustrated by the story of a fishing vessel returning home after many days at sea. As they neared the shore, the sailors gazed eagerly toward the dock where a group of their loved ones had gathered. The skipper looked through his binoculars and identified some of them: "I see Bill's Mary, and there is Tom's Margaret and David's Anne."

One man became concerned because his wife was not there. Later, he left the boat with a heavy heart and hurried up the hill to his cottage. As he opened the door, she ran to meet him saying, "I have been waiting for you!" He replied with a gentle rebuke, "Yes, but the other men's wives were watching for them!" Are you eagerly watching for the Lord's return? If not, get off of your cell phone. Stop being distracted!

Peter adds that we are to be watching unto prayer. We are to be looking for His return, and at the same time, we are not to be in an emotional mess while we are watching. God does not want us to go through life each day being frustrated, fretting, and foaming at the mouth in flaming anger and worry. An unsaved world already knows what this is all about and wants to be delivered from such turmoil. The problem is they turn to the wrong things, like alcohol or drugs, to deal with these feelings.

II. Be Alert to the Seductions, Satanic Attacks, and Snares of Sinful Temptations

Matthew 26:41—Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

The words "watch and pray" indicate continuous action. Keeping up your spiritual guard is not a part-time matter but a full-time one. When a bird is sleeping on its perch, it does not fall off.
Chapter 23...Get Off Your Cell Phone!...16:13a

How does it manage to do this? The secret is in the tendons of the bird's legs. God designed the legs that when it is bent at the knee, the claws contract and grip like a steel trap. The claws refuse to let go until the knees are unbent again. The bended knee gives the bird the ability to hold on to his perch so tightly. When we bend our knee in prayer, it enables us to grip on to those things which are valuable.... honesty, holiness, honor, humility, helpfulness, and a heart for God.

Whether we like it or not, we are in a spiritual war until the day we die. When we get self-confident, spiritually comfortable, or independent of the Lord's leadership, we tend to get spiritually drowsy. Church, prayer time, or Bible reading is not as important as it used to be. You cannot overcome Satan or the desires of the flesh in your own power. This is why New Year's Resolutions don't last. Daily we are to yield our life to the Lord.

* Romans 12:1,2—I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

The ancient sport of falconry employed trained hawks in the chase of wild game. When the "educated predator" was allowed to fly, however, it often rose too high for human eyes to see it against the blue sky. It was, therefore, not uncommon to carry a small caged bird called a shrike. The hunter could then easily tell where his hawk was located by watching the antics of the little creature in front of him, for it instinctively feared the falcon and always cocked its head to keep it in view.

The Christian desperately needs the sensitivity and perception of the shrike when it comes to the detection of his spiritual enemy. Satan dwells in high places and is a master deceiver. He camouflages himself against the beautiful background of attractive people and exciting activities. His presence is hard to detect if we are not on guard.

The Christian that is determined to be alert and guard his Christian testimony will use wisdom and discernment in the friends he chooses, the places he frequents, the products he purchases, and the tidings that come from his tongue. The believer that is alert and attentive is very mindful that he is in a spiritual battle, and in many situations, his most dreaded enemy is himself, his fleshly desires.

Samson is an illustration of this fact. His lust for Delilah blinded him to what was taking place in his life. He failed to be alert and aware
of the destructiveness of his disobedience and ended up losing his power and strength from God, not realizing this until it was too late. He was totally unaware of the reality of his weakness and ruin.

* Judges 16:19-20—... And she made him sleep upon her knees; and she called for a man, and she caused him to shave off the seven locks of his head; and she began to afflict him, and his strength went from him. [20] And she said, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the Lord was departed from him.

To drop your guard in matters of your flesh is to court moral failure and damage to your testimony, your close walk with God and your relationships with your loved ones.

* Such was the case with Achan who failed to guard his heart against greed and destroyed his family.

* Such was the case with David, whose passion for Bathsheba ignited his imagination and demanded that his fleshly desires be fulfilled, no matter what damage was done and who was hurt.

* Such was the case with Demas, whose love for this world distracted him from his love for the Lord, causing him to quit, and leaving him with a legacy of being a loser.

* Such was the case with Jonah, whose bitterness became a boulder in the path that God commanded him to follow. His failure to deal with his rebellion toward God's will robbed him, at first, of his submission to God's instructions, and later, of serenity and joy in his life after the Lord used him in one of the greatest revivals in history.

Apathy in alertness and attentiveness lead to actions that we will regret in the future. Solomon started well when he became king of Israel. He was in essence, praying for God's help in being alert, attentive, and cautious in ruling the kingdom. When he dropped his guard and went to sleep at the helm, he made stupid decisions that ruined his life, his family, and his walk with God. At the end of his life, he flopped. Solomon confirmed the truth that as you get older, your battle with your flesh can become even greater.

Arrogance and Apathy are sisters that continue to whisper in our ears until we lie silent in the grave. The songs of these sirens are kept "in check" by our alertness and awareness to their subtle deceptions. The song of Arrogance is loud and bold. It appeals to our ego, swells our head, fuels our cockiness, and drowns our dependence upon the Lord.
The song of Apathy is much different. It is like the tender voice of the violin or harp, lulling us into spiritual slumber, laziness in our love for others, and boredom for the Bible and our burden for souls. The songs from the glistening lips of Arrogance and Apathy affected the king. Solomon dropped his spiritual guard and made some critical blunders. Satan pulled the wool over his eyes and got a great laugh from his blunders and disobedience.

* 1 Kings 11:4—For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father.

If you are going to survive as an effective, victorious soldier for Jesus Christ, then it is mandatory that you realize that Satan is out to ruin your life and testimony for Christ. He hates you. Get off of your cell phone and watch out for what he is trying to do to you!

* 1 Peter 5:8—Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

The word "vigilant" is from the Greek word *gregoreuo* {gray-gor-yoo'-o} which means "to watch; to give strict attention to, be cautious." This is to be our attitude toward Satan. Spiritually speaking, we need to get off of our cell phone. We need to be alert.

In Solomon’s early years, he was a man of wisdom. Unfortunately, he did not heed what God revealed to him in his latter years. Nevertheless, when he followed the Lord, he offered counsel about being alert.

* Proverbs 22:3—A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished.

Beloved, the person who is attentive looks ahead and sees evil that may be on his path, and hides himself. He prepares for the problem by protecting himself from the evil. Those who are naive and lack understanding of the dangers in their path do nothing and are hurt. Problem people or activities that may be a problem for you should be avoided. Failure to do so may result in a problem for you.

God's Word gives us ample warnings about destructive people and behavior that will hurt us. When we ignore those warnings, then we are scarred by the slash of sinful living which leaves deep scars in our lives and loved ones. This is why Solomon warns us to be attentive to evil and stay away from it.

* Proverbs 4:14-15—... Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. [15] Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass
* Proverbs 1:10-15... My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not. [11] If they say, Come with us, let us lay wait for blood, let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause: [12] Let us swallow them up alive as the grave; and whole, as those that go down into the pit: [13] We shall find all precious substance, we shall fill our houses with spoil: [14] Cast in thy lot among us; let us all have one purse: [15] My son, walk not thou in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path: 

* Proverbs 22:5—Thorns and snares are in the way of the froward: he that doth keep his soul shall be far from them.

The person who is attentive and keeps his soul will stay as far away as possible from the thorns and snares of this life. He will avoid those activities that will hinder and hurt him (thorns), or entrap him (snares). Wild women, men, or parties, drugs, alcohol, gambling, pornography, etc. should be avoided. They are thorns and snares that should not be played with and handled.

When it comes to temptation, don't stare, study, or flirt with it, for you will be mesmerized by its lure. One three-year old's explanation for being in the kitchen on top of a chair, eating cookies: "I just climbed up to smell them, and my tooth got caught."

Beloved, we fall into sin many times because we position ourselves in the path of temptation just like this little boy. Do not put yourself in a deliberate position where you know you are going to be tempted and get your tooth caught. Amen! Sometimes this is not possible, but in many cases we have a choice about whom we are spending time, where we are going, and what we are doing. Guard what God has done for you by avoiding temptation.

As you think about your friends right now, do they draw you closer to the Lord or do they draw you away from Him and His Word?

* 1 Corinthians 6:18—Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.

* Romans 13:14—But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof

Be watchful or alert

* Be Alert for the Second Coming of Christ
* Be Alert to the Seductions, Satanic Attacks, and Snares of Sinful Temptations
* Next....Be Attentive to your Soul and the Sentiments of Your Heart
III. Be Attentive to your Soul, and the Sentiments of Your Heart

* Proverbs 4:23—Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.

The hagfish is a unique predator. It is long and slender like a snake, but it's a fish. It ties itself into a knot in order to be a killer. This ugly, slimy, eel-like creature twists itself into a loop as it attracts another fish. It will then plunge its teeth into one of the gills of a fish as it approaches. When it is firmly attached, the tenacious hagfish begins a twisting action with the knot in its body, burrowing deeper into its prey until it is completely inside the other fish. It then eats the fish from the inside until all that is left is nothing but skin and bones.

Satan is a hagfish that attacks what is on the inside of us. He targets our heart to destroy us. If we give him ground in our heart, then he will build a stronghold or castle in our life. When this happens, we struggle with sinful habits, bitterness, doubt, hate, lust, etc. This is why Paul warned us to not give him any ground.

* Ephesians 4:27—Neither give place to the devil.

What is in your heart, what you muse about, what smoulders within your soul, will come out eventually like smoke out of a chimney. If your heart is evil, then evil will surface in your actions.

* Matthew 15:19-20a... For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: [20] These are the things which defile a man:...

The course of your life, the choices you make, the relationships that you establish with people are all affected by what is going on in your heart. This is why Solomon says, “Get off your cell phone! Be on the lookout! Keep your heart, watch over it carefully with all diligence.”

The word "diligence" is from the Hebrew word mishmar {mish-mawr'}. It carries the idea of guarding like a prison guard with eyes peeled for any possible escape. It means "to guard with extreme effort." We are to keep our thoughts and desires under control or under confinement like a prisoner that is locked up in jail. Our minds are to be adamant about doing what is right.

If you are going to overcome temptation, you need to make up your mind now that you are going to do what is right. Make your choice now. Don't wait until the time of temptation. That may be too late.
This is what Daniel did. He made up his mind before temptation came. He was attentive and alert to his spiritual condition and his physical temptations. He guarded his heart by making up his mind to do what was right before the temptations came. He looked down the road and knew some of the tests that he would face.

* Daniel 1:8a—But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s meat, nor with the wine which he drank:...

* Psalm 119:30—I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid before me.

The battle for the heart is a constant battle that every Christian faces. It is a never-ending conflict. Charles Spurgeon once made a remarkably honest confession to his congregation. In a sermon entitled "The Power of the Holy Ghost," he said:

I hope that my will is managed by Divine Grace, but I am afraid my imagination is not at times. Those who have a fair share of imagination know what a difficult thing it is to control. You cannot restrain it....My imagination has taken me down to the vilest kennels and sewers of earth. It has given me thoughts so dreadful that, while I could not avoid them, yet I was thoroughly horrified by them. These thoughts will come; and when I feel in the holiest frame, the most devoted to God, and the most earnest in prayer, it often happens that this is the very time when the plague breaks out the worst.

Spurgeon’s honest testimony ought to be a warning to us all to be vigilant in guarding our heart, especially in those times when we are on top of the mountains in our lives.

Not only do we need to guard our heart against temptation, but also against a bitter, unforgiving spirit. A lack of forgiveness, bitterness, and hate will destroy what God has done for you. Bitterness will poison your soul. It will shift your focus from God to the failures of others, and it will drain away your delight and joy. We are to be on guard against bitterness and an unforgiving spirit. You may get mad at people that offend you, but you had better forgive them quickly.

* 2 Corinthians 2:10-11—... To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ; [11] Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.

* Ephesians 4:31—Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:
Chapter 23...Get Off Your Cell Phone!...16:13a

* Hebrews 12:15—Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled:

God also admonishes us to guard our heart against pride that inflates our independence toward God, deflates our devotion to the Lord, swells our sense of security when we are insecure, and ruins our lives by recklessness, rebellion, and resistance toward God's will, way, and Word.

Pride will put you in a fantasy land. It will cause you to conclude that your accomplishments and victories are the result of your efforts instead of God's blessings and enablement. Pride will distract you from your focus on God to focusing on your self. Pride will blind you to your weaknesses. Pride, self independence, and self-security can lead to disaster because the person tends to become independent of God and resistant to His will, His way, and His Word. Watch out for these! Get off of your cell phone!

* 1 Corinthians 10:12—Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

Philip II, father of Alexander the Great and king of Macedon was always accompanied by two men who had an interesting duty. One man would come to him each morning and say, "Philip, remember you are but a man," while the second asked the king each evening, "Philip, have you remembered that you are but a man?" We can't hire people to keep us humble, but we can turn to God's Word each day to keep ourselves in proper perspective.

We also need to guard against discouragement, depression, and disillusionment which leave us defeated, doubting, and in dismay. Some of the greatest Christians in church history have faced deep bouts of depression. John Knox said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit and put an end to this miserable life." America's first foreign missionary, Adoniram Judson, stated after the death of Nancy, his wife, "God is to me the Great Unknown. I believe in him, but I find him not." Judson suffered from deep depression after her death.

Satan is a master at cracking our confidence in Christ or in ourselves. A key factor in guarding our heart is to keep our focus on the Lord and His Word. When Harry Truman became president, he worried about losing touch with common, everyday Americans, so he would often go out and be among them. Those were in simpler days when the President could take a walk like everyone else. One evening, Truman
decided to take a walk down to the Memorial Bridge on the Potomac River. When there, he became curious about the mechanism that raised and lowered the middle span of the bridge. He made his way across the cat walks and through the inner workings of the bridge, and suddenly he came upon the bridge officer, eating his evening supper out of a tin bucket.

The man showed absolutely no surprise when he looked up and saw the best-known and most powerful man in the world. He just swallowed his food, wiped his mouth, smiled, and said, "You know, Mr. President, I was just thinking of you." It was a greeting that Truman adored and never forgot.

Wouldn't it be wonderful, if Jesus Christ were to suddenly appear before us physically or come suddenly in the cloud, if we could say, "You know, Lord, I was just thinking of you." Keeping our focus on the Lord and His Word will strengthen us. How often do you think about Him?

* Isaiah 26:3—Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.
* Psalm 119:11—Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.

When we are distracted, when we are on our cell phone, if you please, it is difficult to focus on the Lord. May we learn to be watchful and alert.

* Be Alert to the Second Coming
* Be Alert to the Seductions, Satanic Attacks, and Snares of Sinful Temptations
* Be Attentive to your Soul, and the Sentiments of Your Heart
* Next...Be Alert or Attentive to the Scriptures

**IV. Be Alert or Attentive to the Scriptures**

Christians are to be attentive and alert to the Lord and His Word. The Berean Christians for 2000 years have been models for attentiveness to the Scriptures.

* Acts 17:11—These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

The reason we need to be attentive and alert to what the Scriptures teach is because they help us gain wisdom, to discern what is true, and provide a blueprint on how to live. They instruct us what to do and what
to avoid. God’s Word strengthens us to live a godly life.

The awareness of God’s presence and our love for Christ are a motivation for us to guard what the Lord has done for us and not surrender to sin. We should not want to disappoint or hurt our loved ones or the Lord who is watching over us.

* Psalm 34:15—The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry.
* Proverbs 15:3—The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.
* 2 Corinthians 3:2—Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men:
* Romans 14:13—Let us therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother’s way.

When we drop our guard, our love and passion for Christ begin to cool and the door is opened to temptation. The Bible warns us of this attitude. The church at Ephesus cooled in their love for Christ. Some drift from the Lord because their love for Christ has been replaced with other things. In a Discipleship Journal survey, 81% of respondents noted that temptations were more potent when they had neglected their time with God and when they were physically tired (57%).

* Revelation 2:4—Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.
* Matthew 24:12—And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.
* Matthew 6:24—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 mammon.

Our attentiveness to God’s Word is crucial if we are going to thrive spiritually and mature in Christ. The wise believer will do well if he will keep watch on his behavior and make sure it is in line with Scripture. When we are attentive and put into practice God’s commandments, we take steps that will help to preserve our lives physically, emotionally, and spiritually. We keep or guard our soul. Solomon also confirmed this truth in the book of Ecclesiastes.

* Ecclesiastes 8:5—Whoso keepeth the commandment shall feel no evil thing: and a wise man’s heart discerneth both time and judgment.
* Proverbs 19:16—He that keepeth the commandment keepeth his own soul; but he that despiseth his ways shall die.
When we reject God's Word, what is "bad" is labeled good and what is "good" is considered bad. The choices we make based on this kind of thinking get us into major trouble. When our nation passes laws that promote and protect perversion and atrocity such as abortion, our country is disgraced and weakened by our lack of wisdom and godliness. We end up making decisions which compound our problems because of the ripple effects that are created by our foolish decisions.

*Proverbs 14:34—Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.*

Solomon offers another reason why we should be attentive to God's Word. Attentiveness to God's Word, keeping or guarding your heart with it, will embolden you to stand for what is right and have the courage and confidence to oppose that which is wrong.

*Psalm 119:11—Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.*

Solomon stated in Proverbs 29:18, “Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.” When people do not have "vision," which is the revelation of the Word of God, or if they ignore God's Word and are not attentive to it, the Bible says that they will perish.

The word, "perish" is from the Hebrew word para’ {paw-rah’} which means "to let go or loosen their restraint, to uncover or become naked." The idea of this word is the fact they lose their moral restraint. Much of the immorality and nudity that exist in our country today is due to the fact of the rejection of God's Word.

Our first President, George Washington, recognized the truth of this verse. He said, "It is impossible to rightly govern the world without God and the Bible." Without the Word of God, people are difficult to govern. This is why leaders govern by force in nations that have shut out the Scriptures and Jesus Christ.

Solomon does not stop here, however. He continues his message by giving us a principle on how to be happy. Removing moral restraints in your life will not make you happy. In fact, they will lead to misery, but being attentive and putting into practice the Word of God will lead to happiness and blessing in your life. If you want to be happy, and most people desire this, then the solution is God's Word.

*Proverbs 23:26—My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways.*
Not only does your father want you to be attentive to him, but the Lord wants your attention. He desires that we give Him our heart. What does this mean? The word "give" speaks of attentiveness. It is from the Hebrew word *nathan* {naw-than'} which means "to dedicate, to devote, to turn or give over, to stretch out." In fact, the word "attentive" is from the Latin word *ad tendo* which means "to stretch." It refers to a horse turning its ears or a bird, cocking its head to listen more fully.

Beloved, the Lord wants us to stretch out our heart to Him in devotion and dedication. He wants us to be attentive and obedient to His ways. Let me ask, "Have you given your heart to God? Are you attentive to His Word?"

Three men walked by a building, one at a time. The first man said, "That's my house." The second man, "That's my house." The third man, "That's my house." All spoke the truth—the first man built it, the second man bought it, and the third man rented it. So, the triune God owns every Christian on the same three counts. God the Father created us. God the Son bought us by His blood. God the Spirit indwells us. Have you yielded your life to Him? Is the Lord important to you? Your attentiveness to Him and His Word will demonstrate His value to you.

V. Be Alert and Attentive to your Statements

If we are not careful, our tongues can devastate people. Think before you speak and put your foot in it.

*Psalm 39:1—I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me.*

If you think about it, many of our problems can be traced to what we say, how we say it, or what we don't say. It is easy to offend people with your mouth. It is for this reason, Solomon tells us to be very attentive to what we are saying or writing. Solomon warned us that death and life are in the power of the tongue (Proverbs 18:21). This was amply illustrated at the end of WW II.

According to the *Blunder Book*, on July 26, 1945, leaders of the United States and Great Britain issued the Potsdam Declaration in which Japan was called upon to surrender unconditionally or face destruction. Emperor Hirohito inquired through the Russians if the reference to "unconditional" surrender could be deleted since Japan's Supreme Council and the Emperor had decided to secure a negotiated peace on June 22.
The Russians informed President Truman about Japan's request, but he refused to alter the demand for unconditional surrender. Japan decided to wait to see if further diplomatic moves might bring the negotiated peace they sought. A statement was issued to the world press announcing Japan's intention to forgo responding for the present to unconditional surrender terms.

In Japanese, the statement used the word *mokusatsu*, which has two possible meanings: [1] to ignore, [2] to refrain from comment. A glaring error was made by the Japanese translator in the English version of the statement. Instead of using the intended saying, "refrain from comment," he wrote that Japan would "ignore" the demand for unconditional surrender.

American leaders became enraged when they read this statement and concluded the Japanese would express contempt to any proposal by the United States. This mistake was one of the factors that fueled further escalation of tension between the United States and Japan. Less than two weeks later, the United States dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and 140,000 died instantly. Another bomb was dropped later on Nagasaki and 80,000 died instantly. The blunder in the translation of one word led to catastrophic consequences. Death and life are in the power of the tongue. Be careful with your words.

* Proverbs 21:23—Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles.

On October 14, 1912, the life of outspoken and energetic, presidential candidate, Theodore Roosevelt was saved by his many words. Roosevelt had just served one term as president, and was reapplying for the job. As he left his hotel in Milwaukee on that day, he stuffed his thick, wordy campaign speech in his breast pocket.

He was soon confronted by a gun-toting bartender. The angry assailant fired at Teddy, hoping that Roosevelt would suffer the same fate as his predecessor, President McKinley. The bullet did crack one of Roosevelt's ribs, but the thickness of his speech probably saved him from death. While many words were life-saving in this one incident, generally the more words you spit out, the more trouble you bring to yourself. Jean Paul Sartre put it this way, "Words are loaded pistols." Beloved, pay attention to what you are going to say before you say it.

The person who is alert, attentive, and careful in what he says will keep his soul from troubles. It is interesting that Solomon uses the plural form... "troubles." Again, he is right on target because when we shoot off
our mouth, we usually don't create one problem, we create a bunch. We tend to get into trouble with more than one person. The trouble that we create affects us in many areas of our lives. These problems affect us physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually and may not only involve social complications, but also legal conflicts.

**VI. Be Alert to the State of those Under Your Care**

* Proverbs 27:23—Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds.

Around 200 A.D. among the German Goths, the best man of a wedding carried more than a ring. Since there remained the real threat of the bride's family attempting to forcibly gain her return, the best man stayed by the groom's side throughout the marriage ceremony, alert, and armed. He might also serve as a sentry outside the newlyweds' home.

The reason the groom would stand to the right of the bride was to keep his right hand or the sword hand free in the event of a sudden attack. The bride and groom were under the care of the "best man" who was alert to their needs and prepared to protect them. This is the challenge of Scripture. We are to be alert to the needs of those under our care, whether it is our family, our employees, students we teach, or members in our church.

**VII. Be Alert in Your Supplications to the Lord**

Praying is hard work. God wants us to be alert to His leading and alert in petitioning Him.

* Colossians 4:2—Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving;
* Matthew 26:40—And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour?

**VIII. Be Alert to the Stress and Sorrow of Others**

At church, work, school, or home, be alert to those around you. Look into their eyes. Be sensitive to those who are hurting and have burdens. If you see a need, try to meet it. Be God's
channel of blessing to other people who need a demonstration of the love of Christ.

*Philippians 2:4—Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

IX. Be Alert to Service Opportunities

The opportunities to serve God are now. Tomorrow may be too late because death can strike at any time or your health or present circumstances could be lost.

*Matthew 9:37—Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few;

X. Be Alert to Souls that Need to Be Saved

Now is the time to reach others for Christ.

*John 4:35—Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.

*2 Timothy 4:5—But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.

May the Lord help us to be alert....

*To the Second Coming
*To the Seductions, Satanic Attacks, and Snares of Sinful Temptations
*To our Souls and the Sentiments of our Hearts
*To the Scriptures
*To Our Statements
*To the State of those Under Our Care
*To Our Supplications to the Lord
*To the Stress and Sorrow of Others
*To Service Opportunities
*To Souls that Need to be Saved
Chapter 24
Final Thoughts
Before the Curtains Close

1 Corinthians 16:13-14
Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. 14 Let all your things be done with charity.

Isaac Watts was the father of hymn-writing in the English language. He was born in England. His father was not a member of the state church of England, and was twice thrown into jail for opposing it. When he was a baby his mother often carried him in her arms to visit his father in prison.

Isaac became a preacher in London. He was a little man, only about five feet tall. His health was very poor all of his life, but his church took loving care of him, for he was greatly loved.

Early in his life, Isaac became wearied with the versified Psalms which the churches used in their services. Isaac set out to compose hymns of his own that were full of life. This was a new departure and met with persistent opposition, but his hymns soon became widely popular in nearly all the churches.

In 1709, Isaac wrote a song based on 1 Corinthians 16:13 entitled “Am I a Soldier of the Cross?” Here is what he penned.

Am I a soldier of the cross,
A follower of the Lamb
And shall I fear to own His cause
Or blush to speak His name?
Must I be carried to the skies
On flowery beds of ease?
While others fought to win the prize,
And sailed through bloody seas?

Sure I must fight if I would reign;
Increase my courage, Lord.
I’ll bear the toil, endure the pain,
Supported by Thy Word.

In the last chapter of 1 Corinthians, before the curtains close on this book, Paul offers some final thoughts and admonitions to the believers in Corinth that are applicable to us today. They are admonitions that will help us all to be soldiers of the cross. In verse 13, he admonished us to be alert. In our last message we focused on this challenge.

He continued his list of closing admonitions by admonishing us to be absolute and anchored in the faith, to be adults in our spiritual growth, to be arduous or strong, and in verse 14, to be affectionate or loving. Let’s take a look at each of the remaining challenges.

I. Be Absolute and Anchored in the Faith  16:13b
“...stand fast in the faith...”

The words “stand fast” are derived from the word steko {stay'-ko}. It means “to stand firm, to persevere, to persist.” It carries the idea of commitment and consistency. In the Greek Old Testament, the word steko is used in Exodus 14:13 where Moses said to his people to not fear, but to stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD. When we stand in the faith, we are in essence standing or resting in our trust in the Lord. We are reliant upon Him.

Standing in the faith also has the idea of confidence in the Lord. Such was the attitude of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego who stood tall when others bowed and worshiped Nebuchadnezzar’s idol. They were committed to God and confident of His care of their lives. They stood fast in the Lord.

* Philippians 4:1a- Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord....
When we stand fast in the faith, not only do we give stability to ourselves, we also give comfort to other people who are blessed by our faith. Our confidence in God gives confidence to others to have the same kind of faith.

* 1 Thessalonians 3:7-8... Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith: 8 For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.

When we stand fast in the faith, we create a bond of fellowship with other Christians. Isn’t it wonderful to meet folks who are perfect strangers, but when you find out they are Christians, you are strangers no more? There is an immediate bond of fellowship and purpose, to strive together for the faith of the gospel.

* Philippians 1:27- Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.

In 1 Corinthians 16:13, Paul’s focus is standing for the truth or the doctrine of the gospel including salvation, the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. Jude spoke about this faith which we should stand for or contend.

* Jude 1:3 -Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

This admonition is so relevant for today because so many Christians are ignorant about the doctrines of the New Testament. Weakness in the knowledge of God’s Word has led to wishy-washy, wobbly believers that are unstable, without purpose, and gullible to false teaching. This was a problem that existed in the church at Ephesus.

* Ephesians 4:14- That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

There are several reasons why Christians are ignorant of Bible truths and gullible to false teachers. First of all, many Christians don’t read and study their Bible. Secondly, many pastors are not preaching the Word anymore. A ten minute sermonette that is tacked on to one hour of music is not going to educate and disciple Christians in the Word. Paul’s admonition is still relevant for us today, “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and
A third reason for ignorance is some pastors are preaching false doctrine that has corrupted the truths about salvation, the resurrection, the virgin birth, and the Scriptures. This was going on in Paul’s day, too. He challenged us to fight for the truth and stand for it. This involves exposing false teaching when it is propagated. Beloved, if our beliefs are wrong, our behavior will be wrong, too.

* 1 Timothy 6:12- Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.

**II. Be Adults in Your Spiritual Growth  16:13c**
"...quit you like men..."

Paul admonished us to be adults in our spiritual growth and behavior. The words “quit you like men” are from the word *andrizomai* {an-drid'-zom-ahee}. The word means “to make a man of someone or to show yourself a man; to be brave.” The challenge of Paul is for us to have spiritual maturity and courage. This was a huge need in the Corinth church and a great need for today. The Corinthians were very immature.

* 1 Corinthians 3:1-2... And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.  2 I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able.

It was the desire of men like Paul and Peter that all believers be mature in Christ and become like Him.

* Ephesians 4:13- Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:
* Ephesians 4:15- But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:

God want us to grow up and mature in a number of different areas.

* **In What Areas are We to Mature?**

1. **Be Mature In the Savior’s Work in Us**

* Philippians 1:6—Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:

As we yield to the Lord, He is free to continue to change our hearts and make us more like Him.
2. Be Mature In Sweetness and Love for Others

If we will love the Lord and others as much as we love ourselves, we will have come a long way in our spiritual maturity.

* 1 Thessalonians 3:12—And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you:

Let me encourage you to use your time at church to express your love for other people. Don’t just sit in your pew and watch everything happen. Go to people and talk to them, shake their hand, ask them how they are doing. Reach out to someone else and show an interest in their lives. You never know, you may say something to them that might really help them through a difficult time.

3. Be Mature In our Service and Work for Christ

* Hebrews 13:21a—Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ....

Do something for God with your life! Realize that God does have bigger plans for you than what you have for yourself.

4. Be Mature In Saintliness or Holiness

In the New York Times, Barnaby J. Feder reported that in 1994 the Quaker Oats Company, which had posted strong financial earnings for several years, purchased the Snapple drinks business. These were the guys that made Snapple Tea and fruit drinks. In late 1994, Snapple had been the leader in these beverages, but the purchase turned out to be a terrible blunder for Quaker Oats and for numerous executives in the company.

In late 1994 Quaker paid $1.7 billion to buy Snapple. A few-years later they could sell the company for only $300 million dollars, a loss of $1.4 billion! In the first quarter of 1997, Quaker announced an overall net loss of $1.1 billion owing to its sale of Snapple.

In April, 1997, the chairman and chief executive of Quaker, who had promoted the purchase of Snapple, resigned. So what does this mean to us? Beloved, like large corporations choosing what businesses to buy, Christians need to choose their commitments, hobbies, activities, friends, and involvements wisely.

If you do not use wisdom and discernment, the wrong crowd and the wrong activities can drain away your spiritual zeal and enthusiasm for Christ. Sinful activities and habits will hinder your spiritual maturity. A sinful lifestyle can be very costly, too, for sin will take you farther than
you want to go. It will last longer than you want it to last and cost more than you want to pay.

* 2 Corinthians 7:1—Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

5. Be Mature In Our Security or Faith in Christ
* 1 Thessalonians 3:10—Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith?

6. Be Mature In Singleness of Mind or Unity
* John 17:23—I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

7. Be Mature In Our Sense or Knowledge of the Savior
* 2 Peter 3:18a—But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

You get to know the Lord by spending time with Him.

8. Be Mature In Our Spiritual Strength
* 2 Corinthians 12:9a—And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness...

9. Be Mature In the Statements that Come from Our Mouths
* James 3:2—For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.

The word "perfect" comes from the Greek word teleios which means "full grown, lacking nothing, mature." The perfect or mature man does not slip up in his words. He is careful in what he says. He realizes that the tongue can ruin reputations and break people's hearts.

A sign of our maturity will be revealed by our mouths. Socrates said, "Speak friend that I may see thee." The perfect or mature man realizes the tongue is the world's smallest, but most destructive trouble-maker. It can get you into serious trouble and also get you out if you will think before you speak. Let me illustrate.

It was his first day on the job. He was a new clerk in the green produce department of a super market. A lady came up to him and said she wanted to buy half of a head of lettuce. He tried to dissuade her from that goal, but she persisted. Finally he said, "I'll have to go back and talk to the manager."

He went to the rear of the store to talk to the manager, not noticing that the woman was walking right behind him. When he got into the back
of the store, he said to the manager, "There's some stupid old lady out there who wants to buy half a head of lettuce. What should I tell her?"

Seeing the horrified look on the face of the manager, he turned about and, seeing the woman, added, "And this nice lady wants to buy the other half of the head of lettuce. Will it be all right?" Considerably relieved, the manager said, "That would be fine."

Later in the day, he congratulated the boy on his quick thinking. He then asked, "Where are you from, son?" The boy said, "I'm from Toronto, Canada, the home of beautiful hockey players and ugly women." The manager looked at him and said in a serious tone, "My wife... is from Toronto." The boy very wisely said, "Oh, and what hockey team did she play for?"

Yes, beloved, our tongues can get us into trouble and also out of it. God wants us to grow up and mature in Christ. Are you growing? Are you getting victory over sin? Are you growing in your dedication, service, and love for the Lord and other people? Are you getting victory over your tongue? Are you growing in your knowledge and closeness to the Lord Jesus Christ? Where are you spiritually? Some may ask, “How does this happen? How does a Christian mature?”

* How Does a Christian Mature?

1. The Spirit of God helps us to Mature
   * 1 Peter 1:2a—Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit....

2. Set Aside Sin from Your Life
   * 1 Peter 2:1—Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings

3. Study and Search the Scriptures

Frenchman Michel Lotito has an iron gut. For some reason Lotito likes to eat metal. In the past twenty-five years, says writer Rosie Mestel, Lotito has eaten eleven bicycles, seven shopping carts, a metal coffin, a cash register, a washing machine, a television, and 660 feet of fine chain. Lotito says it wasn't easy eating his first bicycle: "I started with the metal and moved on to the tires," he recalls. "It was really difficult to stay that extra day to finish off the rubber. Metal is tasteless, but rubber is horrible." Now Lotito swallows pieces of tire and frame together.

But none of that can compare with his biggest meal: a Cessna. That's right, Lotito has eaten an entire light airplane, 2,500 pounds of aluminum, steel, vinyl, Plexiglas, and rubber. With a meal like that he cuts the metal
into pieces about the size of his fingernail and consumes about two pounds a day. Most people would agree that Michel Lotito has an unhealthy appetite. But wait a minute, if we are not careful, we have appetites that are just as unhealthy. All Christians need to change their appetites from destructive habits to what is true food for their souls. If they are to mature, they need to develop a hearty appetite for the Word of God.

* 1 Peter 2:2—As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:
* 2 Timothy 3:16-17—... All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: [17] That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.
* Colossians 1:28—Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:

4. Spiritual Sacrifices are to be Offered to the Lord
* 1 Peter 2:5—Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

The most important sacrifice that you are to offer to the Lord every day is you.

* Romans 12:1- I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

5. Shadow the Steps of Christ in order to Mature
* 1 Peter 2:21—For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:

6. Serve the Lord to the Best of Your Ability
* 1 Peter 4:11—If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever.

7. Be Sensitive or Attentive to the Servants of Christ

God uses preachers and teachers of the Word to help believers grow if they will truly preach and teach the Word.

* Ephesians 4:11-12... And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; [12] For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of
the body of Christ:

8. Be Steadfast and Serious about Your Spiritual Growth and Service

You do what you want to do. If you want to go forward for Christ, you will. If you don’t care, you won’t. You can make excuses or you can move forward.

* Philippians 3:13-15...Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, [14] I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, [15] Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.

9. In Sufferings, be Patient and Strengthened by the Lord

* 1 Peter 5:10—But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.

God uses our trials to develop patience and maturity in us. For example, a wave of persecution of house churches by the Chinese Government began in January, 2004. Christians received sentences of up to three years, reports the mission agency Open Doors. Brother Zhong from central China tells of his first imprisonment, which lasted 33 days. Here is his gripping story:

All of our house church leaders were arrested in a raid by the National Security Office while we were training them. In prison, our heads were shaved, and we were interrogated for days. We were told that the other inmates were waiting for their chance to beat us up when we were sent to our cells. Up until then, every new prisoner had been beaten up.

I entered my cell shaking with fear. It was a fearsome sight: sixteen other prisoners standing in two rows, fists ready. My heart was beating hard, and I prayed rapidly for help. Suddenly the leader of the gang asked “Why are you here?” “Because I am a Christian,” I answered timidly, expecting the first blows.

“You don't beat people up?” he asked. “No,” I answered. The next question surprised me, “Can you sing?” I replied “Yes I can,” wondering where this was heading. The gang leader told me to sing. The song ‘I Give Myself as a Seed’ came to mind, so I sang.
The words are:
"Who doesn't have a brother or sister? Who doesn't have a wife and child? Who doesn't want to be with his family? Who doesn't want to be among His relatives? But if the Lord calls me to carry His Cross, I would ignore Them all, even if they passed by my house."

Tears ran down my cheeks as I sang. The Holy Spirit came in our midst, and half of the other prisoners were in tears when I finished. The leader stepped forward and patted me on the shoulder. He then asked me to read the Gospel to them. They wanted to hear it every day.

One day, when we sang again, a guard came to ask what we were doing, and who was responsible. I stood up, and was punished. I had to take off my clothes and stand against the wall in a very uncomfortable position. The leader of the prisoners stood up, demanding the same punishment. The guard became very angry and stormed out of the cell. One of the other inmates became a Christian that day. I was released soon afterwards, because my wife managed to pay my bail. My time in prison impaired my health, but the spiritual gain was worth far more. I am very grateful to God.

In his suffering, God strengthened Brother Zhong and helped him to be patient. God used this man, as well as men like James and Job because they were steadfast in their sufferings.

* James 1:3-4... Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. [4] But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

* Job 23:10—But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.

Not only are we to be alert, not only are we to be adults in our spiritual growth and maturity, but we are also to be arduous or strong.

III. Be Arduous or Strong  16:13d

"...be strong...

When the Civil War broke out, John Vassar was a full-time missionary for the American Tract Society. The New York native soon began distributing Bible tracts to the Union troops and leading thousands to Jesus Christ. In July, 1863, soon after the battle at Gettysburg, John became separated from the Union Army and was captured by Confederate General Jeb Stuart's cavalry.
When John was brought before the general, the men who captured him believed Vassar to be a Yankee spy. But as he was being questioned, Vassar fearlessly replied, "I am working as a representative of the American Tract Society, to try and save the souls of the dear boys that fall around me daily." Then John asked, "General, do you love Jesus?"

General Stuart initially dodged the question by saying: "I know of that good old Bible Society, and have no fear of its emissaries." "But, my dear general, do you love Jesus?" pressed Vassar. Puzzled on how to respond, one of Stuart’s staff members suggested that Vassar be returned to the Yankee lines on the promise that Vassar would not report the confederate position for twenty-four hours. The staff officer made the suggestion lest there be "a prayer-meeting from here to the city of Richmond."

John’s response reminds us that when you find yourself in a difficult situation, be strong in your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. This is what Paul challenges us here, “Be strong.” That is a common emphasis in any generation. It is the emphasis of today, “Be strong, be fit.” The difference, however, between Paul and what is emphasized today is Paul urges us to have spiritual strength, not necessarily physical strength.

Paul said in 1 Timothy 4:8, “For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.” Godliness is profitable for good grades at school, for a successful business, for a great marriage and family, and for having a healthy, thriving, happy nation.” If America and its leaders would focus their attention on being godly, our nation would see a huge change for the better and enjoy God’s fullest blessings that HE wants to bestow upon us if we will just obey and follow Him.

* Psalm 33:12a- Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD....
* 2 Chronicles 7:14-If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

When we look in 1 Samuel 30, we find David in a dire situation.

* 1 Samuel 30:6—And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters: but David encouraged himself in the Lord his God.

David was greatly "distressed." This word means "pressed in, closed in, cornered, or squeezed." Problems were putting a squeeze on
David. Have you ever been in that boat? David was being squeezed and choked by a plateful of pasta problems covered in the sauce of strife, cynicism, and sorrow. His problems included:

- the displacement from his home
- the disdain and ingratitude of his own people
- the deferment of his hopes
- the depletion of his possessions
- the defiance of his men and his friends

Grief in the hearts of his people turned to bitterness, anger, and rebellion. This is the meaning of the phrase "the soul of the people was grieved." The army wanted to play the blame game and they want David to be "it." They wanted to stone him. These folks were not thinking clearly. We never do when we are bitter, rebellious, or grieving.

David was not only hurt, but humiliated. God, however, was using this heartache to work in his heart. He got David into a position where he was alone and had no one but God to turn to and that is what David did. He turned to the Lord.

In chapter 28:15, Saul was distressed and turned to the Witch of Endor. David was distressed and turned to the Lord. The Bible says that David encouraged himself which means "he strengthened, restrained, or conquered himself in the Lord." He strengthened himself. So how do you do that, especially when you are feeling pretty low or scared?

* How Do You Strengthen Yourself in the Lord?

A. Realize the Lord and His Spirit are the source of your strength, not booze, drugs, or other people.

Army Chaplain Keith Kilgore, a Southern Baptist preacher said, “It’s the best ministry I’ve ever had. When soldiers are about to face combat, they start getting spiritual. They want to get right with God.” These soldiers understood that strength comes from the Lord like nothing else.

- Ephesians 3:16- That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;
- Psalm 46:1—God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. This verse was the basis of the battle hymn of Martin Luther, "A Mighty Fortress is our God."

B. Rely on the Lord and put your trust and hope in Him.

- Psalm 42:5—Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help
of his countenance.

* Psalm 31:24- Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the LORD.

As you hope in the Lord, give Him time to work things out for you. Don’t rush God or get ahead of Him.

C. Remember the Lord, His love and care for you.

* Isaiah 26:3—Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.

* Psalm 118:6—The Lord is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me? Don’t let your fear push you into making reckless decisions.

D. Receive God's grace when you are weak and helpless, thereby making yourself strong.

* 2 Corinthians 12:9,10—And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

Paul challenges us all to be alert, to be adults in our spiritual growth and maturity, to be arduous or strong in the Lord, and to be affectionate or loving.

IV. Be Affectionate or Loving  16:14

*Let all your things be done with charity.*

I have been reading a book this week entitled Titanic Warning by Casey Sabella. Over 1500 people died in 1912 in a tragedy that should have never taken place. As the ship Titanic, sank into the ocean around 2:10 in the morning, and people were forced into the icy waters of the Atlantic, loud cries rang out into the dead of night, but then they were hushed into a gradual silence as hypothermia took its victims.

Charles Lightoller was a surviving member of the Titanic’s crew. He shared something that really struck me. He said, “What I remember about that night, what I will remember as long as I live, is the people crying out these words, “I love you.”

That makes a lot of sense. These folks probably knew they were going to die and wanted to express their love to loved ones before they passed into eternity. They wanted their words to also give comfort in a time of calamity. What a challenge to us all to express our love to
people, even in difficult times.

Paul makes it clear that everything that we do, should be done with love for others. This is the meaning of the word “charity.” We are to be consistent in loving people. In the Old Testament, the sign that you followed Abraham was circumcision. The sign that you followed Moses was keeping the Sabbath. The sign that you followed John the Baptist was that you were baptized. The sign that you follow Jesus, however, is that you love one another. Jesus stressed this to us repeatedly.  
* John 13:35- By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

The apostles John stressed the importance of love.  
* 1 John 4:7- Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.

Love keeps our determination from becoming harsh and it keeps our strength from overwhelming other people. Love keeps the sternness of the truth from sounding hateful. Love balances the strengths of a man with the velvet of gentleness and concern. It helps a man to be a man of strength and beauty. When we love people, the focus of attention is turned from ourselves to the needs of others. When we love others, we are willing to make sacrifices for them. When we behave this way, we are behaving just like our Savior.

In 1908, Irish explorer Ernest Shackleton headed an Antarctic expedition attempting to reach the South Pole. They came closer than any before but, 97 miles short of the pole, had to turn back. In his diary, Shackleton told of the time when their food supplies were exhausted save for one last ration of hardtack, a dried sort of biscuit, that was distributed to each man. Some of the men took snow, melted it, and made tea while consuming their biscuit. Others, however, stowed the hardtack in their food sacks, saving it for a last moment of hungry desperation.

The fire was built up, and weary, exhausted men climbed into their sleeping bags to face a restless sleep. Shackleton said that he was almost asleep when out of the corner of his eye, he noticed one of his most trusted men sitting up and looking about to see if anyone was watching. His heart sank within him as this man began to reach toward the food sack of the man next to him. He watched as the man opened the food sack and took his own hardtack and put it in the other man’s sack.

That’s what love does. Love is willing to make sacrifices for others. Are you? Are you maturing in the Lord and following Jesus Christ? God help us all to do so.
Chapter 25
Refreshments in the Church
1 Corinthians 16:15-24

I beseech you, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints,) 16 That ye submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with us, and laboureth. 17 I am glad of the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus: for that which was lacking on your part they have supplied. 18 For they have refreshed my spirit and yours: therefore acknowledge ye them that are such. 19 The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house. 20 All the brethren greet you. Greet ye one another with an holy kiss. 21 The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand. 22 If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha. 23 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. 24 My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.

When I was in kindergarten many moons ago, we had a time set aside each day which was my favorite. It was refreshment time. We usually got a cookie and some juice as we sat at our little tables. I loved refreshment time. It made school more enjoyable and fun for me. I was trained very well! Over a half century later, I still love refreshment time. Ha! Ha! Amen! Keep the milk and cookies coming, especial those soft oatmeal cookies with raisins and pecans! Love those soft chocolate chip cookies, too!

In this closing portion of 1 Corinthians, Paul shares with us some people who were “refreshments” in the church. These were folks that encouraged him, made the burdens lighter, and his days much brighter. As we spend some time on this final portion, we want to take a good look at ourselves and ask, “Am I a source of refreshment and blessing to other
people or am I burden?” Let’s begin. Notice verse fifteen.

I. Addiction for the Ministry 16:15-16

Paul begins by talking about those in the house of Stephanas. These folks were the first ones to be saved in Greece. Stephanas means “crown” and these believers behaved royally like princes and princesses of the King of kings. They were a huge source of refreshment to Paul and others they served because they had addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints. That’s how you and I become a source of refreshment to others, too.

Paul said in Romans 12:11, “Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord.” In Philippians 2:4 he said, “Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.” Others! That is what Jesus was trying to get across to us. That is what the Christian life is all about!

The family of Stephanas realized this. They served the Lord together addicting themselves to the ministry of the saints. What does Paul mean by the word “addicting?” It does not mean to be bound or addicted to a certain habit. It is from the Greek word *tasso* {tas'-so} which means “to appoint on one’s own responsibility or authority; to assign a place; to be under authority.”

This family took upon themselves the responsibility of serving the Lord and others. They just went to work without being asked. When they saw a need, they did something about it. These folks had a serving spirit and helped to ease the burdens of other people. What a blessing are folks like these! Paul urged the Corinthians to submit to the household of Stephanas and others like them because they were totally committed to serving God’s people.

In General Patton’s *Principles for Life and Leadership*, Gen. George S. Patton Jr. says:

Picking the right leader is the most important task of any commander. I line up the candidates and say, “Men, I want a trench dug behind warehouse ten. Make this trench eight feet long, three feet wide and six inches deep.” While the candidates are checking their tools out
at the warehouse, I watch them from a distance. They puzzle over why I want such a shallow trench. They argue over whether six inches is deep enough for a gun emplacement. Some complain that such a trench should be dug with power equipment. Others gripe that it is too hot or too cold to dig.

If the men are above the rank of lieutenant, there will be complaints that they should not be doing such lowly labor. Finally, one man will order, "What difference does it make what he wants to do with this trench! Let's get it dug and get out of here." That man will get the promotion. Pick the man who can get the job done!

Beloved, God too, is looking for people to whom He can give authority and responsibility. Like Patton, he gives people jobs and watches to see how they respond. Most of all, God is looking for obedience and faithfulness. Do you have an addiction to the ministry of the saints?

II. The Arrival of Refreshing Friends 16:17-18

I am glad of the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus: for that which was lacking on your part they have supplied. 18 For they have refreshed my spirit and yours: therefore acknowledge ye them that are such.

The needs that the Corinthian believers could not meet, Paul’s three friends were able to fill. The word “lacking” is from the word husterema {hoos-ter-ay-mah} and it refers to property, resources, poverty, or destitution. These folks not only met a financial need for Paul, but also met a fellowship need, too. Paul said they “refreshed” his spirit, the spirit of the Corinthian believers, and they should be recognized.

What does Paul mean by this word “refreshed?” It is derived from the word anapauo {an-ap-ow-o} which means “to cause or permit a person to cease from any movement or labor in order to recover and collect his strength; to give rest to someone; to encourage or refresh.”

Beloved, these friends of Paul were cheerleaders as well as burden bearers. We need people like this in our lives and many of us have been blessed to have refreshing people cross our paths at critical times like a cool breeze on a hot, summer day.

Thank God for refreshing friends that pick us up when life has beaten us down and shoved our face in the mud. Their words or acts of
kindness are like snow on parched lips. Thank God for refreshing friends that ease the stress and burdens of our lives by picking up some of our load with their labors of love. Thank God for refreshing friends that God uses to supply financial needs when our barrel of meal is empty like the widow of Zarephath.

Thank God for refreshing friends, but more importantly, may the Lord help us to BE refreshing friends. If you will focus on BEING a person that refreshes other people, your life will be brighter, bubblier, and blooming with the sweet fragrance of joy and satisfaction. God wants us to be encouragers. He wants us to be refreshments in the church.

Failure to refresh others is one of the key weaknesses in Christianity today. One of the main reasons for this fault is many believers are selfish-minded instead of ministry-minded. We are also so overwhelmed by our circumstances, problems, and difficulties that we are distracted from thinking of the needs of others. Instead, we are focused on our problems.

It is very difficult to give joy and encouragement when you don't have it yourself. The people doing the refreshing need to be secure, confident, resourceful, and on solid footing themselves if they are going to effectively help others. The selfish, unforgiving, bitter, critical, frustrated, fighting, and argumentative person is seldom an encourager.

Encouragement is very important in our own spiritual growth and in the growth and maturing of others. We need it because we tend to be discouraged by disappointments, setbacks, foul-ups, let downs, knock downs, washing out, caving in, or being brushed aside by others who have put us down and beaten us up emotionally by their critical spirits. We need refreshment and encouragement when the desperation of our circumstances drain us of strength, security, and serenity.

For example, on October 26, 1967, Lieutenant Commander John S. McCain III was shot down over Vietnam and taken prisoner by the North Vietnamese. He endured a broken leg and other injuries and was held in solitary confinement for the first two years of his five-year internment as a prisoner-of-war.

Just prior to Christmas, 1969, John's spirits sunk to "the lowest point possible." He recalled these feelings and thoughts:

I was not sure if I would survive another night, let alone ever return home for a Christmas with my family. But then a tapping came on the wall. Ernie Brace, a veteran pilot who was captured two years before
John, occupied the cell on the other side of the wall. John remembered, "As soon as I heard the tapping that Christmas Eve, I knew it was Ernie. I got up and pressed my ear against the cold stone wall of my cell. At first it was difficult to make out the faint tapping of my neighbor, but it soon became very clear.

Ernie tapped these words, “We'll all be home for Christmas. God Bless America.” With that I began to cry. When you are imprisoned, the enemy can take almost everything from you but they cannot take your spirit.

Those unspoken words from Ernie encouraged John McCain who survived a total of five and a half years as a prisoner-of-war. Folks, realize that the Lord blesses us with people who can share our grief and burdens in those critical times of our lives and bring refreshment to our souls. Thank God for these refreshments in the church.

Great men have accomplished great things because they were either encouragers or encouraged by other people. Elijah had Elisha, Paul had Luke (1 Cor. 16:18), and David had a Jonathan that encouraged him in the Lord (1 Samuel 23:16). One of the prime cheerleaders of the New Testament was Barnabas. In fact, his name means "Son of Encouragement." His original name was Joses, but was given the name Barnabas by the apostles. His actions reveal why he received this name.

Encouragement is very important to our survival in battling for the Lord. It is like oxygen to the soul. Encouragement energizes like a battery and comforts like sunshine after a rain or like coins in our pocket. The refreshing person...

* assures when one is apprehensive
* cheers those in fear
* motivates those who hesitate
* inspires the tired
* urges those on the verge of surrender or defeat
* stirs up those who want to settle down with the status quo
* fires up those who are feeling like a failure
* opens up those who have clammed up or shut up about the Lord or who have been hurt and don't want to speak to anyone
* challenges one to look up to the Lord and giddy up in serving God
* counsels us to make up with those we have offended.

We will find encouragement in our own lives when we form...

* an attachment to the Almighty
* a detachment from depravity
* an acknowledgment of God's ability
* the management of the Messiah over our lives making Him our master

We have a responsibility to refresh or encourage others. The Bible gives several insights about our responsibilities toward others.

* **Our Responsibility to Refresh Others**

1. **We are commanded to give attention on how to encourage one another.**
   * Hebrews 10:24, 25—And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works. Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

2. **We are responsible to encourage those who deserve it.**
   * Proverbs 3:27—Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it.

3. **The strong are to encourage the weak.**
   * Romans 15:1—We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

4. **The ability to refresh someone is a gift from the Lord.**
   
   Do not waste it and throw it away. If it is difficult for you to encourage others, ask the Lord for help and for ideas on how to be a blessing to people. What are some ways we can encourage people? We will now look at the methods or routine of refreshment.

* **The Routine of Refreshment**

   The writer of Hebrews instructed us to consider and give careful thought on how to really refresh, encourage, or help someone. He said in Hebrews 10:24-25, “And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: 25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”

   What are some ways then we can refresh or encourage other people or ourselves?

1. **We Refresh with Our TALENTS & TOKENS**

   William Carey was able to reach people in India for Christ and translate the Bible into eleven languages because he had people in England who held the ropes for him. They refreshed and encouraged him by praying for him consistently and by financially supporting him so he could give his full attention to his ministry.
Just as these gifts encouraged him, our gifts can be a great source of encouragement to missionaries and those who are especially desperate. Your gift may greatly strengthen someone who feels useless, ineffective or that no one cares. Money, thank you cards, and small or expensive gifts can be a great source of blessing to others. Barnabas and the Macedonian Christians are prime examples of people who used their financial resources to encourage other believers in other churches (Acts 4; 2 Corinthians 8).

2. We Refresh Others with Our TIME

Another great way to refresh someone is take them under your wing and spend time with them. It takes time to be a refreshing person. In fact, it is very difficult to be an encourager when you are not around. One way you can encourage visitors at your church is to invite them to sit with you during the service or invite them to lunch after church.

One of the best ways to encourage yourself when you are down is to spend time helping other people and be a refreshing person yourself. Someone said that the ten rules for getting rid of the blues is to go out and do something for someone else and then repeat it nine more times.

3. We Refresh Others with Our TONGUE

When geese fly in a V-formation, they are able to travel 72% farther than if they flew alone. They are able to do this by sharing the load of responsibility in leading the flock. When the lead or point goose tires, he drops back into the formation and another goose takes his place until he tires. The geese at the back of the formation fly in the wind draft of the birds ahead of them. They encourage the lead birds to keep up their speed and momentum by honking at them. Injured, weak, or sickly birds are encouraged by being accompanied by two geese who follow them down to the ground and protect them.

We can learn a lot from the example of these birds in encouraging with our words those who are down and discouraged. Our words should encourage and inspire like the honk of a goose. Words that encourage are inspired by love and are directed toward the fears of the person needing encouragement. Words that refresh come from a person willing to get involved and sacrifice if need be. A good word cost no more than a bad one so may we produce plenty of good ones. The Bible says our words are a very powerful source of refreshment or encouragement.

* Isaiah 50:4a—The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary...
* Proverbs 10:21—The lips of the righteous feed many: but fools die for
want of wisdom.
* Proverbs 12:25—Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop: but a good word maketh it glad.
* Proverbs 12:18—There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword: but the tongue of the wise is health.
* Proverbs 15:23—A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth: and a word spoken in due season, how good is it!
* Proverbs 16:24—Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones.

In The Whisper Test, a lady named Mary Ann Bird writes:

I grew up knowing I was different, and I hated it. I was born with a cleft palate, and when I started school, my classmates made it clear to me how I looked to others: a little girl with a misshapen lip, crooked nose, lopsided teeth, and garbled speech.

When schoolmates asked, "What happened to your lip?" I'd tell them I'd fallen and cut it on a piece of glass. Somehow it seemed more acceptable to have suffered an accident than to have been born different. I was convinced that no one outside my family could love me. There was, however, a teacher in the second grade whom we all adored—Mrs. Leonard. She was short, round, happy—a sparkling lady.

Annually we had a hearing test. Mrs. Leonard gave the test to everyone in the class, and finally it was my turn. I knew from past years that as we stood against the door and covered one ear, the teacher sitting at her desk would whisper something, and we would have to repeat it back to her such as "The sky is blue" or "Do you have new shoes?"

I waited there for those words that God must have put into her mouth, those seven words that changed my life. Mrs. Leonard said, in her whisper, "I wish you were my little girl."

Beloved, God says to every person deformed by sin, "I wish you were my son" or "I wish you were my daughter." Thank God for His love and thank God for those who refresh us with their words of kindness and love.

4. We Refresh Others with Our TENDERNESS

Tenderness goes a long way in refreshing others, especially when they are confronted continually with harshness. It was Henry Drummond who said, "How many prodigals are kept out of the kingdom of God by the unlovely character of those who profess to be on the inside."

Our example, especially our love and tenderness, has a great impact upon others for good. Tenderness goes a long way in refreshing others.
5. We Refresh with Our TENACITY

An officer was ordered by his commander to guard a mobile cannon. While making his way to his destination in a jeep, he discovered his .45 caliber pistol was missing. To lose one's weapon was considered very serious in the army. He contacted his commander, completed his mission and returned to the base where he was greeted by his captain. He handed the missing gun to the officer and told him some children found it and fired off one shot.

The chills from hearing this felt like icicles running down his back. The captain could have held an investigation and put a bad mark put on this officer's record, but he didn't. He merely scared the wits out of this officer by making up the story about the children and told him to never let it happen again.

That officer learned volumes that day in working with people who have failed. His philosophy of leadership today is to pick the failure up, dust him off, and get him moving forward again. The officer's name is the retired General Colin Powell.

People tend to be so impatient with others who have failed or fallen. Thank God He was patient with us and did not give up on us. The tenacity of the Lord is a great source of refreshment to us and our tenacity can encourage others who need us. Do you know someone who has been rejected because of failure or other reasons? Why not seek them out and try to lift them up. Paul instructed us to do this in the letter to the Galatians.

* Galatians 6:1—Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

This is what Jesus did with Peter after he had denied the Lord. The writer of Hebrews instructed us to be patient, tenacious in our encouragement, and not give up on others.

* Hebrews 3:13—But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

6. We Refresh Others with the TRUTHS of Scripture

One of the greatest sources of refreshment is the Word of God. The Bible can comfort like no other book because it is God's book. Where do we find those encouraging passages for the different needs we have in our lives? The following list will prove to be most helpful when you or a
discouraged friend need refreshment from Scripture.

**A. When Expectations go Unfulfilled... Depend upon the Lord.**

* Psalm 30:5—For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.
* Psalm 62:5—My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him.

**B. When the Evaluation of Yourself is Low and you Feel worthless... Realize Several Things.**

1) **Realize you are an ambassador.**

* 2 Corinthians 5:20—Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

2) **Realize you are a child of God.**

* John 1:12—But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:

3) **Realize your labor for the Lord is not a waste.**

* 1 Corinthians 15:58—Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

4) **Realize those who are weak or feeble in the body of Christ are important.**

* 1 Corinthians 12:22, 23—Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness.

**C. When you are Evaded and Rejected by Others... Remember the Lord was Rejected, too.**

* John 16:33—These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

Rejection or the treachery of others is painful, yet, the Lord can take this treatment and turn it into that which is beneficial and good. The treachery of the cross led to the resurrection from the grave and our salvation. Sometimes He allows us to get to a position of hopelessness and despair so that we might seek hope and find it in Him.
On March 22, 1933, Dachau Concentration Camp, located in the town of Dachau just outside of Munich, Germany was opened. It was to be the first of many concentration camps built by the Nazis. It was originally built to house political opponents of the Nazi Party. Over the next twelve years, the camp would imprison Jews, homosexuals, gypsies, Jehovah's Witnesses, pastors, and prisoners of war.

The two main goals for the prisoners were to provide the Nazi Party with slave labor and personnel for medical experiments. More than 206,000 prisoners passed through its gates, some 32,000 of whom perished there. On April 27, 1945, Dachau was the last prisoner of war camp to be liberated by US Forces. The camp then gradually took on a new persona.

In January, 1948, control of the former prisoner camp was handed over to the Bavarian state government. The Bavarian authorities immediately arranged for refugees that were fleeing Communism, and for homeless persons to be accommodated in the barracks of this former death camp. It was renamed the "Dachau East Residential Settlement." The settlement continued to serve the displaced and homeless until 1965. The camp that had been a place of death turned into a settlement of hope.

This is what the Lord did in us, taking us from death to life. Christ wants to transform us into His image and likeness day by day. He also wants us to bring hope that is found in Him to a dying world.

D. When Errors or Failure Plague you...Don't quit.

* 1 John 1:9—If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

* Proverbs 24:16—For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief.

For years William Wilberforce pushed Britain's Parliament to abolish slavery. Discouraged, he was about to give up and throw in the towel. He wondered, “What’s the use?” William’s elderly friend, John Wesley, heard of it and from his deathbed called for a pen and a piece of paper.

Wesley was extremely weak, but with a trembling hand, Wesley was able to scratch out on the paper: "Unless God has raised you up for this very thing, you will be worn out by the opposition of men and devils. But if God be for you, who can be against you? Are all of them stronger than God? Oh be not weary of well-doing! Go on, in the name of God and in the power of his might, till even American slavery shall vanish away
John Wesley died six days later after writing that note, BUT Wilberforce fought for forty-five more years for freedom, and in 1833, three days before his own death, he saw slavery abolished in Britain. Even the greatest of men need encouragement and challenged to not give up, to not throw in the towel, to not quit.

V. When Exhausted, Empty inside, or Sick....God will Help You.
* Isaiah 41:13—For I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee.
* 2 Corinthians 7:6—Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus;
* Psalm 41:3—The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness.
* Psalm 3:3—But thou, O Lord, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head.
* 2 Corinthians 12:9—And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

F. When Engulfed by your Problems or Trials....They will Work out for Good.
When Thomas A. Edison's desk was opened years after his death, this card was found among his papers: "When down in the mouth, remember Jonah. He came out all right." Beloved, if God sends the storms, He will also steer the vessel. When it gets dark enough the stars will come out.
* Romans 8:28—And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.
* Isaiah 43:2—When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.

7. We Refresh Others with TRUST in the Lord
When the outlook is dark, and the in-look's discouraging, just try the up-look; It's always encouraging. Trusting in the Lord and waiting upon Him will encourage your life. Moses said in Exodus 14:13, "And Moses
Chapter 25...Refreshments in the Church...16:15-24

said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever."

Moses encouraged the people by getting them to depend upon God. The New Testament teaches that the Holy Spirit is our Comforter, our parakletos. It comes from the Greek word parakalein, a verb which means "to encourage." Parakalein was used several ways in Greek literature.

A. It was used to call in a coach to train a team at his own expense. He would counsel and give advice to the team. The Holy Spirit is our trainer and teacher, too (John 14:26; 16:13).

B. It was used to call in the Greek gods as helpers. The Holy Spirit is our helper (Hebrews 13:6). In Psalm 71:21 the Greek Septuagint translated parakalein as "comfort." The Holy Spirit is our comforter (John 14:16).

C. It was the word of the rallying cry. It was used of speeches of the leaders and soldiers who urged or encouraged each other in battle. Parakalein meant to challenge the timid soldiers to fight on courageously. This is what the soldiers who were fighting for the independence of Texas did when they shouted "Remember the Alamo!" A father does the same thing with his kids when they offer excuses for inactivity or attempting difficult tasks. I like what one father said to his complaining and failing son: "Son, all you need is encouragement and a swift kick in the seat of your can'ts."

Thank God for those that encourage us. Thank the Lord for the Holy Spirit that refreshes us to God’s will. The Holy Spirit gives us boldness to live for Christ and do His will.

*Acts 4:31- And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.*

The parakletos then is an encourager. He is someone who refreshes others. He is one who puts courage into the faint hearted and makes an ordinary man cope with dangerous, difficult situations. He is a helper, counselor, and one who stands by you. We ought to thank God for people like this in our own lives. Better yet, we ought to be the ones that bring refreshment to others.
We have examined two areas so far.

* Addiction for the Ministry
* The Arrival of Refreshing Friends
* Next....The Asian Greeting

III. The Asian Greeting  16:19-21

* Romans 16:3-5a Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus:
  4 Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.  5 Likewise greet the church that is in their house....

Because of their dedication to the Lord, Aquila and Priscilla were a great source of refreshment to many believers. Their examples provide lessons for us on how to encourage others.

Paul continued and told them that all the believers sent their greetings and he told the Corinthians to greet one another with a holy kiss. What’s that all about?
In early church, this was a custom of greeting other believers. It was similar to our shaking hands or giving someone a hug. It was not a sensual kiss. It was not given between men and women, but between those of the same sex. It was usually given on the cheek, the forehead, or on the hand. In fact, they had a name for it. They called this kiss “The Peace.” As the church grew, the custom eventually faded because the believers did not maintain close relationships with one another.

Let me say something here. Those of you that attend regularly here need to remember that this is your church family. You can develop close relationships with people if that is what you want to do or you can distance yourself from the believers that meet here Sunday morning, Sunday night, and Wednesday night.

I would hope that every time you come to church or when you leave the church grounds, your desire would be, “Who can I refresh today? Who can I reach out to? Who could use an expression of my love for them? Who could use an encouraging word, a pat on the back, or a gentle hug?”

Beloved, take advantage of those times before church, after church, and during the minutes in the service where we take time to shake one another’s hands and welcome one another, to show an interest in other people. Use that time to invest in others.

Examine your attitude about your church family. You can have the attitude, “This is my church. I’ll put up with everyone. I’ll grin and bear it.” You probably won’t stay long or you will be miserable. You can also have the attitude “This is MY church FAMILY! I thank God for it!” With that kind of attitude, you will encourage and refresh others.

**IV. Anathema & the Aspiration for the Lord’s Return**

16:22-24

*If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha.* 23 *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.* 24 *My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.*

Closing comments of any letter, whether it is a short or a long letter, tend to be filled with either *seriousness* or *sentiment.* Paul follows that pattern here. He has just written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit a crucial letter to a corroded, cantankerous, confused church. This epistle is one of the most important epistles in the New Testament because it addresses so many problems that we are facing
today in the church. Right now, multitudes of churches in this nation alone, are confronted with the same problems in Corinth because they have ignored the teachings of 1 Corinthians.

Paul pulls the curtain on this first epistle offering a warning to those who do not love the Lord Jesus Christ. The warning indicates the importance, the imperativeness, and the indispensableness of knowing Jesus Christ as one’s Savior and truly loving Him. Your relationship with Jesus Christ has eternal consequences. It will determine whether you spend eternity in Heaven or Hell.

Paul says that the person that loves not the Lord or is heartless, lacking any affection for Christ, let him be Anathema. Anathema means “to be accursed or doomed to destruction.” Without Christ in your heart, you are doomed for destruction.

* John 3:18- He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

Paul then uses an interesting word in his closing, the word “Maranatha.” It means “Our Lord cometh or may the Lord come.” As the sun settles on this epistle, Paul is looking toward the eastern sky for the return of the Son of God. In fact, loving His return is so important that a crown is awarded to those who love His appearing. May we realize the nearness of His coming.

* 2 Timothy 4:8- Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.
* Philippians 4:5 Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.
* James 5:7a- Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord....

Nothing will straighten out a church quicker than a church looking for the return of Christ. Looking for His return will motivate believers to be pure in attitude and actions, to be persistent in their allegiance to the Savior, to be perceptive to aimless souls that need to be saved, and to protect against apathy that can seep into their hearts.

Are you looking for Him today? We know that He could return today. Are you ready? Paul’s final words remind us of God’s wonderful grace and the love of the brethren. These things sustain us day by day. Until He comes or we die, may we be refreshments in the church and demonstrate Christ’s love for other people.
Bibliography for 1 Corinthians

The following men of God have made contributions to these sermons including practical insights, historical information, Bible customs, and word studies. I greatly appreciate their studies in the Word and the way their writings have helped me. Any of these books will provide you a great source of information in your studies of the Bible. I recommend that you stock them in your library.

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