PROBLEMS OF A PRIMITIVE CHURCH

EXPOSITORY SERMONS ON 1 CORINTHIANS

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"The Church At Corinth"

Scripture Text: *1 Corinthians 1:1-3*

Introduction:

A. The city of Corinth was a **thriving metropolis** with a population of about **400,000**.
   1. Now when I say "thriving," please understand that I mean **only in a commercial sense**.
   2. Corinth was certainly **not** "thriving" spiritually.
   3. In fact, Corinth was a "**mecca of immorality**."
   4. It was noted for it's **open and gross licentiousness**.
   5. The whole city was **steeped in immorality** of all kinds.
   6. **Drunkenness, gluttony, promiscuity and idolatry** were rampant in this city.
   7. (Illus.- Just to give you one example, there was an idol temple in Corinth that was dedicated to the worship of **the Greek goddess, Aphrodite**. In this temple there resided 1,000 priestesses, who were actually nothing more than **paid prostitutes**. And so, the practice of fornication was **a religion** to many of those who lived in Corinth.)
   8. The city of Corinth was so wicked, that the Greek word which literally means, **"to live like a Corinthian,"** became **a byword** of shame and disgrace.
   9. Believe me, if someone called you a **"Corinthian"** back then, they were **not complimenting you**.

B. It was to this "mecca of immorality" that **Paul came** on his **second missionary journey**.
   1. It was here that he met **Aquila and Priscilla**, who became his very close friends and coworkers in ministry.
   2. It was also here in Corinth that Paul won a man named **Crispus** to the Lord, along with his entire family.
   3. While Crispus was a Jew, **many Gentiles** were also saved, and as a result of 18 months of Paul's laboring in Corinth, **a church was established**.

C. What kind of church was the church at Corinth?
   1. According to ***1 Cor. 3:1***, it was **a "carnal" church**.
   2. It was a church that was primarily made up of **baby Christians**, Christians who, for whatever reason, had failed to grow spiritually.
   3. It was a church with **many problems**. In fact, this seems to be the primary reason that Paul wrote this letter ***(1 Corinthians)***, to deal with these problems.

D. This morning, as we begin our study of Paul's first letter to the church at Corinth, I want us to focus our attention on **these people to whom the letter was addressed**.
   1. We know who the author of this letter was from ***Vrs. 1,*** which says, "**Paul**, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God," but **what can we learn** about those to whom the letter was addressed?
   2. First of all, we can learn that they were...

I. Saved.

A. How do we know that they were saved?

1. We know because they had **called "upon the name of Jesus Christ**."
2. Look again at ***Vrs. 2*** of our text, "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place **call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord**, both theirs and ours:"
3. But someone says, "Wait a minute. That verse merely says that they had called upon the name of Jesus, **it doesn't say that they were saved**?
4. It does in light of the promise found in ***Rom. 10:13***?
5. The Bible says in ***Rom. 10:13***,, "For **whosoever shall call** upon the name of the Lord **shall be saved**." (Amen?)
6. And so, these people to whom this letter was addressed were **most certainly saved**!

B. Now this raises a question.

1. **What** does it mean to be saved?
2. First of all, it means **to be forgiven**.
3. The Bible says in ***Rom. 4:7***, "Blessed are they whose **iniquities are forgiven**, and whose **sins are covered**."
4. (Illus.- I remember the night that I got saved. I remember how it felt like **a huge weight had been lifted** off of my heart. Why? Because for the first time in my life, I knew that **my sins had been forgiven**. Amen?)
5. And so, to be saved means to be forgiven.
6. It also means **to be alive spiritually**.
7. The Bible says in ***Col. 2:13***, "And you, **being dead in your sins** and the uncircumcision of your flesh, **hath he quickened** together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;"
8. Not only did God forgive me of my sins when I got saved, but He also "quickened" me.
9. In other words, He made me alive spiritually.
10. You see, before I got saved, I was spiritually dead.
11. Oh, I was alive physically, but I was dead spiritually.
12. But then God's Holy Spirit quickened me.
13. The Bible says in ***1 Cor. 15:22***, "For as in Adam all die, even so **in Christ shall all be made alive**."
14. And so, to be saved means to be alive spiritually.
15. It also means **to be bound for heaven**. (Amen?)
16. Listen to what the Bible says in ***1 Pet. 1:3-4***, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,...To an inheritance **incorruptible**, and **undefiled**, and that fadeth not away, **reserved in heaven for you**,"
17. What does it mean to be saved?
18. It means to be **forgiven**.
19. It means to be **spiritually alive**.
20. It means to be **bound for heaven**.

21. You know, when you consider what it means to be saved, it's hard to understand why anyone would not want to be saved. (Amen?)
22. And so, these people to whom this letter was addressed were **saved**!

C. But someone says, "Wait a minute, preacher. Didn't you just say that this church had a lot of problems? Weren't there divisions in this church? Wasn't there sexual immorality in this church? Wasn't there idolatry in this church? Weren't these people guilty of taking one another to court, making light of the Lord's supper and abusing spiritual gifts?"
1. The answer to all of these questions is, **"Yes!"**
2. But notice, I **said** that these people were **saved**, I **didn't say** that they were **sinless**!
3. Aren't you glad that you don't have to be sinless in order to be saved?
4. Now please don't misunderstand what I am saying.
5. I am not condoning the sins of which these Corinthian believers were guilty, I'm just saying that there a **difference** between **being saved** and **being sinless**.
6. I am saved (there is no doubt about it), but I am certainly not sinless (and neither are you).
7. And so, these people to whom this letter was written were saved.

D. Notice, also that they were...

II. Sanctified.

A. Look again at ***Vrs. 2*** of our text, "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, **to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints**,"
1. Now **what** does it mean to be "sanctified"?
2. A lot of people think it means to be **especially holy**.
3. (Illus.- I've had more than one person tell me, "Preacher, I believe that I am saved, but I certainly wouldn't go so far as to say that I am sanctified.)
4. Well, the truth is, you **can't be saved without also being sanctified**.

B. What then does it mean to be "sanctified," if it doesn't mean to be especially holy.
1. The word "sanctified" and the word "saints" come from the same (Greek) root word which literally means **"separated, set apart, devoted to a holy purpose."**
2. A good Biblical example of this is the Old Testament tabernacle, as well as it's contents.
3. Once the tabernacle and it's contents were constructed and set up, they were **sanctified to the Lord**.
4. Listen to ***Num. 7:1***, "And it came to pass on the day that Moses had fully set up the tabernacle, and had anointed it, and **sanctified it**, and all the instruments thereof, both the altar and all the vessels thereof, and had anointed them, and **sanctified them**;"
5. Now there was nothing especially holy about the tabernacle itself or it's contents, but they were holy in the sense that they were **set apart and consecrated to God's service**.

C. The same thing is true of us as believers today.
1. When God **saved** us, He also **sanctified** us.
2. In other words, He **separated us and set us apart for a holy purpose**.
3. **What** is this holy purpose for which we have been set apart?
4. Paul answered this question in ***1 Cor. 10:31***, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, **do all to the glory of God**."
5. Paul put it like this in ***Rom. 15:5-6***, "Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus:...That ye may with one mind and one mouth **glorify God**, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

D. Now this raises a question.
1. If our purpose is to glorify God, **how do we accomplish this purpose**?
2. Jesus answered this question in ***Mat. 5:16***, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may **see your good works**, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."
3. Peter put it like this in ***1 Pet. 2:12***, "Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may **by your good works, which they shall behold**, glorify God in the day of visitation."
4. How do we glorify God?
5. By...
-serving God,
-obeying His commandments,
-letting others see our good works.

E. If you will stop and think about it, this is why God saved us.
1. Some think that the only reason God saved us was to keep us out of hell and to take us to heaven when we die.
2. That's one reason, yes, but **not the main reason**.
3. The main reason was so that by...
-serving Him,
-obeying His commandments,
-letting others see our good works,
we could bring glory to God in this life!
4. That's what Paul meant when he addressed these Corinthian believers as the "**sanctified** in Christ Jesus, called to be **saints.**" ***(Vrs. 2)***

F. And so, these people to whom this letter was addressed were sanctified.
1. They were saved.
2. They were sanctified.
3. Notice, finally that they were...

III. A Part Of An Assembly.

A. Let me ask you a question.
1. When you hear the word **"church,"** what comes to your mind?
2. If you are like most people, you think of **a building**.

3. (Illus.- For example, if someone were to stop you on the street tomorrow morning and ask you the following question, "Where can I find the First Baptist Church of Ranson?" you would probably give them directions to this place [building]. Without thinking, that's probably what I would do also.)
4. And so, most people, when they hear the word "church," think of a building.
5. There is another group of people, who when they hear the word "church," think of **some mystical spiritual body** that exists only in heaven.
6. (Illus.- Many years ago I asked a gentleman whom I had just met if he belonged to a church. He said, "Yes." When I asked him WHAT church he belonged to, he said, "I belong to THE church." I asked him again, "And what church is that?" And, again, he said, "THE church." When I asked him to explain what he meant by that, here's what he told me in so many words, he said, "I belong to the **big** church, the **universal** church, the church **in heaven**.")
7. And so, some people, when they hear the word "church," think of some mystical spiritual body that exists only in heaven.

B. Now let me ask you another question.
1. Which of these two ideas is correct?
2. Is a church, in fact, **a building**, made of wood, and brick, and mortar, or is it **a mystical spiritual body** that exists only in heaven?
3. The answer is, **"Neither!"**
4. Let me tell you what a church is!
5. A church is a body (a local body) of baptized believers in Christ, who have come together and covenanted themselves together for the purpose of carrying out our Lord's commission.

C. Look again at ***Vrs. 2*** of our text, "Unto **the church of God which is at Corinth**,"
1. Paul did not write this letter to a building.
2. Neither did he write this letter to a mystical spiritual body that exists only in heaven.
3. He wrote this letter to **a body of baptized believers** in Christ who had come together **in the city of Corinth**, and had covenanted themselves together for the purpose of carrying out their Lord's commission.
4. By the way, do you know what the Greek word from which we get the english word "church" means?
5. It is the word **"ecclesia,"** and it literally means **"a called out assembly."**
6. Pardon my grammar, but the truth is, **if you can't assemble it, then it ain't a church**!
7. (Illus.- I remember talking to another man who told me that he belonged to the **universal** church. I said, "Really? Well, tell me, **when and where** does your church meet?" He asked me, "What do you mean?" I said, "When and where does your church come together for fellowship and for Biblical instruction?" He said, "**It doesn't**." I said, "**Then it is not a church**!")

D. But someone asks, "Does a person have to belong to **a local church** in order to be a Christian?"
1. No, but they do if they want to be **a good Christian**!

2. Listen to ***Heb. 11:24-25***, "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."
3. **Why is it so important** that believers be a part of a local church?
4. Those of you who are a part of this church know the answer to this question.
5. As believers, we need the...
   -**fellowship** of other believers,
   -**encouragement** of other believers,
   -**spiritual instruction** of other believers!
6. To put it simply, **we need one another**! (Amen?)
7. It's amazing how many **"one anothers"** are found in Scripture.
8. For example, God's Word commands us to...
   -**love** one another ***(Rom. 13:8)***,
   -**admonish** one another ***(Rom. 15:14)***,
   -**serve** one another **(Gal. 5:13)**,
   -**bear** one another's **burdens** ***(Gal. 6:2)***,
   -**teach** one another ***(Col. 3:16)***,
   -**comfort** one another ***(1 Thes. 4:18)***,
   -**edify** one another ***(1 Thes. 5:11)***,
   -**exhort** one another ***(Heb. 3:13)***.
9. This is why we all need to be a part of a local church!

Conclusion:

A. What have we learned about these people to whom Paul's letter is addressed?
   1. They were **saved** (had called upon the name of the Lord).
   2. They were **sanctified** (separated and set apart for a holy purpose).
   3. They were **a part of an assembly** (a local church).

B. Let me ask you three questions.
   1. First of all, are you **saved**?
   2. If you are saved, then you are also sanctified, but are you **fulfilling that holy purpose** for which you were separated and set apart?
   3. Finally, are you **a part of a local church**?

"Enriched By Him"

Scripture Text: *1 Corinthians 1:4-8*

Introduction:

A. One day last week while I was browsing the web site of Forbes Magazine (Forbes.com), I pulled up a list of the world's twenty five most wealthy people.
   1. There were **three things** about that list that surprised me.
   2. First of all, I was surprised to find so many names that I did not recognize, names like **Paul Allen** and **Lawrence Ellison** and **Kenneth Thompson** and **Steven Ballmer**.
   3. I was also surprised by the number of different nationalities represented, I mean in addition to American, nationalities like **Indian**, **Mexican**, **Swedish**, **German**, **French**, **Russian**, **Spanish** and **Italian**.
   4. The third thing that surprised me was the fact that **I couldn't find my name on the list**.
   5. I read it over several times and my name was not there.
   6. Why did that surprise me?
   7. It surprised me because I am, without a doubt, **one of the wealthiest people in the world**!
   8. Oh, I know that I don't have billions of dollars in the bank, and I don't live in a mansion, and I don't drive a Rolls Royce, but if you are talking about **spiritual wealth**, **I am rich**!

B. These Corinthian believers to whom Paul wrote the letter that we are now studying were **also rich**.
   1. Look again the first part of ***Vrs. 5*** of our text, "That in every thing ye are **enriched by him**,"
   2. Notice the word "**enriched**."
   3. It comes from a Greek word (ploutizo) that literally means "**to make wealthy**."
   4. Notice also the words "**by him**."
   5. What Paul is saying here is that these Corinthian believers had been **enriched (made wealthy) by God**.

C. Now this raises a question.
   1. **What had God given them** to make them wealthy?
   2. According to our text, He had given them at least **three things**.
   3. First of all, He had given them...

I. His Grace.

A. Look again at ***Vrs. 4*** of our text, "I thank my God always on your behalf, for **the grace of God which is given you** by Jesus Christ;"
   1. What is the "**grace of God**"?

2. The word translated "**grace**" (charis) here literally means "**graciousness**" or "**favour**."
3. A good definition then of "the grace of God" is this: it is "**the graciousness or favour that God bestows upon sinners, in spite of the fact that we do not deserve it**."

B. For example, it was because of "the grace of God" that **He sent His Son, Jesus, into this world to die for our sins**.
1. The Bible says in ***1 John 4:10***, "Herein is love, **not that we loved God**, but that **he loved us**, and **sent his Son** to be the propitiation for our sins."
2. Some people have the idea that one day God looked down from heaven and saw all of these people who loved Him in need of a Savior.
3. It's true that he saw people in need of a Savior, but He didn't see people who loved Him.
4. Instead, He saw people who **hated Him** and **didn't want to have anything to do with Him**.
5. Yet, He **sent His Son anyway**.
6. In ***1 John 4:19*** we read, "We love him, because **he first loved us**."
7. That's grace! (Amen?)

C. Not only was it because of the grace of God that He sent His Son into the world to die for our sins, it was also because of God's grace that **He saved us when we called upon Him**.
1. (Illus.- Last week, not long after the Pope had died, a news commentator was interviewing someone in the Catholic Church hierarchy, I think it was a cardinal. Anyway, the comment was made, "If anyone deserved to go to heaven, it was Pope John Paul II.")
2. Now that comment didn't surprise me because the Catholic Church teaches salvation by works.
3. However, the Bible teaches us that **we are saved by grace**! (Amen?)
4. Listen to ***Eph. 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."

D. The honest truth is, **no one** deserves to go to heaven, not even the Pope.
1. Why not?
2. Because the Bible says in **Rom. 3:23**, "For **all have sinned**, and come short of the glory of God;" and the Bible also says in ***Rom. 6:23***, "For **the wages of sin is death**;"
3. If God were to give us what we deserve, **every last one of us** would **end up in hell**.
4. But thank God, He is a God of grace! (Amen?)

E. And so, first of all, these Corinthian believers were "enriched" (made wealthy) because God had given them His grace.
1. By the way, God has made His grace available to all of mankind.
2. The Bible says in ***Tit. 2:11***, "For the **grace of God** that bringeth salvation **hath appeared to all men**,"

3. That's **good news**! (Amen?)

F. Notice also that God had given these Corinthian believers...

II. His <u>Word</u>.

A. Look again at ***Vrs. 5*** of our text, "That in every thing ye are enriched by him, **in all utterance**, and in all knowledge;"
1. Notice the word "**utterance**," if you will.
2. It is translated from the Greek word "**logos**," which literally means "**something said**."
3. It is the same Greek word that is translated "**word**" in ***John 1:1***, which says, "In the beginning was **the Word**, and **the Word** was with God, and **the Word** was God."
4. ***John 1:1***, of course, refers to Jesus Christ, the **living Word**, but in addition to the living Word, God has also given us the **written Word**! (Hold up your Bible.)
5. Listen to ***John 17:8***, Jesus is praying to His Heavenly Father, "For **I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me**; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me."

B. **Why is it** that having God's Word makes us wealthy?
1. Having God's Word makes us wealthy because God's Word is **extremely valuable**.
2. In ***Psa. 119:72***, the psalmist prayed, "The law of thy mouth is **better unto me than thousands of gold and silver**."
3. Later in that same Psalm the psalmist prayed, "Therefore I love thy commandments **above gold**; yea, **above fine gold**." ***(Psalm 119:127)***
4. Solomon put it like this in ***Pro. 3:13-14***, "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding....For the merchandise of it is **better than the merchandise of silver**, and **the gain thereof than fine gold**."

C. Why is the Word of God so valuable?
1. Why is it better than silver and fine gold?
2. Several reasons.
3. First of all, the Word of God is valuable because **it tells us how to be saved**.
4. It tells us how to...
   -come to God,
   -receive His forgiveness,
   -be restored to fellowship with Him.
5. There was a time in Jesus' ministry when many of His followers **turned back** and **walked** with Him **no more**. ***(John 6:66)***
6. Jesus then addressed the twelve and asked them the following question, "Will **ye also** go away?" ***(John 6:67)***
7. Do you remember what Peter said to Jesus, in answer to that question? He said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? **thou hast the words of eternal life**." ***(John 6:68)***
8. In other words, Peter said, "Lord, there is no where else we can go to learn about eternal life."

9. This is why people are **foolish to reject the Bible**, because there is **no where else they can go** to learn about (how to receive) eternal life.
10. And so, God's Word is valuable because it tells us how to be saved.

D. God's Word is also valuable because **it shows us how to live and to please God with our lives**.
1. The psalmist prayed in ***Psalm 119:105***, "Thy **word** is **a lamp unto my feet**, and **a light unto my path**."
2. Solomon put it like this in ***Pro. 6:23***, "For the **com-mandment** is **a lamp**; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are **the way of life**:"
3. (Illus- Have you ever had your power go off in the middle of the night and then try to find your way in the dark without a light of any kind? If so, you probably stumped your toe, or perhaps even tripped and fell over a piece of furniture. Trying to find your way in the dark without a light of any kind can be dangerous.)
4. The same thing is true in a spiritual sense.
5. **Trying to find our way** in this sin darkened world without the light of God's Word **can be dangerous**. (Amen?)
6. And so, God's Word is valuable because it shows us how to live and to please God with our lives.

E. May I say, finally, that God's Word is valuable because **it feeds our soul**.
1. Jesus said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but **by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God**." ***(Mat. 4:4)***
2. Peter put it like this in ***1 Pet. 2:2***, "As newborn babes, desire **the sincere milk of the word**, that ye may **grow** thereby:"
3. This is how we **grow** spiritually.
4. This is how we **obtain** a closer walk with the Lord.
5. This is how we **experience** a greater awareness of God in our lives.

F. And so, God's word is valuable because it...
-tells us how to be saved.
-shows us how to live and please God with our lives.
-feeds our soul, enabling us to grow & mature spiritually.

G. What had God given to these Corinthian believers to make them wealthy?
1. He had given them **His Grace**.
2. He had given them **His Word**.
3. Notice, finally, that He had also given them.

III. His <u>Spirit</u>.

A. Look again at the first part of ***Vrs. 7*** of our text, "So that ye **come behind in no gift**;"
1. **What** is Paul talking about here?
2. I believe he is talking about **spiritual gifts**.
3. The word translated "**gift**" here is the Greek word "**charisma**," which literally means "**a divine gratuity**" or "**a spiritual endowment**."

4. Clearly, from what we read later on in this letter, the church at Corinth was a **very gifted church**, even though they were guilty of **abusing their gifts**.
5. In fact, Paul devoted three whole chapters ***(12-14)*** in this letter to dealing with their misuse of **the gift of tongues**.

B. Now this raises a question.
1. **How** did they come by these spiritual gifts?
2. They received them from the Holy Spirit, when they got saved, and when the Holy Spirit entered their heart.
3. Turn with me, for just a moment, to ***1 Cor. 12:8-11***, "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."

C. Does God give spiritual gifts to His children today?
1. The answer is, "Yes."
2. Although He no longer gives the miraculous "**sign gifts**," such as the gift of **miracles**, and the gift of **healing**, and the gift of **tongues** (there is no longer a need for these gifts), He most certainly gives what I call **"ministering gifts**."
3. According to ***Rom. 12:7-8***, some of these gifts are the gift of **ministry**, the gift of **teaching**, the gift of **exhortation**, the gift of **giving**, the gift of **ruling**, and the gift of **mercy**.
4. I am convinced that the Holy Spirit gave at least one (perhaps more than one) of these ministering gifts the moment that we got saved, and He entered into our hearts.

D. And so, the question is not, "Do we have a gift?" but rather, "**Are we using our gift** in some way to minister to the body of Christ (our church family)?"
1. If we have the gift of **ministry**, are we ministering?
2. If we have the gift of **teaching**, are we teaching?
3. If we have the gift of **exhortation**, are we exhorting?
4. If we have the gift of **giving**, are we giving?
5. If we have the gift of **ruling**, are we ruling?
6. If we have the gift of **mercy**, are we showing mercy?
7. Paul admonished Timothy in ***1 Tim. 4:14***, **"Neglect not the gift** that is in thee,"
8. Are we using the gift that God has given us, or are we **neglecting it**???

E. (Illus.- Some very wealthy people, rather than using their wealth to benefit others, will hoard it away and just "sit on it." That is sad!)
1. But let me tell you what is even sadder?
2. Believers in Christ, who rather than using their valuable gifts to benefit others within the body of Christ, just "sit on them."

3. I wouldn't want to be in their shoes when they stand before the judgment seat of Christ and Jesus asks them, "Why didn't you use the gifts that I gave you?"

F. And so, God had given these Corinthian believers the Holy Spirit.
1. He had given them His Grace.
2. He had given them His Word.
3. He had given them His Holy Spirit.

Conclusion:

A. Do you see now why I was surprised that my name was not on Forbes list of the 25 wealthiest people in the world?
1. Just like the Corinthian believers, I have been **enriched by my God**!
2. He has given me **His grace**!
3. He has given me **His Word**!
4. He has given me **His Holy Spirit**!
5. Bless God, **I am rich**! (Amen?)
6. And so are you, that is if you know Jesus Christ as your personal Savior.

B. Do you know Jesus Christ as your personal Savior?
1. Are you saved?
2. If so, then you should rejoice every day in the fact that **you too have been enriched by your God**!
3. If you are not saved, then I would **strongly urge you** to come to Christ today.
4. You may have assets totaling billions of dollars, but if you don't have Christ, you **as poor as poor can be**!

"God Is Faithful"

Scripture Text: *1 Corinthians 1:9*

Introduction:

A. I don't know about you, but I have known a lot of people in my lifetime **upon whom you could not depend**.
1. People who would...
-tell you one thing, and then do something else,
-make promises, and then not keep those promises,
-would tell you, "you can count on me," and then turn right around and let you down.
2. More than once I have learned the hard way the truth of ***Prov. 25:19*** that says, "**Confidence in an unfaithful man** in time of trouble is like **a broken tooth**, and **a foot out of joint**."
3. It's about gotten to the point that I am **a little afraid** depend on people too much, because I have been **disappointed so many times**.

B. Now to be fair, I guess that I should also say that I am not totally innocent, because **I too have let people down**.
1. It pains me to say this, but there have been times when I have...
-told people one thing, and then did something else,
-made promises that, for one reason or another, I did not keep,
-told people, "you can count on me," when, in fact, they could not.
2. And so, **I am not totally innocent**, this morning.
3. In fact, I'm sure that you were to be honest, you would have to say that **you too have been guilty** of this sin.

C. But even though this is true, even though people have let us down and we have let people down, we have a God Who has **never let anyone down**! (Amen?)
1. We have a God...
-Who **always** does what He says He is going to do,
-Who **always** keeps the promises that He makes,
-upon Whom we can **always** depend!
2. While people may let us down, **our God never will**!

D. I want to speak to you, this morning, about the faithfulness of our God.
1. Look again at ***Vrs. 9*** of our text, "**God is faithful**, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord."
2. Did you notice the words, "God is **faithful**"?
3. What does that mean?
4. It simply means that we can always count on our God!
5. First of all, let me say that we can always count on...

I. His Pardon.

A. (Illus.- I realize that some of you young people here this morning are too young to remember this, but about 16 years ago **Marine Colonel Oliver North** was convicted in a court of law of lying to Congress and destroying government documents. Before the trial actually began, there was talk of a presidential pardon. In fact, many believe that Colonel North was **counting on being pardoned by then President Ronald Reagan**. The pardon, however, never came, at least not from President Reagan.)

B. You know, I'm glad that our God is more faithful to us than Colonel North's superiors were to him.
   1. We can count on His pardon.
   2. In fact, those who have placed their faith in Jesus Christ as their personal Savior have already received a pardon from God! (Amen?)

C. There are three things that I want to say about this pardon.
   1. First of all, it is **free**.
   2. It cannot be **bought**.
   3. It cannot be **earned**.
   4. It cannot be **bartered for in any way**.
   5. It is free, and the only way that you can get is it to receive it as a gift.
   6. The Bible says in ***Rom. 6:23***, "For the wages of sin is death; but **the gift of God is eternal life** through Jesus Christ our Lord."
   7. The Bible also says in ***Eph. 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."
   8. The reason that God's pardon is free is because it has already been paid for with the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

D. Not only is God's pardon free, it is also **complete**.
   1. In other words, those who receive God's pardon as a free gift are **fully pardoned of all their sins**, past, present and future.
   2. Some would have us to believe that when a sinner gets saved, **only his past sins** are pardoned.
   3. They say that God's pardon **could not possibly extend into the future** and cover sins that we have not yet committed.
   4. What these misguided people need to understand, however, is that when Jesus died on the cross, **all of our sins were in the future**. (Amen?)
   5. The reason that God's pardon is complete, is because when Jesus shed His blood for us, He paid the price for **all of our sins**!
   6. The Bible tells us in ***1 John 1:7*** that "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from **all sin**."

E. Not only is God's pardon free, and not only is it complete, it is also **universal**.
   1. In other words, it is offered to all men.
   2. Did you ever notice that the Biblical invitation to come to Christ and to be saved is issued to "**whosoever**"?

3. The Bible says in ***John 3:16***, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that **whosoever** believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."
4. The Bible also says in ***Rom. 10:13***, "For **whosoever** shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."
5. Have you received God's pardon for your sin?
6. If not, **you can count on God's pardon**.

F. We can also count on...

II. His Presence.

A. Have you ever counted on someone, and just when you needed them most, **they were not there**?

1. (Illus.- A few years ago I was driving on Rt. 9, just coming into the southern part of Martinsburg. As I was getting ready to take that Queen Street exit to go up into downtown Martinsburg, a car to my left, cut across in front of me to take the same exit. When he did that, of course, I had to slam on my brakes to avoid a collision. The first thought to cross my mind when that happened was, **"Where's a policeman when you need him?"** Immediately after I had that thought, I glanced in my real view mirror, and guess what I saw? You're right! There was a Martinsburg Police car immediately behind me who had seen the whole thing. When we pulled up to the stop sign to turn on to Queen street, the officer pulled up beside me and motioned for me to let him get in behind the guy who had cut us off in traffic. I was more than happy to comply, and when I saw the blue lights come on I said, **"Yes!"**)
2. But you know, even though on that day the cop was there when I needed him, most of the time when you get cut off in traffic, there is not a policeman within miles.
3. Aren't you glad that our God is not like the police?
4. Aren't you glad, that when you need Him the most, He is always there?

B. In ***Mat. 28:18-20*** we find what has been called by some "the great commission."

1. It is here that our Lord gave His church their marching orders.
2. The great commission is a three part commission.
3. First of all, we are to **preach** the gospel to every creature, winning as many to Christ as we can.
4. Secondly, we are to **baptize** those whom we win.
5. Finally, we are to **teach** those whom we baptize, making them disciples.
6. If you will stop and think about it for a moment, this is **quite a task**! (Amen?)
7. But what I want you to notice now is the promise that Jesus gave His church immediately after He had given them the commission, He said, "lo, **I am with you alway**, **even unto the end** of the world." ***(Vrs. 20)***

C. But someone asks, "How is He going to keep that promise? He is not here anymore! After He arose from the dead, He ascended back to His Father, and He is now in heaven with Him. How can He keep that promise to be with us always?"

1. He can keep that promise because soon after He ascended back into heaven, He sent the blessed Holy Spirit to take His place.
2. Listen to what Jesus told His disciples in ***John 14:16***, "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may **abide with you for ever**;"

D. In ***Heb. 13:5***, we also find this promise, "et 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**."

E. Yes, we can always count on God's presence.
1. We can count on His presence when we...
-are weak,
-are tempted,
-are afraid,
-discouraged,
-brokenhearted.
2. And so, we can always count on God's presence.

F. We can also always count on...

III. His Provision.

A. I guess of all the things that we worry about, the one thing that we are inclined to worry about the most is whether or not **our material needs will be met**.
1. Whether or not we will be able to...
-pay our rent (mortgage),
-pay the utility bills,
-buy groceries,
-put shoes on our children's feet.
2. But you know, if we are saved, and if we are putting God first in our lives, our material needs should be the least of our worries. (Amen?)
3. Why do I say that?
4. Because we can always count on God's provision.

B. The psalmist David knew that he always could count on God's provision.
1. In ***Psa. 23:1***, he wrote, "The LORD is my shepherd; **I shall not want**."
2. And then, in ***Psa. 37:25***, he wrote, "I have been young, and now am old; yet have **I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread**."

C. The apostle Paul knew that he could always count on God's provision.
1. Listen to what he wrote in ***Phil. 4:19***, "But my God shall **supply all your need** according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.
2. He himself had proven that, over and over again, in his own life and ministry.

D. There is a catch, however.
1. Perhaps I shouldn't use the word "catch."

2. There is **one "condition"** that we must meet if we are to be sure that God will provide our needs, and that condition is that **we must put God first in our lives**.
3. Jesus Himself said in ***Mat. 6:33***, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."
4. He had just been talking about the material necessities of life.
5. He said, "If we will put God first in our lives, God will surely provide all of our material necessities (needs)!

E. And so, we can always count on God's provision.

F. We can also always count on...

IV. His Power.

A. You know, there are times when we really need God's power in our lives.
1. For example, we need God's power when **Satan hurls his fiery darts at us**.
2. ***Eph. 6:12*** tells us that "we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against **the rulers of the darkness of this world**, against spiritual wickedness in high places."
3. This is why Paul admonishes us in ***Eph. 6:10*** to "be **strong in the Lord**, and in the **power of his might**."
3. Thank God, we can always count on His power when we are under Satan's attack.

B. We also need God's power when **temptation comes our way**.
1. Because of the **depravity of our own flesh**, temptation can be **a very powerful thing**.
2. But listen to God's promise concerning temptation as recorded in ***1 Cor. 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**."
3. We can count on God's power when temptation comes our way.

C. We also need God's power **just to live the Christian life**.
1. Because of the opposition of Satan, this world in which we live, and our own depraved flesh, **it's really tough to live the Christian life**.
2. There's just so much to...
-hinder us,
-discourage us,
-pull us in the wrong direction.
3. But while it is tough to live the Christian life, it is not impossible.
4. Why not?
5. Paul answered that question in ***Phil. 4:13***, when he wrote, "I can do all things **through Christ which strengtheneth me**."
6. We can count on God's power to live the Christian life.

D. (Illus.- You know, we can't always depend on Allegheny Power to keep our lights burning and our electrical appliances running. With all of the power outages that we've been having lately, every now and then you will flip a switch, and the power won't be there.)

1. But thank God, His power is a lot more dependable!
2. It's always there when you need it.
4. Our problem is that we don't always take advantage of the power that is constantly available to us.

E. And so, we can **always count on God's power**.

F. May I say, finally, that we can always count on...

V. God's Promises.

A. I'm sure that we've all experienced the disappointment of a broken promise.

1. Perhaps it was our **parents** who made promises that they did not keep.
2. Perhaps it was an **employer** who made promises that he did not keep.
3. Perhaps it was a **close friend**, someone we were sure we could depend upon, who made promises that he did not keep.
4. Perhaps it was **someone else**, but we have all experienced, at one time or another, the disappointment of a broken promise.

B. But while it is true that we can't always depend on the promises that people make to us, **we can always count on God to keep His Word**! (Amen?)

1. In the last two chapters of the book of Joshua, we find Joshua's farewell address to the nation.
2. As he was nearing the end of his life, he wanted to challenge the people to fear God and to continue serving Him.
3. In order to accomplish this, he reminded them of something very important.
4. Listen as I read what Joshua told the nation of Israel in ***Josh. 23:14***, "And, behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth: and ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that **not one thing hath failed** of all the good things which the LORD your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and **not one thing hath failed** thereof."

5. In other words, Joshua said, "Because God has been faithful to you, so faithful that He has **kept every promise** that He ever made to you, you should be faithful to Him.
6. That's the kind of God we have! (Amen?)
7. Paul put it like this in ***1 Thes. 5:24***, "**Faithful is he** that calleth you, **who also will do it."**
8. We can always count on God's promises.

Conclusion:

A. Let's go back to our text now, ***1 Cor. 1:9***, that says, **"God is faithful**, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord."

1. Paul said, "God is faithful."
2. In other words, we can always count on Him.
3. We can always count on...
   -His **pardon**,
   -His **presence**,
   -His **provision**,
   -His **power**,
   -His **promises**.
4. We need not ask the question, "Can we count on God?"
5. However, there is a question that we do need to ask, and that is, "**Can God count on us? Can He count on us to love Him, to obey Him, to serve Him, to put Him first in our lives**?"

B. Perhaps you do not know this God Who is so faithful to His children?
   1. Wouldn't you like to **know** Him?
   2. Wouldn't you like to **fellowship with** Him?
   3. Wouldn't yo like to **experience His faithfulness** in your own life?
   4. You can, if you will only trust His Son, Jesus, as your personal Savior.
   5. Would you like to do that this morning???

"Perfectly Joined Together"

Scripture Text: *1 Corinthians 1:10-17*

Introduction:

A. Before I begin to deal with this morning's text, I want to say that **diversity in a church is a good thing**.

1. In other words, the fact that we are all different is not a bad thing. The fact that we have different...
   -**personalities**,
   -**gifts and abilities**,
   -**likes and dislikes**,
   -**ideas and opinions about some things**,
   is not necessarily a bad (negative) thing.
2. In fact, it is a good (positive) thing.
3. This is why when God created us, He made us all unique.
4. Did you realize that there is **no one else in this world** who is just like you? (Thank the Lord!)
5. This is also why when God saved us, He gave us all **different spiritual gifts**.
6. Let me say it again, diversity in a church family is a good thing.
7. Can you imagine how **boring (monotonous)** this church would be, not to mention how **dysfunctional** this church would be, if we all were identical, if we all had the same...
   -**personalities**,
   -**gifts and abilities**,
   -**likes and dislikes**,
   -**ideas and opinions about everything**?
8. And so, let me say one more time, **diversity** in a church family is **a good thing**!

B. But having said that, let me also say that when our diversity **causes divisions** within the church family, **that is not a good thing**.

1. Apparently, this is what had happened in the church at Corinth.
2. Notice again ***Vrs. 10-11*** of our text, "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all **speak the same thing**, and that **there be no divisions among you**; but that ye be **perfectly joined together** in the same mind and in the same judgment....For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that **there are contentions among you**."
3. That word "**contentions**" in ***Vrs. 11*** comes from the Greek word "**eris**," which literally means "**quarreling**" or "**wrangling**" or "**debating**."

C. Now this raises a question.

1. **About what were they debating**?
2. The answer is found in ***Vrs. 12*** of our text, "Now this I say, that **every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ**."

3. Apparently, they were debating about who was the best preacher (minister).
4. One group within the church argued that **Paul** was the best preacher.
5. Another group argued that **Apollos** was the best preacher.
6. Yet another group argued that **Cephas (Peter)** was the best preacher.

D. One Bible commentator described these different factions that existed in the church at Corinth like this.
1. He said, first of all, you had your "**loyalists**."
2. They liked **Paul** because **he was the one who founded the church** and probably had personally led many of them to Christ. One can understand why these believers might feel a sense of loyalty to him.
3. But you also had your "**stylists**."
4. They liked **Apollos** because of **his style of preaching**.
5. According to ***Acts 18:24***, Apollos was a very "**eloquent**" preacher, and apparently his oratory skills had garnered him quite a following in the church.
6. A third faction that existed within the church were the "**traditionalists**."
7. These were Jewish converts who liked **Cephas (Peter)** simply because **he was the apostle to the Jews**, in other words, his ministry was primarily a ministry to the Jews.
8. And so, you had these three factions within the church at Corinth, there were the...
-loyalists (they liked Paul).
-stylists (they liked Apollos),
-traditionalists (they liked Peter).

E. Now don't misunderstand what I am saying.
1. There is certainly **nothing wrong** with believers within a church family having different preferences, whether it be preferences in preachers or preferences in something else.
2. However, when we allow our personal preferences to **take center stage** and **cause divisions** within our church family, then we have a real problem! (Amen?)
3. And that is exactly what had happened in the church at Corinth.
4. (Illus.- Let me illustrate. I realize that it is not football season, but we all have our favorite football teams, don't we? Some of us are Redskins fans. Some of us are Cowboys fans. Some of us have pledged our football allegiance to the Ravens, or the Steelers, or the Eagles, or perhaps some other team. But we all have our favorite football teams, and there is nothing wrong with that. However, if I am so sold out to my team that I won't speak to Bro. Flanagan because he happens to like another team, then **I have a real problem**! Amen?)

F. Now this raises yet another question.
1. How can we guard against **allowing our personal preferences divide us** and **cause a serious problem** as far as the fellowship of our church is concerned?
2. I believe Paul answered this question in our text.
3. The first thing that we can so is to keep our minds and our hearts focused on...

I. Our Messiah.

A. Did you notice, when we read ***Vrs. 12*** earlier, that there were actually **four factions** within the church at Corinth?
   1. I've already mentioned three.
   2. First of all, there were the **loyalists** (**Paul**).
   3. Then there were the **stylists** (**Apollos**).
   4. Then there were the **traditionalists** (**Peter**).
   5. But according to ***Vrs. 12***, there was at least one more faction within the church.
   6. Let's read it again, it says, "Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; **and I of Christ**."
   7. Who were these believers who said, "We are of Christ."?
   8. I believe that they were those believers within the church who **refused to become "people followers,"** but instead **kept their minds and hearts focused on Christ**, which is what we all ought to do. (Amen?)

B. Why should we keep our minds and hearts focused on Christ?
   1. Because **He is the One Who died for us**.
   2. He is the One Who...
      -came down from heaven,
      -was nailed to the old rugged cross,
      -shed His precious blood for our sins!
   3. Notice again the questions that Paul asked in ***Vrs. 13*** of our text, "Is Christ divided? **was Paul crucified for you**? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?"
   4. In other words, Paul said, **"Why are you putting me on a pedestal**? I didn't die for your sins! Apollos didn't die for your sins! Peter didn't die for your sins! **Jesus is the One** Who died for your sins! **He's the One** Whom you should be putting on a pedestal!"

C. Paul went on to say in ***Vrs. 14-15***, "I thank God that **I baptized none of you**, but Crispus and Gaius;...**Lest any should say** that I had baptized in mine own name."
   1. (Illus.- A few years ago I was sitting in a restaurant having lunch with a preacher brother. A lady whom I recognized as someone I had led to the Lord years earlier and baptized, walked up to us and spoke to me. She had a friend with her and she said something to this effect, "I want you to meet Pastor Withem, **he's the preacher who saved me**." When she said that, I just cringed!)
   2. I imagine that's how Paul felt when he heard about the faction in the church at Corinth who had bestowed upon him **"sainthood."**
   3. It's no wonder that he said, "I'm sure glad that I didn't baptize many of you. If I had, you probably would have made me into a **"god."**

D. Notice again the first question that Paul asked in ***Vrs. 13,*** **"Is Christ divided**?"
   1. The answer, of course, is, "**No**!"
   2. The Bible says in ***Eph. 4:4-5***, "There is **one body**, and **one Spirit**, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;...**One Lord**, one faith, one baptism,"
   3. What Paul is saying is this, "Since Christ is not divided, since He is one Lord, believers within a local church should be of one mind and one heart.

4. The best way to accomplish this unity is for each one of us to keep our minds and our hearts focused on our Messiah.

E. A second thing we can do to guard against divisions within our church is to keep our minds and our hearts focused on...

II. Our Mission.

A. Let me ask you a question.
1. As a New Testament church, as a local body of believers in Christ, **what is our primary mission**?
2. According to ***Acts 1:8***, our primary mission is to **be a witness** for our Lord Jesus Christ.
3. Listen to what Jesus told His church just before He ascended back into heaven, He said, "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and **ye shall be witnesses unto me** both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."
4. Now **how** are we to be a witness?
5. While there are a lot of ways to be a witness, the best way is **by preaching**.
6. Isn't that what Paul said in ***Vrs. 17*** of our text?
7. He said, "For Christ sent me not to baptize, but **to preach**."
8. Now this does not mean that baptism is not a part of the Great Commission, because it is, but what it does mean is that **our primary mission** as a New Testament church is **to preach,** or **to be a witness for Christ**.

B. What does this have to do with guarding against division in our church?
1. If we will keep our minds and our hearts focused on our mission (being a witness for Christ), it is highly unlikely that we will let our personal preferences divide us.
2. (Illus.- Let me illustrate. I am so proud of the men who make up our men's soul winning ministry. Almost every Tuesday afternoon, and Thursday evening, and Saturday afternoon, we have men from this church out in our neighborhood knocking doors and being a witness for Christ. While we have had a few problems along the way, such as being chased by dogs, having doors slammed in our faces, and having Bro. Still thrown out of Jefferson Memorial Hospital, there's one problem we have **not** had. We have not had **any contention, any quarreling, any wrangling, or any debating** among the men who are a part of that ministry! Isn't that amazing? Know why? Because these men have **their minds and their hearts focused on something far more important** than promoting their personal preferences or agendas! Amen?)

C. Do you know what I have learned from **being a pastor for over 30 years**?
1. The people who create contention and cause division in a church, in other words, your troublemakers (and every church as them), are not believers who have their minds and their hearts focused on the church's mission.
2. They **couldn't care less** about being a witness.
3. They **couldn't care less** whether or not people get saved.

4. All they care about is...
   -getting what they want,
   -promoting their own personal interests,
   -carrying out their own personal agendas!
5. These are Christians who will get all up in arms and will fight you over the silliest things, things that won't matter one bit a hundred years from now, yet they don't care enough about their own neighbor's soul to walk across the street and tell him about Jesus.
6. There's something terribly wrong with that picture!

D. And so, one way to guard against divisions within our church is **keep our minds and hearts focused on our mission**. (I've never seen a believer who was busy trying to win people to Christ cause problems in a church. It just doesn't happen!)

E. A third way to guard against divisions within our church is to keep our minds and hearts focused on...

III. Our Message.

A. I will just mention this briefly.
1. Notice again what Paul said in ***Vrs. 17*** of our text, "For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach **the gospel**:"
2. Not only is it important that keep our minds and hearts focused on our mission, it is also important that we keep focused on **our message**.
3. What is our message?
4. Our message is "**the gospel**."
5. The **good news** that "Christ **died for our sins** according to the Scriptures, and that He **was buried**, and that He **rose again the third day** according to the Scriptures." ***(1 Cor. 15:3-4)***

B. I'll tell you something else about troublemakers.
1. They are **not believers who spend a lot of time in God's Word**. (If they have a devotional life, and they probably don't, you can be sure that it is sadly lacking.)
2. How do I know that?
3. I know because believers who spend a lot of time reading and meditating on God's Word are spiritually minded, and **spiritually minded believers do not create contention and cause divisions within a church**.
4. Turn with me to ***1 Cor. 3:3*** and notice what Paul said about these Corinthian believers, "For ye are yet carnal: for whereas **there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal**, and walk as men?"
5. It is clear from this verse that the troublemakers in the church at Corinth were carnal, not spiritual Christians, which means that their minds and hearts were not focused on the Word of God.

C. The prophet Isaiah wrote in ***Isa. 26:3***, "Thou wilt keep him in **perfect peace**, whose **mind is stayed on thee**:"

Conclusion:

A. Let's notice one more time ***Vrs. 10*** of our text, "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all **speak the same thing**, and that there **be no divisions among you**; but that ye be **perfectly joined together** in the same mind and in the same judgment."

1. How can we accomplish this?
2. How can we speak the same thing?
3. How can we be perfectly joined together?
4. How can we guard against creating contention and causing division within our church family?
5. By doing three things.
6. First of all, by keeping our minds and our hearts focused on **our Messiah** (Jesus).
7. Secondly, by keeping our minds and our hearts focused on **our mission** (being a witness).
8. Finally, by keeping our minds and our hearts focused on **our message** (God's Word).
9. If each of us will do these three things, there will never be any serious contention or divisions within this church!
    9. However, if any of us fails to do these three things, there is a good possibility that one day Satan may use us to stir up trouble.

"The Preaching Of The Cross"

Scripture Text: *1 Corinthians 1:18-25*

Introduction:

A. When you hear the word "foolish," what is the first thing that comes to your mind?

1. (Illus.- I don't know about you, but when I hear the word "foolish," I think of people like **Larry**, who's boyhood dream was to fly, but fate conspired to keep him from fulfilling his dream. He did join the Air Force, however his poor eyesight disqualified him from becoming a pilot. After he was discharged from the military, he just sat in his backyard watching the big jets fly overhead. **It was while he was sitting outside in his "extremely comfortable" Sears lawn chair that he hatched his weather balloon idea.** He purchased 42 weather balloons from an Army-Navy surplus store, tied them to his tethered lawn chair, and then filled the balloons with helium. He then strapped himself into his lawn chair with some sandwiches, a couple of beers, and a pellet rifle. Why the pellet rifle? Well, he figured he would pop a few of the many balloons when it was time to descend. Larry's plan was to sever the anchor and then lazily float up to a height of about 30 feet above his back yard, where he would then enjoy a few hours of flight before coming back down. However, things didn't work out quite like Larry had planned. **When his friends cut the cord anchoring the lawn chair to his Jeep, he did not float lazily up to 30 feet.** Instead, he streaked into the LA sky as if shot from a cannon, pulled by the lift of 42 helium balloons holding 33 cubic feet of helium each. He didn't level off at 100 feet, nor did he level off at 1000 feet. After climbing and climbing, he finally leveled off at 16,000 feet. **Well, at that height he felt he couldn't risk shooting any of the balloons, lest he unbalance the load and really find himself in trouble.** So he stayed there, drifting, cold and frightened with his beer and sandwiches, for more than 14 hours. During the course of his flight, he drifted across the primary approach corridor of LAX, where Trans World Airlines and Delta Airlines pilots radioed in reports of the strange sight. **Eventually he did gather enough nerve to shoot a few balloons, and then slowly descended.** When he reached the ground, the hanging tethers tangled and caught in a power line, blacking out a Long Beach neighborhood for about 20 minutes. Larry eventually climbed to safety, where he was arrested by waiting members of the LAPD. As he was led away in handcuffs, a reporter dispatched to cover the daring rescue asked him why he had done it. Larry replied, "A man can't just sit around.")
2. And so, when I hear the word "foolish" I think of people like Larry.
3. (Illus.- I also think of people like **Robert**, who had his head bloodied when he was struck by a Conrail train. When police asked him what had happened, he told them that he was trying to see how close to the moving train he could place his head without actually getting hit.)
4. And so, when I hear the word "foolish," I think of people like Larry and Robert.

B. The unsaved world, however, has a very different idea of what constitutes foolishness.

1. When the unsaved world hears the word "foolish," they think of people like me.
2. Why? Because of **what I believe** and **what I preach**.
3. Look again at the first part of ***Vrs. 18*** of our text, "For **the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness**;"
4. Now what did Paul mean by "the preaching of the cross"?
5. The Greek word translated "**preaching**" here is not the word that means "to preach" or "to proclaim" or "to evangelize."
6. Instead, it is the word "**logos**," which literally means "**the Word**" or "**the message**."
7. And so, when Paul spoke of "the **preaching** of the cross," he was actually talking about "the **message** of the cross."

C. This morning, as we consider "the message of the cross," there are **three things** that I want to bring to your attention. First of all, I want us to think about "the message of the cross"...

I. Explained.

A. If someone were to ask you to explain "the message of the cross," how would you go about it?
1. I'll tell you how I would explain it.
2. I would take them to ***John 3:16***, because in my opinion, there is **no other verse** in all of God's Word that **better explains** "the message of the cross."

B. According to ***John 3:16***, "the message of the cross" is a message of **love**. (Amen?)
1. How does ***John 3:16*** begin?
2. It begins like this, "For God **so loved** the world."
3. If the cross tells us anything, it tells us that God loves us!
4. Listen to what the Bible says in ***Rom. 5:8***, "But God commendeth **his love toward us**, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."
5. Listen also to what the Bible says in ***1 John 4:9-10***, "In this was **manifested the love of God toward us**, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him....Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that **he loved us**, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."
6. Whenever we see a cross, we should think of God's love.
7. Whenever we hear about the cross, we should think of God's love. Why?
8. Because "the message of the cross" is a message of love.

C. It is also a message of **sacrifice**.
1. Again, ***John 3:16*** says, "For God so loved the world, that **he gave his Only Begotten Son**."
2. If the cross tells us anything, it tells us of the sacrifice that both the Father and the Son made for each one of us.
3. What sacrifice did **the Father** make?
4. He sacrificed **His Son**.
5. He "gave his Only Begotten Son."

6. The Bible says in ***1 John 4:14***, "And we have seen and do testify that **the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world**."
7. And so, the Father sacrificed the Son.
8. Now what sacrifice did **Jesus** make?
9. Jesus sacrificed **Himself**! (Amen?)
10. Jesus said in ***John 10:17-18***, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because **I lay down my life**,...No man taketh it from me, but **I lay it down of myself**."
11. Paul put it like this in ***Gal. 2:20***, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who **loved me**, and **gave himself for me.**"
12. And so, Jesus sacrificed Himself.
13. Whenever we see a cross, or hear about the cross, we should think about the sacrifice that both the Father and the Son made for each one of us.
14. And so, "the message of the cross" is a message of sacrifice."

D. It is also a message of **life**.
1. Again, ***John 3:16*** says, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his Only Begotten Son, **that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life**."
2. If the cross tells us anything, it tells us that those who believe in Jesus have everlasting life!
3. Our Lord Jesus said in ***John 5:24***, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, **hath everlasting life**, and shall not come into condemnation; but is **passed from death unto life**."
4. Jesus also said in ***John 11:25-26***, as He was trying to comfort Martha who's brother, Lazarus, had just died, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:...And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."
5. When we see or hear about the cross, we should think about how those who believe in Jesus have everlasting life.
6. And so, "the message of the cross" is a message of life.

E. What is "the message of the cross"?
1. It is a message of **love** (For God so loved the world...)
2. It is a message of **sacrifice** (...that he gave his Only...)
3. It is a message of **life** (...that whosoever believeth...)
4. That's "the message of the cross" explained.

F. Now let us think about "the message of the cross"...

II. Excluded.

A. Do you know what is amazing?
1. It is the fact that even though "the message of the cross" is a wonderful and hope filled message, the vast majority of people today totally **exclude it from consideration**.

2. In other words, they completely reject it, refusing to have anything whatsoever to do with it.

B. Why do they exclude "the message of the cross"?
1. They exclude it for basically two reasons.
2. Many exclude it because, in their minds, **it cannot be substantiated (proven)**.
3. Look again at the first part of ***Vrs. 22*** of our text, "For the Jews **require a sign**,"
4. If you have studied the life and ministry of our Lord, you know that on many occasions the Jews asked for a sign.
5. For example, in ***John 2***, when Jesus cleansed the temple the first time, the Jews asked Him, **"What sign shewest thou** unto us, seeing that thou doest these things?" ***(John 2:18)***
6. In ***John 6:30***, the Jews again asked for a sign, saying, "**What sign shewest thou** then, that we may see, and believe thee?"
7. And so, the Jews were constantly asking for a sign.
8. Did Jesus give them a sign?
9. He did, but not the kind of sign that they wanted.
10. Listen to what Jesus said in ***Mat. 12:39***, "An evil and adulterous generation **seeketh after a sign**; and there shall no sign be given to it, but **the sign of the prophet Jonas**:"
11. What was the "sign of the prophet" Jonah?
12. Well, as Jonah was "three days and three nights in the whale's belly," even so was Jesus **"three days and three nights in the heart of the earth**." ***(Mat. 12:40)***
13. And then **He rose again**! (Amen?)
14. Did this miraculous sign convince the Jews that Jesus was, in fact, their Messiah? The answer is, **"No!"**
15. And so, the Jews were constantly asking for a sign.

C. People today are no different.
1. They refuse to believe in something that cannot be substantiated (proven) in some tangible way.
2. (Illus.- It hasn't been too many months ago that a man told me, "Preacher, if I can't see it with my eyes and touch it with my hands, I refuse to believe it is real!")
3. And so, many people exclude "the message of the cross" because it cannot be substantiated (proven) to their satisfaction.

D. Many more people exclude "the message of the cross" because, in their minds, **it is irrational**.
1. In other words, it is **inconsistent** with human reasoning and human wisdom.
2. Look again at ***Vrs. 22*** of our text, "For the Jews require a sign, and **the Greeks seek after wisdom**:"
3. Now don't misunderstand what I am about to say, because if you are talking about God's wisdom, wisdom is a wonderful thing. It is also something after which we should **diligently seek**.
4. Listen to ***Pro. 4:7***, "Wisdom is **the principal thing**; therefore **get wisdom**: and with all thy getting get understanding."

5. And then again in ***Pro. 16:16***, "How much better is it to **get wisdom** than gold! and to get understanding rather to be chosen than silver!"
6. And so, if you are talking about God's wisdom, wisdom is a wonderful thing.
7. However, the wisdom of this world is a horse of a different color.
8. The wisdom (thinking) of this world absolutely refuses to believe "the message of the cross."
9. Why? Because it is irrational.

E. And so, the vast majority of people today totally exclude "the message of the cross" from consideration!
1. Why? Because, in their minds, it is both unsubstantiated (unproven) and irrational.
2. In fact, they consider it **a bunch of foolishness**, and not only that, **they consider us fools for believing it**!

F. But do you know who's really the fool here?
1. It is not those of us who believe "the message of the cross," but rather **those who reject it**.
2. Why?
3. Because the Bible says that one day, **they will perish**.
4. Notice again ***Vrs. 18*** of our text, "For the preaching of the cross is to **them that perish** foolishness;"
5. That's "the message of the cross" excluded.

G. Now finally, this morning, let us think about "the message of the cross"...

III. Embraced.

A. Thank God, there are those who, in spite of the fact that it cannot be substantiated nor understood using human reasoning and wisdom, **still choose to embrace "the message of the cross**."

B. Do you remember Thomas?
1. We call him "doubting Thomas" because he was slow to believe that Jesus had actually risen from the dead.
2. He is the one who told the other disciples, "**Except I shall see** in his hands the print of the nails, and **put my finger** into the print of the nails, and **thrust my hand** into his side, I will not believe." ***(John 20:25)***
3. Well, Thomas got his wish.
4. About a week later Jesus appeared to his disciples the second time, and this time Thomas was present.
5. Jesus walked up to Thomas and said, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and **be not faithless, but believing**." ***(John 20:27)***
6. All that Thomas could do was fall down before Him and say, "**My Lord and my God**." ***(John 20:28)***

7. I'm sure we all remember this amazing event, but do you remember what Jesus said to Thomas immediately afterwards? He said, "**Thomas**, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: **blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed**." ***(John 20:29)***
8. And so, thank God, there are those who, in spite of the fact that it **cannot be substantiated** nor understood using human reasoning and wisdom, **still choose to embrace "the message of the cross**."

C. Even though the world thinks we are fools, **we are not**!
1. Know why?
2. Look again at ***Vrs. 18*** of our text, "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God."
3. Paul put it like this in ***Rom. 1:16***, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ (the message of the cross): for it is **the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth**; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."
4. No, we are not the fools, because **we are the ones who are saved**, but they are the fools because **they are the ones who will one day perish**.

D. By the way, there are only two kinds of people in this world, those who are saved and those who are perishing.
1. (Illus.- The story is told of a man who decided to attend church for the first time. It just so happens that he chose a Baptist church during revival meeting. When he returned home that evening, his wife asked him, "Well, how was it?" He replied, "It was okay, but the preacher really didn't have anything to say to me." His wife asked him, "What do you mean?" He replied, "He talked about those who are saved and on their way to heaven, and those who are lost and on their way to hell, and I really don't believe that I fall into either category.)
2. Contrary to what this man said, **we ALL** fall into one of these two categories, we are either **saved** and on our way to heaven, or **lost (perishing)** and on our way to hell.
3. It's either one or the other.

Conclusion:

A. As I get ready to conclude this message, I want to ask you this question, "Which category do you fall into? Are you **saved** and on your way to heaven, or are you **lost** and on your way to hell?"

B. But you say, "Preacher, it's not that I wouldn't like to be saved and live in heaven one day, but all that stuff about Jesus dying on the cross for my sins and then rising from the dead is a bunch of foolishness."
1. It may very well be foolishness to you, but I assure you, on the authority of God's Word, it is your only hope for heaven.

2. You will either believe that “foolishness” with all of your heart, or you will one day die in your sins and spend the rest of eternity paying the penalty for your sins.
3. The choice is yours.

"Not Many Mighty"

Scripture Text: *1 Corinthians 1:26-29*

Introduction:

A. As most of you know, we have had an active men's soul winning ministry for about three years now.
   1. During that time, almost every week, we have had anywhere from six to ten of our men out knocking doors, seeking opportunities to be a witness for Christ.
   2. One of the many things that we have learned is that **the kind of reception we receive** depends, to a large extent, on **the social and economic status** of the neighborhood in which we are visiting.
   3. In other words, the **more affluent** the neighborhood, the **colder** the reception, and the **less affluent** the neighborhood, the **warmer** the reception.
   4. (Illus.- Just this last Thursday evening, Bro. L.C. and I experienced this phenomenon. We started out our evening knocking doors in one of the newer neighborhoods here in Jefferson County. While the houses were not mansions by any means, it was a fairly "well to do" neighborhood. One of the first doors we knocked on, a lady came to the door and if looks could kill, neither L.C. nor myself would be here this morning [we would both be dead]. I smiled and said, "Hello, my name is Mike Withem..." and before I could say another word, the door abruptly closed, and that was it. While I was disappointed, I was not surprised. Why? Because that kind of reception is common in more affluent neighborhoods. However, on that same evening, L.C. and moved to a less affluent neighborhood, less than a mile away, and the first two doors that we knocked on resulted in a **very warm reception**. The first person we talked to was an **ex-con** who was trying to put his life back together, and the other was a **divorced mom** who was struggling to provide for herself and her seven year old son, yet both of these people showed a **genuine interest** in what we had to share and **invited us back**.)
   5. And so, the **more affluent** the neighborhood, the **colder** the reception, and the **less affluent** the neighborhood, the **warmer** the reception.

B. Now how do you explain this phenomenon?
   1. By the way, we do try to be balanced in our door knocking.
   2. Even though, as a general rule, the reception is much colder in the more affluent neighborhoods, we do go to these neighborhoods because they need to hear the gospel as well.
   3. But how do you explain the fact that the way we are received depends, to a large extent, on how affluent the neighborhood is?
   4. The answer is found in our text, this morning.

C. As we examine our text more closely, there are three things that I want us to see. First of all, I want us to see....

I. The Reality.

A. What reality?

1. The reality that the **vast majority of people** who come to Christ and trust Him as Savior are **not among the affluent** of our society.
2. Were you aware of this reality?
3. Look again at ***Vrs. 26*** of our text, Paul wrote, "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that **not many wise men** after the flesh, **not many mighty**, **not many noble**, are called:"
4. Now what does this mean?
5. It simply means that among those who come to Christ and trust Him as Savior, you will not find many who are wise, nor many who are mighty, nor many who are noble, according to the world's definition of these terms.
6. The word "**wise**" here means "**intelligent**."
7. The word "**mighty**" means "**powerful**."
8. The word "**noble**" means "**high in rank**."
9. So what Paul is saying, is, that among those who come to Christ and trust Him as Savior, you will not find many who are **intelligent**, nor will you find many who are **powerful**, nor will you find many who are **high ranking**.

B. But someone says, "Wait a minute, preacher. That offends me! I'm not sure I would agree with that!"

1. Okay, **I can prove** that what the Bible says here is true.
2. Just **look around you** at the people who are gathered here this morning. (This is a typical fundamental church.)
3. How many **philosophers** do you see?
4. How many **college professors** do you see?
5. How many **doctors** or **lawyers** do you see?
6. How many **bank presidents** or **CEOs** do you see?
7. How many **Bill Gates** or **Donald Trumps** do you see?
8. How many **congressmen** or **senators** or **judges** do you see?

C. Now this is not to say that you won't find any of these people among those who come to Christ and trust Him as Savior.

1. Paul didn't say that not **any** wise men after the flesh, not **any** mighty, not **any** noble, are called, but rather "not **many**..." (There is a difference!)
2. (Illus.- The lady Huntingdon was one of the richest ladies in all of England, a well-to-do socialite. After she was saved, she would tell people, "I was saved by one letter, the letter M." When people asked her what she meant, she would say, "I'm so glad that the Bible says, 'Not **many** noble,' rather than not **any** noble."
3. And so, you will find **some** intelligent people, and **some** powerful people, and **some** high ranking people among those who come to Christ and trust Him as Savior, but **you won't find many**!

D. What kind of people will you find among the saved?

1. Turn with me to ***Mark 12:35-37***, "And Jesus answered and said, while he taught in the temple, How say the scribes that Christ is the Son of David?...For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The LORD said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool....David therefore himself calleth him Lord; and whence is he then his son? And **the common people heard him gladly**."
2. What kind of people do you find among the saved?
3. For the most part, you find "common people."
4. You find people who are plumbers, and painters, and electricians, and carpenters, and auto mechanics, and truck drivers, and janitors, and sanitation workers, and nurses, and school teachers, and store clerks, and on and on the list goes.

E. James put it like this in ***Jam. 1:25***, "Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen **the poor of this world** rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?"

F. And so, that's the reality.

G. Now I want us to notice...

II. The Reasons.

A. In other words, why is this true?
1. Why is it true that "that **not many** wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called:" ***(Vrs. 26)***
2. Why is it true that among those who come to Christ and trust Him as Savior, you will not find many who are **super intelligent**, nor will you find many who are **powerful or influential**, nor will you find many who are **high ranking**. (Why is this true?)

B. There are actually two reasons.
1. First of all, it is true because people who fall into these categories **have trouble seeing their need for Christ**.
2. Take "the **wise**" for example.
3. Most of them have the attitude, "Why do I need Christ? I am so **intelligent** that I will **think** my way into heaven."
4. What about "the **mighty**"?
5. Most of them have the attitude, "Why do I need Christ? I am so **powerful** that I will **force** my way into heaven."
6. What about "the **noble**"?
7. Most of them have the attitude, "Why do I need Christ? I am so **high ranking** that I will **command** my way into heaven."
8. And so, the first reason "that **not many** wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called" is because people who fall into these categories **have trouble seeing their need for Christ**.

C. Consider the **rich**, for just a moment.
   1. Do you remember what Jesus said in ***Mat. 19:23***?
   2. He said, "Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall **hardly** enter into the kingdom of heaven."
   3. In other words, it is hard **(difficult)** for a rich man to be saved.
   4. Why is this true?
   5. It's true because those who are rich **have a tendency to trust in their riches**, rather than in Christ.
   6. Jesus said it like this in ***Mark 10:24***, "Children, how **hard** is it for them that **trust in riches** to enter into the kingdom of God!"
   7. And so, the first reason "that **not many** wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called" is because people who fall into these categories have trouble seeing their need for Christ.

D. But there is another reason, and that is because there is something that God wants to prove.
   1. God wants to prove that He does not need people who are wise, nor does He need people who are mighty, nor does He need people who are noble, but rather **He can save and He can use anyone whom He chooses**, no matter what worldly position they might occupy!
   2. Paul said it like this in ***Vrs. 27-28*** of our text, "But God hath chosen **the foolish things of the world** to confound the wise; and God hath chosen **the weak things of the world** to confound the things which are mighty;...And **base things of the world**, and **things which are despised**, hath God chosen, yea, and **things which are not**, to bring to nought things that are:"

E. There are so many examples of this that I don't know where to begin.
   1. (Illus.- We've all heard of the great **D.L. Moody**. D. L. Moody had few educational advantages, and for that reason, I am told that he murdered the English language when he preached. Someone once said about him, "He's the only man I have ever heard who could pronounce the word 'Mesopotamia' in two syllables." Yet God took D. L. Moody and used him to shake two continents for His glory, and the effects of his ministry are still felt today.)
   2. (Illus.- **Fanny Crosby** is another great example. Fanny Crosby was blind from the age of six weeks, yet God used her to write more than 9,000 hymns, hymns such as "Blessed Assurance," and "All The Way My Savior Leads Me," and "I Am Thine O Lord," and "Jesus Keep Me Near The Cross," and "Praise Him, Praise Him," and "To God Be The Glory," just to name a few. Although blind, Fanny Crosby was the guest of six presidents and a personal friend to Grover Cleveland. Her 9,000 hymns were put to music by almost every famous American composer of the nineteenth century, and they are still a blessing to the church today.)
   3. (Illus.- **Jonathan Edwards** is yet another example. From what I am told, Jonathan Edwards was a man marked by physical weakness. He was a very frail man. He was also asthmatic, and it was not unusual for him to wheeze, and cough, and hack while preaching. He would read his sermons in a very low volume because his voice was so weak, and people would sometimes have to strain to hear him.

He had horrible eyesight as well. His eyesight was so poor, that he had to wear thick glasses, and would still have to hold his sermons an inch from his nose to read them. Yet, in spite of all of his physical disabilities, when he preached, the power of God fell in such a manner that people often convulsed in conviction. Jonathan Edwards, as much as any other, was the instrument that God used to bring revival to America in the mid 1700s.)

F. Now what is God saying by using people like D.L. Moody and Fanny Crosby and Jonathan Edwards?
1. He's saying to **"the wise" of this world**, I don't need you, I have men like D.L. Moody whom I can use."
2. He's saying to **"the mighty" of this world**, I don't need you, I have women like Fanny Crosby whom I can use."
3. He's saying to **"the noble" of this world**, I don't need you, I have men like Jonathan Edwards whom I can use.
4. And so, there is something that God wants to prove.
5. He wants to prove that He does not need people who are **intelligent**, He does not need people who are **powerful**, He does not need people who are **high ranking**, He can save and He can use **anyone** whom He chooses!

G. (Illus.- I know that I am certainly no D.L. Moody or Jonathan Edwards, not by any stretch of the imagination, but God certainly proved something when he saved me and then called me to preach His Word. If you knew anything at all about my background and my upbringing, you would know that it is **a miracle of grace** that I am standing before you this morning. I am proof positive that **God can use anyone** whom He chooses. I am a perfect example of how God can take a "nobody," and make them a "somebody." Amen?)

H. And so, those are the reasons.

I. Finally, this morning, I want us to see...

III. The Result.

A. In other words, I want us to see the result of realizing that our (earthly) **wisdom**, and our (earthly) **might**, and our (earthly) **nobility** are of **no value whatsoever**, when it comes to being saved and being used of God. Look at ***Vrs. 29*** of our text, "That **no flesh should glory** in his presence."

B. You know, there are a lot of things that will **not be present** when he get to heaven.
1. For example, there will be no **sin** in heaven.
2. Neither will there be any **sorrow** or **tears** in heaven.
3. Neither will there be any **sickness** or **death** in heaven.
4. This is one reason why, the older I get, the better heaven looks to me! (Amen?)
5. But there's something else that not be present when we get to heaven, and that is **boasting**!

6. There will be **no personal boasting** in heaven!
7. Why not? Because if do end up making it to heaven, it won't because of anything that we have done, but rather it will be because of God's miraculous saving grace.
8. This is why Paul wrote in **Eph. 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**."

9. There is another reason why there will be no boasting in heaven, and that is we will be too busy praising God for what He has done for us! (Amen?)

C. And so, that's the result.

Conclusion:

A. What have we seen this morning?
1. First of all, we saw the **reality** ("not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called:")
2. Secondly, we saw the **reason** ("But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;...And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are:")
3. Finally, we saw the **result** ("That no flesh should glory in his presence.")

B. Perhaps I am speaking to someone this morning and you are thinking, "God doesn't want me! God cannot use me! I'm a nobody!
1. Well, you may be a nobody, but God wants to **make you a somebody**! (Amen?)
2. He wants to use you to demonstrate to the whole world that He is wise enough and mighty enough and noble enough to save and use anyone whom He chooses.
3. You can become **a miracle of His grace**, if you will only **look to Him** this morning and **trust His Son**, Jesus, as your personal Savior.
4. Won't you do that???

"Let Him Glory In The Lord"

Scripture Text: ***1 Corinthians 1:30-31***

Introduction:

A. I'm not going to do this, but suppose that I were to give each of you a piece of paper and ask you to make a list of all of your **physical needs**, what would you write down?
   1. If we were to write down only those things that we absolutely need (could not live without), it would be a very short list. (Amen?)
   2. For example, we need...
      -**air** to breathe,
      -**water** to drink,
      -**food** to eat,
      -**clothing** to wear,
      -**shelter** to protect us from the elements,
      and that's about it (everything else we could do without).
   3. But suppose I were to ask you to turn that piece of paper over and make a list of all of your **spiritual needs**, what would you write down then?
   4. Someone says, "Wait a minute, pastor, that would be **much more difficult**, because we have so many different spiritual needs."
   5. Well, you are **partially** correct.
   6. We do have many different spiritual needs, but it would be **much easier** to list all of our spiritual needs than to list our physical needs.
   7. Why is that?
   8. Because we could make a list that would cover all of our spiritual needs and that list **consist of just one word**.
   9. "How would that be possible?" someone asks.
   10. It would be possible because in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, **all of our spiritual needs are met**.
   11. In other words, when it comes to our spiritual needs, **all we need is Jesus**. (Amen?)

B. Look again at ***Vrs. 30*** of our text, "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is **made unto us** wisdom, and **righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption**:"
   1. As we examine this verse carefully, we will make three startling discoveries.
   2. First of all, we will discover that in Christ...

I. All Of Our <u>Past</u> Needs Have Been Fulfilled.

A. Let me ask you a question.
   1. When we were a lost sinner, what was our greatest spiritual need?
   2. Without a doubt, our greatest spiritual need was **the need for "righteousness."** (In other words, the need **to be made right** in the sight of God.)
   3. Why was this our greatest need?
   4. It was our greatest need because without righteousness one will never see heaven.

5. Listen to what Paul wrote in ***1 Cor. 6:9***, "Know ye not that **the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God**?"
6. And so, when were a lost sinner, our greatest need was the need for righteousness (the need to be made right in the sight of God).

B. But someone says, "Wait a minute, pastor! Even before I was saved, I was **a pretty good person**."
1. You might have been a good person **in the eyes of the world** and **in your own eyes**, but I can assure you that when God looked at you, **He didn't see anything good**!
2. What did He see?
3. ***Isa. 64:6*** answers that question, it says, "But we are all as an unclean thing, and **all our righteousnesses** are **as filthy rags**;"
4. Paul put it like this in ***Rom. 7:18***, "For I know that **in me** (that is, in my flesh,) **dwelleth no good thing**:"
5. And so, the truth is, before we were saved, when God looked at us, He saw nothing good whatsoever, only filth.
6. (Illus.- Warren Wiersbe once said, "If our righteousness is filthy, what must our sins look like in God's sight?" That's a sobering thought, isn't it?)

C. Now this raises a question.
1. If man, by nature, has no true righteousness of his own, and if righteousness is required in order to go to heaven, **how are we ever going to make it** to heaven?
2. Let me say, first of all, that **righteousness is indeed required** in order to go to heaven, and not just righteousness, but **a perfect righteousness**.
3. Why is this true?
4. It's true because heaven is **a perfect place**.
5. It is a perfect place, created by a perfect God for a perfect people.
6. This is why we read in ***Rev. 21:27***, "And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing **that defileth**, neither whatsoever **worketh abomination**, or **maketh a lie**:"
7. And so, not only is righteousness required in order to go to heaven, but a perfect righteousness is required (nothing less than utter perfection).

D. Someone says, "If that's true, preacher, than **none of us is going to make it to heaven**!"
1. You are almost right!
2. It is true that none of us can make it to heaven on the basis of our righteousness, but those of us who have trusted Jesus as our Savior, we can and we will make it to heaven **on the basis of His righteousness**. (Amen?)

3. Turn with me to ***2 Cor. 5:20-21***, "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....For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; **that we might be made the righteousness of God in him**."
4. Notice again the last phrase in ***Vrs. 21***, "...that we might be made the righteousness of God **in him**."
5. In whom? In Christ!

6. Let me ask you a question.
7. **How righteous** is our Lord Jesus Christ?
8. According to the verse we just read, He possesses **a perfect righteousness**.
9. What did it say? It said, "...who knew **no sin**."
10. Listen also to ***1 John 3:5***, "And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and **in him is no sin**."
11. And so, the answer to the question is, Jesus possesses a perfect righteousness.
12. This is why those who put their faith and trust in Him are assured of heaven.
13. Not on the basis of their righteousness, but on the basis of Christ's perfect righteousness. (Amen?)

E. It's like this, before I was saved, when God looked at me, all that He saw was filth (He saw absolutely nothing good or holy or righteous)!
   1. However, when God looks at me today, He sees perfection, not my perfection, but Christ's perfection.
   2. (Illus.- The late Harry Ironside told the following story. It seems that he was in Texas visiting a sheep ranch, when he saw the strangest thing he had ever seen. It looked like a lamb that had four front feet and four back feet. When he asked about the lamb, this is what the rancher told him. He said, "We had a sheep bear a lamb, and the lamb died. At the same time, we had another sheep bear a lamb, and the sheep died. And so we thought that we could take the lamb that had no mother and put it with the sheep that had lost her lamb. We thought it was the perfect solution. However, when we put the lamb and the sheep together, the sheep pushed the lamb away and refused to have anything to do with it, the reason being, it was not her lamb. Someone then suggested skinning the dead lamb and draping the skin over the living lamb's body. That's exactly what we did, we clothed the living lamb in the skin of the lamb that had died. [Somebody say, Amen!] When we placed it in with the mother sheep, this time she accepted it and began caring for it.")
   3. The same thing is true of us.
   4. We are accepted by God for one reason and one reason only, and that is because we are **clothed in the righteousness of His Son**!

F. And so, in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, **all of our past needs have been fulfilled**.
   1. In Christ, we are "made...**righteousness**." ***(Vrs. 30)***
   2. There is a second startling discovery to made in this passage, and that is in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ,...

II. All Of Our <u>Present</u> Needs Are Being Fulfilled.

A. Let me ask you another question.
   1. I asked you a moment ago, "When we were a lost sinner, what was our greatest need **then**?" and the answer was, **the need for righteousness**.
   2. Now let me ask you another question, "As a believer in Christ, what is our greatest need **now** (at this moment)?"

3. Without a doubt, our greatest need now is **the need for "sanctification."** (In other words, the need to live holy lives.)

B. Our need for sanctification is borne out in many different passages.
   1. For example, in ***1 Pet. 1:15-16***, we read, "But as he which hath called you is holy, **so be ye holy in all manner of conversation**;...Because it is written, **Be ye holy**; for I am holy."
   2. And then in **1 Thes. 4:3,7**, we read, "For this is the will of God, **even your sanctification**, that ye should abstain from fornication:...For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, **but unto holiness**."
   3. And then again in ***Tit. 2:11-12***, we read, "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;"

C. Now this raises a question.
   1. How are we to do this?
   2. How are we to live holy lives in this sinful world in which we live?
   3. Well, again, **Christ is the answer**.
   4. The key is to let Christ live His life through us.
   5. Listen to what Paul wrote in ***Gal. 2:20***, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but **Christ liveth in me**:"
   6. (Illus.- One Sunday on their way home from church, a little girl turned to her mother and said, "Mommy, the preacher's sermon this morning confused me." The mother said, "Oh? Why is that?" The little girl replied, "Well, he said that God is bigger than we are. Is that true?" The mother replied, "Yes, honey, that's true." The little girl then said, "And he also said that God lives in us? Is that true, Mommy?" Again, the mother replied, "Yes." "Well," said the little girl, "If God is bigger than us and He lives in us, **wouldn't he show through**?")
   7. Someone described "sanctification" like this**: the process whereby the God Who lives within us shows through our lives**! (I like that, don't you?)
   8. (Illus.- Michelangelo, the great sculptor and painter, was pushing a heavy rock up a small incline to his work area so that he could do some sculpting. A neighbor watched him for over an hour as he worked to get the large rock in place. Finally, he asked, "Michelangelo, why do you labor so hard over that ugly, heavy piece of rock?" The great sculptor replied, "**Because there is an angel inside that wants to come out**.")
   9. That pretty much describes sanctification, doesn't it?
   10. God wants to **come out** in our lives and "sanctification" is the process by which He accomplishes that.

D. How do we let Christ live His life through us?
   1. If you were here last Sunday, Steven answered that question as he preached on the subject of **being filled with the Spirit**.

2. We let Christ live His life through us by yielding ourselves to the indwelling Holy Spirit, by denying ourselves what we want, and **letting Him have His way** in our lives.

E. And so, in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, **all of our present needs are being fulfilled**.
1. In Christ, we are "made...**sanctification**." ***(Vrs. 30)***
2. There is a third startling discovery that can be made from examining this passage, and that is in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ,...

III. All Of Our <u>Projected</u> Needs Will Be Fulfilled.

A. Let me ask you a third question, this morning.
1. I asked you earlier, "When we were a lost sinner, what was our greatest need then?" and the answer was, the need for **righteousness** (to be made right with God).
2. I also asked you, "As a believer in Christ, what is our greatest need now?" and the answer was, the need for **sanctification** (to live holy lives).
3. Now let me ask you a third question.
4. As a believer in Christ, what is our greatest **future** need?
5. Without a doubt, our greatest future need is **the need for "redemption."** (In other words, the need for a new body.)

B. But someone says, "Wait a minute, pastor, haven't we already been redeemed?"
1. We have, but our redemption is **not yet complete**.
2. In other words, our spirits have been redeemed, but **our bodies are still waiting for their redemption**.
3. Turn with me, for just a moment, to ***Rom. 8:23***, "And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, **waiting** for the adoption, to wit, **the redemption of our body**."
4. Even though we are saved, even though **we have been made righteous**, even though **we are being sanctified**, there is **still something that we are waiting for**, and that is **the redemption of our bodies**.

C. Someone asks, "**What do I have to do** in order to make sure that I will receive a new body?"
1. The answer is, **"Nothing!"**
2. Jesus has taken care of this as well. (Amen?)
3. Listen to the precious promise found in ***1 Cor. 15:51-52***, "Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but **we shall all be changed**,...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**."
4. The apostle John put it like this in ***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."

D. And so, in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, **all of our projected needs will one day be fulfilled**.

Conclusion:

A. Do you see now why I said that when it comes to our spiritual needs, **Jesus is all we need**?
   1. In Christ, all of our **past** needs have been fulfilled (He is our **"righteousness"**).
   2. In Christ, all of our **present** needs are being fulfilled (He is our **"sanctification"**).
   3. In Christ, all of our **projected** needs will be fulfilled (He is our **"redemption"**).
   4. Look again at ***Vrs. 30*** of our text, "But of him are ye **in Christ Jesus**, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and **righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption**:"

B. Now what does this mean to us today?
   1. First of all, it means that if you have Christ, you have **everything**, but if you don't have Christ, you have **nothing**!
   2. But someone says, "I have my **good works**."
   3. If you don't have Christ, you have nothing.
   4. But someone says, "I have my **baptism**."
   5. If you don't have Christ, you have nothing.
   6. But someone says, "I have my **religion**."
   7. If you don't have Christ, you have nothing.
   8. You are a spiritual pauper!!!

C. Now one more thing.
   1. Because Jesus is all we need, we should "glory in" Him, and not in ourselves.
   2. ***Vrs. 31*** of our text says, "That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

"When I Came To You"

Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

Introduction:

A. If you wanted to learn how to do something that you had never done before, how would you go about it?

1. One way that you could go about it is by what I call **"trial and error."** In other words, you could just jump in and start doing it, and then learn by your mistakes. While this may work with some things, it definitely would not work with other things. For example, if you wanted to learn how to use plastic explosives, I wouldn't recommend the "trial and error" process.
2. Another way that you could go about it is by **reading a "how to" book**. Bookstores are full of "how to" books on subjects ranging from cooking to fixing cars to remodeling your home. While this may work well with some things, it definitely would not be a good idea with other things. For example, how many of you would allow a surgeon to perform a heart by-pass operation on you whose only credentials were reading a book entitled, "Heart Surgery For Dummies"?
3. And so, you could learn how to do something that you had never done before either by **"trial and error"** or by **"reading a 'how to' book."**
4. There is, however, **a better way**. (What is it?)
5. In my opinion, **the best way** to learn how to do something that you have never done before is by **finding someone who is a master at it, and then learning from him**. (Amen?)

6. For example, if you wanted to learn how to repair cars, the best thing to do is to find a master mechanic, and then learn from him.
7. If you wanted to learn how to cook, the best thing to do is to find a master chef, and then learn from him.
8. If you wanted to learn how to build houses, the best thing to do is to find a master carpenter, and then learn from him.
9. This is called "learning from a master," and is undoubtedly the best way to learn how to do something that you have never done before.

B. Speaking of masters, the apostle Paul was a master at many things.

1. For example, he was a master soul winner. (Amen?)
2. He demonstrated this during the 18 months that he lived and ministered in the city of Corinth.
3. What I want us to do this morning is to look carefully at Paul's experience in Corinth, and learn from his example how we too can become master soul winners.
4. First of all, I want us to answer the question,...

I. Why Did Paul Go To Corinth In The First Place?

A. Paul wrote in ***Vrs. 1*** of our text, "And I, brethren, **when I came to you**," but why did Paul go to Corinth?
   1. Did he go there **to find work**?
   2. Did he go there **to visit relatives**?
   3. Did he go there **on a family vacation**?
   4. Of course, none of these are the reasons that Paul went to Corinth.
   5. Paul went to Corinth for one reason and one reason only, and that was **to win people to Christ**.

B. How do we know this?
   1. We know this because of what he did soon after arriving there. What did he do?
   2. After finding a place to live, he went straight to the synagogue and began telling people about Jesus!
   3. ***Acts 18:4*** says, "And **he reasoned in the synagogue** every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks."
   4. When the Jews rejected his message, we are told in ***Acts 18:6*** that he turned to the Gentiles in Corinth and began telling them about Jesus.
   5. And so, there's no doubt that Paul had one reason and one reason for going to Corinth, and that was **to win people to Christ**.

C. But someone says, "That was Paul's business. He was a missionary. It was his business to win people to Christ."
   1. That's true, Paul was a missionary and it was his business to win people to Christ, but the fact is, if you are a believer in Christ, it is your business as well. (Amen?)
   2. (Illus.- There was a time in the life of D.L. Moody when he purposed to witness to at least one soul every day of his life. This became a practice that he kept until the end of his life. One day he asked someone if they were saved. The person looked at him and said, **"Sir, that is none of your business."** Moody looked at him and said very kindly, **"Sir, that is my business."**)
   3. (Illus.- The story is told about a New York pastor who became concerned about a certain banker in the town where he ministered. One day he went to the banker's office and asked for ten minutes of his time. The banker asked, **"Have you come on business, preacher?"** The pastor replied, **"Yes, business for God and for eternity. I have come to talk to you about your soul."** The banker looked at the preacher and said, **"I've been waiting for 30 years for someone to tell me how to get saved."**)
   4. And so, as believers in Christ, it is our business to win people to Christ.
   5. We may not be a missionary.
   6. We may not be an evangelist.
   7. We may not be a pastor.
   8. But if we are a believer in Christ, it is our business to win people to Christ.

D. Why is this true?
   1. It's true because the great commission was not given just to missionaries and evangelists and pastors, but rather the great commission was given **to the entire church**.

2. When Jesus said, "**Go** ye therefore, and **teach all nations**," ***(Mat. 28:19)*** He was speaking to the entire church!
3. When He said, "**Go** ye into all the world, and **preach the gospel to every creature**,"***(Mark 16:15)***, He was speaking to the entire church!
4. When He said, "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and **ye shall be witnesses unto me** both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth," ***(Acts 1:8)***, He was speaking to the entire church!
5. And so, the great commission was not given just to missionaries and evangelists and pastors, but rather it was given to the entire church.

E. Why did Paul go to Corinth in the first place?
1. He went there for the purpose of winning people to Christ, and that's exactly what he did!
2. That should also be our purpose, when and where ever we go, to win people to Christ.
3. Now let's answer this question,...

II. What Was Paul Thinking When He Went To Corinth?

A. Let me tell, first of all, what he was **not** thinking.
1. He was **not** thinking that he would go to Corinth and **"with excellency of speech"** or **"enticing words of man's wisdom"** win the city to Christ.

2. In other words, he was **not** thinking that he would go to Corinth and **by his own persuasive speech and reasoning** somehow convince the Corinthians to come to Christ.
3. Look again at ***Vrs. 1*** of our text, "And I, brethren, when I came to you, **came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom**, declaring unto you the testimony of God."
4. Now look again at the first part of ***Vrs. 4***, "And my speech and my preaching was **not with enticing words of man's wisdom**,"
5. Even though Paul was, in fact, a gifted speaker, and even though his persuasive skills were as good as anyone's, **he did not go to Corinth confident in his own ability to win his listeners to Christ.**

B. In fact, according to his own admission, when Paul went to Corinth, he was **scared to death**. (Amen?)
1. Look again at ***Vrs. 3*** of our text, "And I was with you **in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling**."
2. We often think of Paul as this **super strong, super courageous, super confident** man who came into town like a roaring lion.
3. However, the truth is, **when it came to his own ability**, Paul was more like **"the cowardly lion of the Wizard of Oz**" than **"the king of the jungle."**
4. Someone says, "Surely Paul was exaggerating when he said that while he was in Corinth, he was weak and fearful and trembling!"

5. No, he was not exaggerating!
6. Turn with me, for just a moment, to ***Acts 18:9-10***, and notice something that happened while Paul was in Corinth, it says, "Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, **Be not afraid**, but speak, and hold not thy peace:...For **I am with thee**,"
7. The fact that God spoke to Paul and told him to "be not afraid" implies that **Paul was afraid**.

C. I think I know how Paul felt.
1. Every time I walk up to a strange house and knock on the door, I am scared to death.
2. Oh, I try not to show it because I don't want Bro. Billmyer, or Bro. Frazier, or Bro. Still, or Bro. Parrish, or whoever happens to be my partner, to think that I am a wimp.
3. But the truth is, when it comes to my own ability to persuade people of their need for Christ, **that's exactly what I am, a wimp**.
4. (Illus.- Christians often say to me, "Pastor, I know that I am supposed to win souls to Christ, but the thought of trying to win a person to Christ scares me to death!")
5. Hey, welcome to the club.
6. I can assure you that you are in good company!

D. And so, that's what Paul was **not** thinking.
1. He was **not** thinking that he would go to Corinth and **"with excellency of speech"** or **"enticing words of man's wisdom"** win the city to Christ.
2. Paul knew that if he depended on his own ability to convince the Corinthians to come to Christ, he would fail miserably.

E. Now what **was** Paul thinking when he went to Corinth.
1. Here's what he was thinking, he was thinking that he would **go to Corinth, present the gospel as simply and as plainly as he knew how, and then depend on the power of God to do the rest!**
2. Look again at ***Vrs. 2*** of our text, "For I determined not to know any thing among you, **save Jesus Christ, and him crucified**."
3. In other words, Paul said, "I decided that I was just going to **preach the simple gospel of Jesus Christ**, that Christ died for our sins, that He was buried, that He rose again the third day, and **depend on God to do the convincing and the saving**.

F. Let me stop here for just a moment and make something very clear, the gospel is **still "the power of God unto salvation** to every one that believeth;" ***(Rom. 1:16)***
1. Listen to what Paul wrote in ***Rom. 1:16***, "For I am not ashamed of **the gospel** of Christ: for **it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth;** to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."
2. Listen also to what Paul wrote to the Thessalonian believers in ***1 Thes. 1:5***, "For **our gospel** came not unto you in word only, but **also in power**, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance;"

3. Let me say it again, the gospel that we preach today is **the same gospel** that Paul preached, and it **is every bit as powerful** today as it was then. (Amen?)
4. Even though we are living in a very different world, the gospel itself has not lost any of it's power!
5. It is still "**the power of God unto salvation** to every one" who believes it! ***(Rom. 1:16)***

G. (Illus.- Many believers today who are caught up in the contemporary church growth movement have convinced themselves that the plain preaching of the gospel is no longer sufficient in bringing people to the Savior. This is why they have resorted to using worldly music and other forms of worldly entertainment to draw people into the church. Let me tell you something, worldly entertainment may bring people to the church house, but it most certainly won't bring people to Christ. Only the gospel of Jesus Christ will do that! [Amen?])

1. But someone says, "Wait a minute, pastor. What's wrong with using worldly entertainment to bring people to the church house, as long as you preach the gospel once you get them there?"
2. That's just it!
3. In most contemporary churches today **the gospel is not being preached**, and what is being preached has been **so "watered down"** that it doesn't even resemble the gospel of the New Testament.
4. Why do they water it down?
5. They water it down to make it **"less offensive."**
6. You can't tell people that **they are sinners**, because that will offend them.
7. You can't tell people that **they are lost**, because that will offend them.
8. You can't tell people that **they deserve to go to hell**, because that will offend them.
9. And so they take everything out of the gospel that people might find offensive, and **whatever is left** is what they preach.
10. Let me tell you something, if you take everything out of the gospel message that people might find offensive, **you might as well not preach what is left**! (Amen?)
11. What you have in the vast majority of contemporary churches today are large crowds of people who are...
    -being **entertained**,
    -having **their ears tickled**,
    -being made to **"feel good"** about themselves.
12. You can call that Christianity if you like, but it is clearly not the Christianity of the New Testament.
13. (Illus.- Can't you just envision Paul going into a city, hiring a rock band, bringing in a group of karate experts, putting up a satellite dish and piping in the super bowl. For the life of me, I can't even begin to envision Paul doing anything even similar to that.)
14. Notice again what he wrote in ***Vrs. 2*** of our text, "For I determined **not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified**."

H. What was Paul thinking when he went to Corinth?

1. He was thinking that he would **go to Corinth, present the gospel as simply and as plainly as he knew how, and then depend solely on the gospel itself, as well as the power of God to do the rest!**
2. Now, let's answer one more question,...

III. What Did Paul Accomplish While He Was In Corinth?

A. Or perhaps I should ask, "What did **God accomplish** through the preaching of the gospel while Paul was in Corinth?"
   1. This is an easy question to answer - **souls were saved and a church was established**.
   2. How do we know that?
   3. We know because the book we are now studying ***(1 Corinthians)*** was, in fact, a letter that Paul wrote to that church.
   4. God blessed Paul's simple presentation of the gospel, and by His mighty power many were brought to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, and a church was established.

B. You know, God will **do the same thing today**.
   1. He will bless **our simple presentation of the gospel**, and by His mighty power bring many to Him.
   2. (Illus.- People sometimes ask me, "Pastor, what advice can you give me that will help me to become a soul winner [or a better soul winner]?" My answer is almost always the same. **Keep it simple and trust God to do the rest.** If we will do that, souls will be saved.)
   3. How can I be so sure?
   4. Because the gospel hasn't changed, and neither has God's power changed.
   5. It's not our soul winning skills that are going to bring people to Christ, but rather the power of God Himself.

Conclusion:

A. (Illus.- A man named Will Houghton, who was once president of Moody Bible Institute in the 1940s, wrote the following words:

Lead me to some soul today,
O teach me, Lord, just what to say.
Friends of mine are lost in sin,
And cannot find the way.
Few there are that seem to care,
And few there are who pray.
Melt my heart and fill my life,
Give me one soul today!)

   1. As we leave here this morning, may this be our prayer.

"The Wisdom Of God"

Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 2:6-13

Introduction:

A. You may have noticed, when Bro. VanDenBerg read our text a moment ago, that the word **"wisdom"** was used **five times** (twice in ***Vrs. 6***, twice in ***Vrs. 7***, and once in ***Vrs. 13***).
   1. Now before I say anything else this morning, let me make something very clear - there are **at least two kinds of wisdom** in this world.
   2. First of all, there is the "**wisdom of this world**."
   3. Look again at ***1 Cor. 1:20***, it says, "Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish **the wisdom of this world**?"
   4. What is the "wisdom of this world"?
   5. It is the wisdom that **permeates** this whole world system in which we live.
   6. It is the wisdom that...
      -drives this world (moves it forward),
      -forms the basis for what this world believes,
      -**justifies the immorality that we see in this world**.
   7. To put it simply, it is the "wisdom **of or related to this world**."

B. But there is another kind of wisdom, and that is the "**wisdom of God**."
   1. Notice again the first part of ***Vrs. 7*** of our text, it says, "But we speak **the wisdom of God** in a mystery,"
   2. What is the "wisdom of God?"
   3. It is the wisdom of our Creator God.
   4. It is the wisdom that...
      -created this world in the first place,
      -devised a wonderful plan to redeem this world,
      -**sent Jesus into this world to die for sins of mankind**.
   5. To put it simply, it is the "wisdom **of or related to our God**."
   6. And so, there are **two kinds** of wisdom in the world today, the wisdom....
      -of **this world**,
      -of **our Creator God**.

C. Now with this in mind, there are three things that I want us to learn this morning about the wisdom of God. Let us learn, first of all, that the wisdom of God is...

I. Superior To The Wisdom Of This World.

A. How superior is it?
   1. Well, let's just say that **there is no comparison**!

2. Look back, if you will, to ***1 Cor. 1:25***, it says, "Because the **foolishness of God** is **wiser than men**;"
3. Do you understand what Paul is saying here?
4. He is saying that "the weakest element of God's wisdom is wiser than the strongest element of man's wisdom."
5. In other words, God's wisdom is so far superior to man's wisdom that there is absolutely no way to compare the two.
6. It's like trying to compare an ant hill to Mt. Everest.
7. It's like trying to compare a penny to our current national debt of 6 trillion dollars.
8. It's like trying to compare one grain of sand to all of the sand on all of the beaches in the entire world.

B. It's no wonder Paul wrote what he did in ***Rom. 11:33***, "O **the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God**! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!?"

C. Now this raises a question.
1. What is it about "the wisdom of God" that **makes it so superior** to man's wisdom?
2. While there are a lot of things that I could mention, for the sake of time, I will only mention one.
3. God's wisdom is superior to man's wisdom **because it's benefits are eternal**. (Amen?)
4. In other words, those who possess God's wisdom, will benefit from that wisdom **for all eternity**.
5. You can't say that about "the wisdom of this world."
6. While "the wisdom of this world" may, in some ways, benefit those who possess it in this life, **it most certainly won't help them one bit when they pass out into eternity**!

D. Look again at ***Vrs. 6*** of our text, "Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not **the wisdom of this world**, nor of the princes of this world, **that come to nought**:"
1. Did you notice the last phrase in that verse?
2. It says that no matter how valuable the world's wisdom may be now, it will one day "come to **nought**."
3. In other words, it will one day **become totally useless**.
4. Do you know why this is true?
5. It's true because, just everything that is associated with this present world, one day it will pass away.
6. This is why we are admonished in ***1 John 2:15-17***, "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....For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world....And **the world passeth away**,"

E. And so, the wisdom of God is superior to the wisdom of this world.

F. Let us also learn that the wisdom of God is...

II. Hidden From Those Who Are Of This World.

A. Notice again ***Vrs. 7-9*** of our text, "But we speak the wisdom of God in **a mystery**, even **the hidden wisdom**, which God ordained before the world unto our glory:...Which **none of the princes of this world knew**: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory....But as it is written, **Eye hath not seen**, nor **ear heard**, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

1. In ***Vrs. 7*** Paul referred to "the wisdom of God" as "**the hidden wisdom**, which God ordained before the world" was created.
2. "Hidden from whom?" someone asks.
3. Hidden from **those who are of this world**.
4. In ***Vrs. 8***, Paul said that "**none of the princes of this world knew**" anything at all about God's wisdom.
5. Had they known, he said, surely "they would not **have crucified the Lord of glory**."
6. When I read this verse last week, I immediately thought about something that Jesus said while hanging on the cross.
7. According to ***Luke 23:34***, Jesus prayed to His Father in heaven, "Father, forgive them; for **they know not what they do**."
8. **Pilate**, when He condemned Jesus to death, **didn't know** who Jesus was (he didn't know that he was condemning the eternal Son of God to die on the cross).
9. The **Roman soldiers** who whipped Jesus, then placed the mock robe on his back and the crown of thorns upon His head, then mocked Him saying, "Hail, king of the Jews," **they didn't know** who Jesus was. ***(Mat. 27:29)***
10. The **Roman soldiers** who actually drove the nails through His hands and feet, **they didn't know** who Jesus was.
11. **Why didn't they know** who Jesus was?
12. They didn't know because "the wisdom of God" was **hidden from them**.

B. But someone says, "Wait a minute, preacher. That doesn't seem quite right. I find it hard to believe that God would hide His wisdom from anyone!"

1. Well, that's what it says!
2. By the way, do you know why Jesus often taught in parables?
3. Someone says, "Yes, He taught in parables so that his listeners could understand spiritual truths."
4. Well, that's partially true.
5. Jesus did teach in parables so that some could understand, but He also taught in parable so that others could not understand.
6. In other words, He taught in parables in order to hide His wisdom from some.
7. Let me show you what I mean.
8. Turn with me to ***Mat. 13:10***. Jesus had just taught His disciples a parable and they asked Him the following question, "**Why speakest thou unto them in parables**?"

9. Now notice Jesus' answer in ***Mat. 13:11***, "He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, **but to them it is not given**."
10. And so, God does hide His wisdom from those who are of this world.

C. Now this raises a very interesting question.
1. Why would God hide His wisdom from those who are of this world?
2. I believe He does so because **they do not possess the ability to understand and appreciate His wisdom**.
3. Do you remember what Jesus told His disciples in ***Mat. 7:6***? He said, "**Give not that which is holy unto the dogs**, **neither cast ye your pearls before swine**, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you."
4. (Illus.- I read an article once about how some rich people "pamper" their pets. For example, there was this one rich lady who put a diamond studded collar on her poodle dog. I don't remember the exact amount, but the diamonds were worth hundreds of thousands of dollars. Let me ask you a question. Do you think that poodle dog appreciated that diamond studded collar? Of course not. It was a dumb dog, and dogs do not possess the ability to appreciate diamonds.)

D. And so, the wisdom of God is hidden from those who are of this world.
1. This is why the world looks at us like we are crazy.
2. They just don't understand what we are all about.
3. We are, indeed, a mystery to them.

E. Finally, this morning, let us learn that "the wisdom of God" is...

III. Revealed To God's Children Through The Illumination Of The Holy Spirit.

A. While God has hidden His wisdom from those who are of this world, He has not hidden it from His children.
1. Notice again ***Vrs. 10*** of our text, "But **God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit**: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."
2. Notice again the words, "But God hath revealed them **unto us**."
3. The "us," of course, refers to those of us who are saved, those of us who are God's children.

B. Now this raises a question.
1. How does God reveal His wisdom to us?
2. He does so **through the written Word of God**.

3. But someone says, "Wait a minute, preacher. It doesn't say that God reveals His wisdom through the written Word, but rather "by his Spirit."
4. That's true, but let me ask you a question.
5. How did we come by the written Word of God?

6. ***2 Pet. 1:21*** answers this question, it says, "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake **as they were moved by the Holy Ghost**."
7. The Bible also says in ***2 Tim. 3:16***, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God,"
8. And so, the written Word of God is **the product of the Holy Spirit of God** (inspired by the Holy Spirit).
9. How then, does God reveal His wisdom to His children?
10. He does so through His written Word, which was given to us by His Holy Spirit.

C. Now let me point out something very important.
1. If we are to know and understand the wisdom of God, in addition to **the inspiration** of the Holy Spirit, we also need **the illumination** of the Holy Spirit.
2. What is the difference?
3. The **inspiration** of the Holy Spirit is what happened (past tense) when the Holy Spirit inspired the Biblical writers.
4. I**llumination**, on the other hand, is what happens (present tense) when the Holy Spirit helps us to understand our Bibles.
5. Let me say it like this, inspiration is **how we got our Bible**, illumination is **how we understand it**.

D. Why do we need the Holy Spirit's help to understand the Bible?
1. Because He is the author!
2. Look again at ***Vrs. 11*** of our text, "For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so **the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God**."
3. Let me just say it like this - because the Bible is a **spiritual book** (authored by the Holy Spirit), the only way we can understand it is **with the help (through the illumination) of the Holy Spirit**.
4. According to ***John 14:26***, this is one of the many ministries of the Holy Spirit, it says, "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, **he shall teach you all things**,"
5. ***John 16:13*** says it like this, "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, **he will guide you into all truth**: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and **he will shew you things to come**."

E. This is why, every time we pick up our Bibles to read and study God's Word, we should pray for the Holy Spirit's help in understanding it.
1. Listen to how the psalmist prayed in ***Psa. 119:18***, "**Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things** out of thy law."
2. In other words, "Lord, open my spiritual eyes, so that I might see and comprehend the wonderful truths of your Word!"
3. (Illus.- If you know anything about Mormon history, you know the story of how they got the book of Mormon. It seems that a treasure hunter in New York by the name of Joseph Smith mysteriously discovered some golden tablets upon which there were writings of some sort that he could not understood. About the same time there appeared to him an angel by the name of Moroni, who gave him a special

pair of eyeglasses. When He put on the eyeglasses, he was somehow able to comprehend the writing on the golden plates.)

4. The story of how the book of Mormon came about is, of course, ridiculous.
5. However, there is a similarity here between Joseph Smith and believers today.
6. The Holy Scriptures, even when read, mean absolutely nothing whatsoever, unless they are **seen through the eyes of the Holy Spirit**.
7. The apostle Paul put it like this in ***Eph. 1:17-18***, "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him:...**The eyes of your under-standing being enlightened; that ye may know** what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,"
8. You see, when reading God's Word, we need the "eyes of" our "understanding...enlightened."
9. **Only the Holy Spirit** can do this for us.

F. By the way, let me say that **no believer has any advantage** over any other believer, when it comes to understanding the Word of God.

1. (Illus.- I've had Christians come to me and say something like this, "Pastor, I don't know if I can understand the Bible because I don't have a lot of education.")
2. Let me tell you something, **it doesn't take education** to understand the Bible, **it takes the Holy Spirit**, and if you are saved, you have the Holy Spirit. (Amen?)

Conclusion:

A. What have we learned about God's wisdom?

1. It is superior to the wisdom of this world
2. It is hidden from those who are of this world.
3. It is revealed to God's children through the illumination of the Holy Spirit.

B. Do you have the Holy Spirit of God living within you?

1. You do, only if you are saved.
2. If you are saved, do you seek the Holy Spirit's help when reading and trying to comprehend the Scriptures.

"He That Is Spiritual"

Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 2:14-3:4

Introduction:

A. Have you every wondered **why some people commit the horrible crimes that they commit**?
   1. For example, have you ever wondered what possesses a man to kidnap a little girl, perhaps right out of her own bed, and then to rape her, and then to murder her, and then to dump her lifeless body in an isolated patch of woods?
   2. Have you ever wondered what possesses some people to commit such horrible and beastly crimes?

B. Now let me ask you another question.
   1. Have you ever wondered **why some professing Christians seem to have more in common with the unsaved world than they do with God's people**?
   2. Why they think like the world, act like the world, talk like the world, dress like the world, and entertain themselves like the world?
   3. Why they don't read their Bibles, why they don't pray, why they don't attend church, why they don't tithe, why they don't try to win souls?
   4. Have you ever wondered why some professing Christians seem to have more in common with the unsaved world than they do with God's people?

C. Now let me ask you a third question.
   1. Have you ever wondered **why some Christians seem to be outstanding Christians**?
   2. Why they are extremely "Christlike" in the way they think, they way they act, the way they talk, the way they dress, the way they entertain themselves?
   3. Why they read their Bibles and pray every day, why they attend church every Sunday, why they faithfully tithe of their income, no matter what, why they try to win souls on a regular basis?
   4. Have you ever wondered why some Christians seem to be really outstanding Christians?

D. I'm sure we've all wondered about these things from time to time, but did you realize that **we don't have to wonder** about these things?
   1. Why not?
   2. Because the Bible gives us the answer to all three of these questions, why...
      -some people commit horrible and beastly crimes,
      -some Christians are so worldly in the way they live,
      -other Christians are so Christlike in the way they live.
   3. The Bible gives us the answer to all three of these question, and it has to do with what I call "the three states of man."

E. What are "the three states of man"? Well, first of all, according to God's Word, there is...

I. The Natural Man.

A. Look again at ***1 Cor. 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."

B. What is "**the natural man**"?

1. The word "natural" here is translated from a Greek word (psuchikos) that literally means, "**lower or sensual or beastly**."
2. The natural man, then, is the...
   -lower man,
   -sensual man,
   -beastly man.
3. In other words, it is **man totally separated from God**.
4. (Illus.- I can illustrate it like this. If you buy a product in the grocery store and the package says "totally natural," you take that to mean it contains absolutely no additives. Have you ever picked up a can at the grocery store and read list of ingredients? You think you are buying a can of beans, but you are actually buying beans as well as a whole host of additives.)
5. The natural man, therefore, is **man in a totally natural state**, **just the way he was born**, **without any spiritual additives** whatsoever.
6. (Illus.- Let me use another example. If you hear women talking about "the natural look," what they mean is no artificial improvements. No makeup. No fake eyelashes. No hair pieces. No artificial fingernails. No artificial improvements whatsoever, just a natural look.)
7. (Illus.- Reminds me of the guy who married a very beautiful woman. On their wedding night, he watched his new bride take off her wig and put it in the top dresser drawer. He then watched her take off her false eyelashes and put them in the top dresser drawer. He then watched her take out her false teeth and put them in the top dresser drawer. He then watched her pop out her glass eye and put it in the top dresser drawer. He then watched her unscrew her wooden leg and put it in the top dresser drawer. After she had done all of this and crawled into bed, he just stood there with a blank look on his face. She asked him, "What's wrong, honey?" He replied, "I'm just trying to decide whether to sleep in the bed, or in the top dresser drawer!")
8. What I am saying, is, the natural man is man in a totally natural state, just the way he was born, without any spiritual additives or improvements whatsoever.

C. There are three things that I want you to notice about the natural man.

1. First of all, the natural man is **spiritually dead**.
2. The Bible says in ***Eph. 2:1***, "And you hath he quickened, **who were dead** in trespasses and sins;"
3. Paul said it like this in ***Eph. 4:18***, "Having the understanding darkened, being **alienated from the life of God**."
4. And so, the natural man is spiritually dead.

5. There is a very interesting passage in ***Mat. 8:21-22***.
6. It seems that Jesus had issued a call to His disciples to follow Him.
7. One of His disciples, in response to this call, said, " Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father." ***(Mat. 8:21)***
8. Do you remember what Jesus said to this disciple?
9. He said, "Follow me; and **let the dead** bury their dead." ***(Mat. 8:22)***
10. Now this raises a very interesting question, "How can the dead bury the dead? How can a dead man pick up a shovel and dig a grave?"
11. Jesus, of course, was talking about **those who are spiritually dead** (void of any spiritual life whatsoever).
12. And so, first of all, the natural man is spiritually dead.

D. Not only is the natural man spiritually dead, he is also **totally depraved**.
1. In other words, there is absolutely no goodness in him.
2. (Illus.- Every now and then you will hear someone say, "There is a little goodness in every man, you just have to look for it." That is a nice saying, but it is not true.)
3. The natural man is totally depraved.
4. Listen to ***Rom. 3:10-18***, "As it is written, There is **none righteous, no, not one**: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are **all gone out of the** way, they are together become unprofitable; there is **none that doeth good, no, not one**. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is **no fear of God before their eyes**."
5. And so, the natural man is totally depraved.
6. This explains why some people commit hideous crimes.
7. They are totally depraved.
8. They possess only a....
   -lower nature,
   -sensual nature,
   -beastly nature.
9. In many ways, they are like animals.
10. That is "the natural man."

E. Notice one more thing about the natural man.
1. Not only is he spiritually dead.
2. Not only is he totally depraved.
3. He is also destined to suffer the wrath of God.
4. I read ***Eph. 2:1*** a moment ago, now let me read the following two verses, "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:...Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and **were by nature the children of wrath**, even as others." ***(Eph. 2:2-3)***

5. Notice again that last phrase in ***Vrs. 3***, it says that we "were by nature the **children of wrath**, even as others."
6. In other words, we were destined to suffer the wrath of God.

F. You've probably guessed by now that when we talk about "the natural man," we are talking about man **before salvation**.
1. We are talking about man before he is saved, before he is born again, before he is indwelt by the Holy Spirit.
2. That is "the natural man."

G. Secondly, according to the Word of God, there is also...

II. The Carnal Man.

A. What is the "carnal" man?
1. Well, let me say, first of all, that the carnal man is saved.
2. Not only is he saved, but he has the Holy Spirit of God living within him
3. Yet even though he is saved, even though he has the Holy Spirit of God living within him, **he still lives his life like an unsaved person**.
4. When you look at a carnal Christian, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to tell the difference between him and the unsaved world.

B. Look again at **1 Cor. 3:1**, "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto **carnal**,"
1. The word translated "carnal" here is a Greek word that literally means "**pertaining to the flesh**."
2. In other words, "fleshly."
3. You have to understand that when God saved us and gave us a new spiritual nature, He did not remove the old fleshly nature.
4. We still have that nature abiding within us.
5. This is why we still struggle with sin.
6. This is why we still have sinful thoughts and desires.
7. This is why we still give in to sin from time to time.
8. We still have a sinful (fleshly) nature.
9. Paul spoke of this struggle between our new nature and our old nature in ***Gal. 5:17***, where he said, "For **the flesh lusteth against the Spirit**, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other:"

C. What is a carnal Christian?
1. He is a Christian who, even though he is saved and possesses a new nature, still allows the old fleshly (carnal) nature control his thoughts and actions.
2. A good Old Testament example of a carnal Christian is Lot.
3. If you had gone to Sodom just before God destroyed the city and met Lot, you **probably would not have been able to tell that he was a child of God**.
4. Why not?
5. Because he had become **a Sodomite** himself.
6. He had become **acclimated to their culture** and their way of life.

7. Rather than influencing them for God, he had **allowed them to influence him** to the point that he was no different from them (just like them).
8. However, the Bible tells us that Lot was a child of God.
9. Listen to 2 Pet. 2:7, it says that God "...delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked."
10. How do you explain the fact that Lot was saved, yet his life was no different than the Sodomites with whom he lived?
11. Only one explanation: Lot was a carnal Christian.

D. This is how you explain the fact that many professing Christians today **have more in common with the unsaved world** than they do with God's people.
1. This is how you explain the fact that they think like the world, act like the world, talk like the world, dress like the world, and entertain themselves like the world.
2. This is how you explain the fact that they don't read their Bibles, they don't pray, they don't attend church, they don't tithe, why they don't try to win souls.
3. They are **carnal Christians**.
4. Even though they are saved and possess a new spiritual nature, **they still allow their old fleshly (carnal) nature to control their lives**.

E. Let me tell you something else about carnal Christians.
1. They are almost always baby Christians.
2. In other words, they have experienced little or no spiritual growth since they trusted Christ as Savior.
3. Look again at ***1 Cor. 3:1-2***, "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto **babes in Christ**.... 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."
4. Now let me stop here and say there is **nothing wrong with being a baby Christian if you just got saved**.
5. In fact, if you are new to the family of God, you can't be anything but a baby Christian.
6. However, there is something wrong with a Christian who has been saved for a long time, yet has not grown spiritually. (That is a problem!)
7. You know, **babies are cute**, aren't they?
8. But **"grey headed babies"** are not cute!

F. Someone asks, "Are carnal Christians destined to suffer the wrath of God, like the natural man?"
1. The answer is, "No."
2. Remember what I said, the carnal man is saved, and so heaven will one day be his home.
3. But I will tell you what he is destined to suffer.
4. He is destined to **suffer shame and humiliation at the judgment seat of Christ**.
5. And so, there is the carnal man.

G. May I say, finally, that according to the Word of God, there is...

III. The Spiritual Man.

A. Notice again ***1 Cor. 2:14-15***, "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....But **he that is spiritual** judgeth all things,"

B. What is the **"spiritual"** man?
1. The "spiritual" man is like the "carnal" man in that **he is saved and has the Holy Spirit** dwelling within him.
2. However, **that's were the similarity ends**.
3. There is a **big difference** between the "spiritual" Christian and the "carnal" Christian.
4. For example, the spiritual Christian is **a Christian who has experienced substantial spiritual growth** in his life.
5. He is no longer a babe in Christ, but instead is an adult.
6. He no longer feeds on the milk of God's Word, but has gone on to solid meat.
7. The Bible admonishes us in ***2 Pet. 3:18***, "But **grow in grace**, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."
8. A "spiritual" Christian has done that.

C. There is another difference between the "spiritual" Christian and the "carnal" Christian.
1. The "spiritual" Christian is **a Christian who submits to the power and leadership of the Holy Spirit in his life, and allows his new nature to control him**.
2. In other words, he **walks** "**in the Spirit**," and **not** in "the flesh." ***(Gal. 5:16)***
3. This is how you explain the fact that some Christians seem to be outstanding Christians.
4. This is how you explain the fact that some Christians are extremely "Christlike" in the way they think, the way they way they act, the way they talk, the way they dress, and the way they entertain themselves.
5. This is how you explain the fact that some Christians read their Bibles and pray every day, attend church every Sunday, faithfully tithe of their income, no matter what, and try to win souls on a regular basis.
6. They are spiritual Christians (or perhaps we could say **"Spirit filled"** Christians).

D. Perhaps the biggest difference between "carnal" Christians and "spiritual" Christians will be seen at the coming Judgment Seat of Christ.
1. Whereas "carnal" Christians will be humiliated at the Judgment Seat, "spiritual" Christians will hear their Master say, "**Well done**, thou **good and faithful** servant:" ***(Mat. 25:21)***
2. If you live for Jesus today, you won't regret it when you stand before Him at His Judgment Seat.

Conclusion:

A. The three states of man.
   1. The natural man (unsaved, apart from God).
   2. The carnal man (saved, but lives in the flesh).
   3. The spiritual man (saved & spirit filled).
   4. Every one of us here this morning can be put in one of these three categories.
   5. Where do you belong?

"Babes In Christ"

Scripture Text: ***1 Corinthians 3:1-4***

Introduction

A. Don't you just love watching babies acting like babies?
   1. (Illus.- Don't you just love watching them playing peek-a-boo.? Don't you just love watching them smearing food all over their faces when they eat? Don't you just love watching them wobbling along as they take their first steps?)
   2. Let's face it, **it's cute when babies act like babies**.

B. But let me tell you what is not cute.
   1. It's **not cute when adults act like babies**.
   2. Have you ever seen adults act like babies?
   3. It's a pitiful sight, isn't it?
   4. (Illus.- I've seen adults get in automobiles and act like babies. I've seen adults act like babies at sporting events. I've seen adults act like babies at checkout counters in grocery stores. Not too long ago, I was in line at a checkout counter in Wal Mart. I don't know if the young lady who was checking was new or what the problem was, but she was very slow. While I stood in line, the man behind me became extremely impatient and began making very rude comments that I'm sure the young lady could hear. I couldn't help but think to myself, "How childish.")
   5. So, it's not at all cute when adults act like babies.

C. But do you know what is even worse than that?
   1. When Christians who ought to know better, and who ought to be more mature spiritually, act like spiritual babies, that's even more pathetic.
   2. Look again at ***Vrs. 1-3*** of our text, you can hear the **disappointment** in Paul's voice as he addressed the Corinthian believers, "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, **but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ**...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...For **ye are yet carnal**:"
   3. In other words, he said, "Because of your spiritual immaturity, you force me to...
      -**speak to you**, and
      -**treat you**, and
      -**feed you** like the spiritual babies that you are."

D. The church at Corinth did not have a monopoly when it comes to spiritual immaturity.
   1. You find spiritually immature believers in every church.
   2. "How can I know if I am spiritually immature?" someone asks.
   3. Well, there are at least three identifying marks.
   4. First of all, a spiritually immature believer will be...

I. More Concerned With Self Than With Service.

A. In other words, spiritually immature believers are extremely selfish, when it comes to their time, their talents and their treasures.
   1. For example, it is very difficult to get them to commit their time to a specific ministry within the church.
   2. It's not that they don't have the time, because often times they do, but the problem is that they are selfish with their time.
   3. They want to reserve (hang on to) what time they do have for their own selfish pursuits.
   4. (Illus.- From time to time I will stand in this pulpit and ask for volunteers to work in this ministry or that ministry. While I thank God for those who do come forward, I am always disappointed that more do not answer the call to service. What's the problem? Well, one of the problems is that some people are just selfish with their time.)

B. Let me give you another example.
   1. A lot of believers, some even in our own church family, absolutely refuse to tithe of their income in order to help fund the various ministries of the church.
   2. What's the problem?
   3. The problem is not that they can't afford to tithe, everyone can afford to tithe, but the problem is that they are selfish with their money.
   4. They want to reserve (hang on to) what money they do have so that they can fulfill their own selfish desires.
   5. (Illus.- It is interesting how that some Christians who claim that they cannot afford to tithe live in really nice homes, drive new cars, and buy really expensive toys for their own personal enjoyment. What's the problem, then? The problem is selfishness, which is a byproduct of spiritual immaturity.)

C. The same thing is true when it comes to our talents.
   1. The point I'm trying to make is this.
   2. Believers who are spiritually immature are, for the most part, extremely self-centered.
   3. They are like the people whom Paul described in ***Phil. 2:21***, when he wrote, "For all **seek their own**, not the things which are Jesus Christ's."
   4. They are far more concerned with self than they are with God's service.
   5. That's why it is almost impossible to get them to commit their time to a ministry or to tithe of their income in order to support the church's ministries.
   6. And so, first of all, a spiritually immature believer will be more concerned with self than with service.

D. May I say, also, that a spiritually immature believer will be...

II. More Inclined To <u>Argument</u> Than To <u>Action</u>.

A. Look again at ***Vrs. 3*** of our text, "For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you **envying, and strife, and divisions**, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?"

B. (Illus.- Do you remember the old Lucky Strike commercials, where the guy said, "I would rather fight than switch."?)

1. Well, it can be said of many believers who are spiritually immature, they would rather fight than...
   -get along,
   -work together,
   -actually get something accomplished for the Lord!
2. If there is not a good fight going on within the church over something, you can be sure that they are doing their best to get something stirred up.
3. That's really all they are interested in?
4. They are certainly not interested in doing anything for the Lord.
5. How do I know that?
6. I know that because if you announce that there is going to be a prayer meeting, don't look for them because they won't be there.
7. If you announce that there's going to be a work day at the church, don't look for them because they won't be there.
8. If you announce that you are going to take a group soul winning, don't look for them because they won't be there.
9. But if you announce that there is going to be a business meeting for the purpose of resolving some dispute, they will be there with bells on!

C. This was certainly the situation in the church at Corinth.

1. How bad was it?
2. It was so bad, that according to ***1 Cor 6:1-6***, they were actually taking each other to civil court.
3. Listen as I read ***Vrs. 1,6***, "Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?...But **brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers**."
4. (Illus.- You know, this is not unheard of today. I've heard of more than one church that got into a big fuss, not over doctrine but over something stupid, that resulted in a church split, then the two opposing sides organized and took each other to court to fight over who got custody of the property and building. That's pathetic. It's more than pathetic, it's childish!!!)
5. But that's what you can expect from those who are spiritually immature.
6. They are more inclined to argument than to action.

D. Why is this so undesirable?

1. Two reasons.
2. First of all, it is a **very poor testimony** when God's people can't get along with each other.
3. (Illus.- Some churches have gotten such a bad reputation in their community because of all their infighting that they never will recover from it. This is so sad.)
4. But there's another reason why this is undesirable.
5. It's undesirable because as long as we are squabbling and fighting with one another, you can be sure that very little, if anything, is getting done for the Lord!

6. That's why the devil does everything within his power to keep things stirred up in a church.
7. He knows that **as long as we are arguing, there will be very little action** for the Lord.
8. And so, secondly, a spiritually immature believer will be more inclined to argument than to action.

E. Finally, a spiritually immature believer will be...

III. More Captivated By <u>People</u> Than By The <u>Potentate</u>.

A. Of course, the Potentate I have in mind this morning is **the Potentate of all potentates**, the King of all kings and the Lord of all lords, our Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

B. Look again at ***Vrs. 4*** of our text, "For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?"
1. We've already seen how there was a lot of infighting in the church at Corinth, but what were they fighting about?
2. Well, among other things, they were fighting about **who was the best preacher**.
3. Some were saying, "Well, I think Paul is the best preacher. I like his style. I like his delivery. I like his personality. I think that he is the best all round preacher."
4. But others were saying, "I like Apollos and I think that he is the best preacher. He has a more fiery sermon delivery than Paul, as well as a more likable personality. I think Apollos is the best all round preacher."
5. It is clear to see from the discussion that was going on that most of the Corinthian believers, rather than being focused on the Potentate (Christ), were focused on people.

C. The same situation exists in most churches today.
1. You have believers who are more focused on people or personalities than on Christ.
2. How do I know that?
3. (Illus.- Well, let me give you an example. There have been many times over the years that people in this church have gotten upset with me. By the way, let me stop here and say that there is nothing wrong or immature about getting upset with the pastor. There have been times when I have said and done things that would have made me upset if someone else had said or done them. So there was nothing necessarily wrong or immature about that. What was wrong and what was immature, however, is the fact that when they got upset with me, they resigned their position of ministry within the church.)
4. Why was that both wrong and immature?
5. Because it demonstrated clearly that **their focus was on me and not on the Lord**.

D. Let me ask you a question, those of you who are involved in a ministry in this church.
1. Who are you working for?
2. Are you working for me? (I certainly hope not!)
3. Those of you who are S.S. teachers, are you working for Bro.Voges? (I hope not.)

4. Those of you who are youth leaders, are you working for Pastor Cawley? (I hope not.)
5. Who are you working for???
6. Well, let me say, **you ought to be working for the Lord**!
7. Listen to what Paul wrote in ***Col. 3:22-23***, "Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God:..And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, **as to the Lord, and not unto men**;"

E. Let me give you another example.
1. If I were to announce that Bro. David Butts was going to be with us this evening and be preaching, most of you would make it a point to be here! (Amen?)
2. But because Bro. Butts is not going to be here this evening, some of you who would definitely come to hear David Butts, will stay home instead.
3. But someone says, "Pastor, that's not fair. Bro. Butts is special."
4. Well, let me ask you a question, "Is it not true that even though David Butts is not going to be here this evening, our Lord Jesus will be?"
5. Didn't Jesus promise us in ***Mat. 18:20***, "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, **there am I in the midst of them**."???
6. Now one more question, "You say that Bro. Butts is special, but who's more special, Bro. Butts or Jesus."

F. And so, a spiritually immature believer will be more engrossed in people than in the Potentate.

Conclusion

A. Are you spiritually immature?
1. Are you more concerned with **self** than with **service**?
2. Are you more inclined to **argument** than to **action**?
3. Are you more engrossed in **people** than in the **Potentate**?
4. If you will answer these questions honestly, it will tell you a lot about your spiritual maturity, or lack thereof.

B. What can you do to become more mature (to grow)?
1. Be faithful to **read God's Word and pray** every day.
2. Be faithful to **attend church**, even when Bro. Butts is not doing the preaching.
3. Take advantage of our **discipleship ministry training**.
4. **Get involved in ministry** yourself. (A good way to grow is by doing.)

"Labourers Together With God"

Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 3:5-9

Introduction:

A. As you know, there are many different kinds of partnerships.
   1. For example, there is the **marriage partnership**.
   2. Of all the different kinds of human relationships, marriage comes closer to being a true partnership than any other. (Amen?)
   3. And so, there is the marriage partnership.
   4. There is also the **business partnership**, where two or more people are co-owners of the same business.
   5. In addition to marriage partners and business partners, there are also...
      -dance partners,
      -domestic partners (partners in sin),
      -partners in crime (Bonnie & Clyde).
   6. The point is, there are many different kinds of partnerships.

B. But of all the different kinds of partnerships that exist, the absolute greatest and the most privileged partnership is **the partnership that we enjoy with our God** as we do His work.
   1. Look again at the first part of ***Vrs. 9*** of our text, "For we are **labourers together with God**:"
   2. The key word here is the word "together," which implies a partnership with our God.
   3. As you know, we just completed an in depth study of the Gospel of Mark.
   4. Do you remember the last verse in that Gospel?
   5. It was right after Jesus had given His church the great commission.
   6. Listen again to the last verse of Mark's Gospel, "And they went forth, and preached every where, **the Lord working with them**," ***(Mark 16:20)***

C. Now as we examine our text more closely, we will learn at least three things about this partnership that exists between us and our God. First of all, we will learn that it is a...

I. Working Partnership.

A. (Illus.- a man by the name of Andrew Fuller once said, "The Scriptures give four names to Christians." He went on to say, "We are called saints, for our holiness; believers, for our faith; brethren, for our love; and disciples, for our knowledge." While I won't argue with what Mr. Fuller said, I do believe that he left out at least one name. **Christians are also called servants, for our labor**.)

B. Notice again the word "**labourers**" in our text.
   1. It says that we are "**labourers** together with God." ***(Vrs. 9)***
   2. Do you know what that word means?

3. It means "**workers**."
4. In fact, the word "**workers**" is used in ***2 Cor. 6:1***, which says, "We then, as **workers** together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain."

C. Let me tell you something about the Lord's work, in case you don't already know, **it is work**!
1. Maybe it's not the kind of work that you do on your 8 to 5 job during the week, but it is work, none the less,
2. (Illus.- Take our AWANA ministry, for example. If you are currently involved in our AWANA ministry, you know that what I am about to say is true. There's a lot of work involved in keeping our AWANA ministry going, In addition to all the planning that has to be done, there is a lot of preparation that has to be done, especially when it comes to special events. Supplies have to be purchased. Tables and chairs have to be set up. Decorations have to be displayed. Refreshments have to be prepared. Then when the event is over, you have the take down and clean up that follows. I've watched our AWANA leaders do all of these things, and more.)

D. Now not every ministry is as demanding as our AWANA ministry, however, **every ministry** involves some degree of work.
1. This is why we refer to it as **"the Lord's work."**
2. This is why the Bible uses the words **"labourers"** and **"workers"** to describe Christians.
3. This is why God has promised to **reward** those who **labor faithfully** for him.
4. In fact, the Bible says in ***1 Tim. 5:18***, "**The labourer** is worthy of his reward."
5. You know, I honestly believe this is why some believers refuse to get involved in ministry (or at least part of the reason), it's a lot of work!

E. And so, this partnership that we have with our God is a working partnership (there's no place for laziness in this partnership).

F. We can also learn from our text that this partnership is a...

II. Cooperative Partnership.

A. If there is any one thing that I have learned since I got saved and got involved in the Lord's work, it is the fact that the Lord's work is too big, too involved, too extensive for any one person.
1. This is why we must work together.
2. This is why...
   -believers within a ministry must work together.
   -ministries within a local church must work together.
   -churches of like faith and practice must work together.
3. God's work is so big that it requires a cooperative effort on the part of God's people everywhere.

B. Notice again the word "together" in ***Vrs. 9*** of our text, "For we are labourers **together** with God:"

1. It doesn't say that we are "labourers **alone** with God," but rather, "labourers **together** with God;"
2. Listen, there is no place for loners in God's work! (We are in this together.)
3. (Illus.- A good example of this is our men's soul winning ministry. I thank God for the faithful men who are involved in this ministry. Some go out on Tuesday evening. Others go out on Thursday evening. Still others go out on Friday mornings, and sometime Saturday morning. But the point is, we have a faithful group of men who are working together every week to take the gospel to our community. It is definitely **a cooperative effort** on their part.)

C. You know, I'm convinced that this is one of the reasons that **ministries sometimes flounder**.

1. It is because you have **a few people**, sometimes only one or two, who are trying to shoulder the load and do all the work themselves.
2. Even if they are very committed to the ministry, it is very easy to get discouraged when you **feel all alone**.
3. Do you remember what happened to Elijah when Jezebel put out a contract on him and he had to flee for his life?
4. The Bible says that he hid himself in a cave and threw himself a little pity party.
5. Listen to what he told the Lord on that occasion, "I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: because the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and **I, even I only, am left**; and they seek my life, to take it away." ***(1 Kings 19:14)***
6. Elijah felt all alone, and because he did, he became really discouraged.

D. And it's not just the numbers factor, either.

1. You can have a lot of people working in a ministry, but **if they are not working together, each one doing their part,** you are still going to have problems.
2. Listen, if you are involved in a ministry, **know** what your responsibilities are, and **faithfully fulfill** those res- ponsibilities to the best of your ability.
3. If you don't do your part, two things will happen.
4. First of all, the ministry will become crippled and ineffective.
5. Secondly, those who are trying to do **their job and yours** will likely become **discouraged** and quit themselves.
6. (Illus.- I'm sure we've all heard the term "burnout." I believe there is such a thing as "ministry burnout," and it usually happens when one person tries to carry the entire load of a demanding ministry all by themselves. They can only do that for a while before the literally burn themselves out.)

E. And so, this partnership is not only a working partnership, it is also a cooperative partnership.

F. Finally, we learn from our text that this partnership is a...

III. Dependent Partnership.

A. Notice again ***Vrs. 9*** of our text, "For we are labourers together **with God**;"
1. The phrase "with God" here is so very important.
2. You see, without God, without His blessings, without His hand being upon everything that we do for Him, **we are destined for failure**! (Amen?)
3. We can do everything that we are supposed to do, we can...
-work,
-work diligently,
-work cooperatively,
yet **if God doesn't bless what we do**, then we are just wasting our time!

B. This is why our Lord admonished us in ***John 15*** to "**abide**" in Him.
1. Listen to what Jesus told His disciples in **Vrs. 4-5**, "**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**....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**."
2. Jesus was very clear.
3. Notice that He did not say, "...without me ye can do **little**," but rather, "...without me ye can do **nothing**."

C. This is why we should **pray and ask God to bless** whatever we do for Him.
1. Let's not forget that even though we play a role in what God is doing in the world today, **it is He (God) that gives the increase**!
2. Look again at ***Vrs. 5-7*** of our text, "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?...I have planted, Apollos watered; but **God gave the increase**....So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but **God that giveth the increase**."
3. Twice in this passage Paul said that even though we may plant the seed, and we may water the seed, it is God who gives the increase (**causes the seed to sprout and grow and produce a crop**).
4. (Illus.- I tell the men in our soul winning ministry that **our only responsibility is to share the gospel** as simply and plainly as we can, then we must put it in God's hands and **pray that He will give the increase**.)
5. If you will stop and think about it, realizing this takes a tremendous burden off of our shoulders. (Amen?)

D. (Illus.- Let me give you another illustration. I've learned over the years that the most important thing I can do in order to be sure that my sermons will be effective, is to bathe them in prayer. Now don't misunderstand what I am saying. I realize how important it is that I study, and that I prepare, and that I do everything humanly possible to preach a good sermon. However, I also realize that I can do all of that, and if God doesn't bless, my sermons will not help or bless anyone.)
1. This is true, no matter what we are attempting to accomplish for the Lord.

2. We love to quote the first part of Phil. 4:13, which says, "I can do all things," however, we sometimes forget that there is a second part to this verse, which says, "...through Christ which strengtheneth me."
3. Yes, we can everything that we are supposed to do, we can...
   -work,
   -work diligently,
   -work cooperatively,
   yet if God doesn't bless our efforts, we will fail!
4. This is what I mean when I say that our partnership with the Lord is a dependent partnership.
5. We are totally dependent on God to bless, if our work for the Lord is to be effective.

Conclusion:

A. What have we learned about our partnership with God?
   1. It is a working partnership (hard work).
   2. It is a cooperative partnership (we need each other).
   3. It is a dependent partnership (we need God to bless).

B. Let me ask you a few questions.
   1. Are you involved in ministry?
   2. If not, could one of the reasons be that you realize that ministry can be a lot of work?
   3. Let me remind you that while ministry can, indeed, be a lot of hard work, it can also be extremely rewarding, not only now, but also when you stand at the Judgement Seat of Christ.
   4. Notice again the latter part of ***Vrs. 8*** of our text, "... and **every man shall receive his own reward** according to his own labour."

C. For those of you who are involved in ministry, are you pulling your weight?
   1. Are you giving your best?
   2. Are you doing your job and cooperating cheerfully with others who are involved in the same ministry?
   3. Don't forget that if you are not pulling your weight, you will cripple the ministry, as well as discourage your co-laborers.

D. Also for those of you who are involved in ministry, are you depending on the Lord for the increase?
   1. Are you asking God on a daily basis to bless your ministry efforts?
   2. Don't forget that God is the One Who gives the increase!

"Revealed By Fire"

Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 3:10-15

Introduction:

A. In the third chapter of ***1 Corinthians***, Paul uses at least two analogies (illustrations) to describe what a New Testament church is all about.
   1. As we noticed last Sunday, the first analogy that he uses is that of **a field**.
   2. He said that we, as believers, as members of a New Testament church, are like **labourers working in a field**.
   3. Some of us **plant**, others **water**, but God **gives the increase**.
   4. It is a partnership.
   5. First of all, it is a **working** partnership (labor involved).
   6. Secondly, it is a **cooperative** partnership (we work [cooperate] together).
   7. Finally, it is a **dependent** relationship (we depend upon God to give the increase).
   8. And so, the first analogy that Paul uses is that of a field.
   9. Notice again ***1 Cor. 3:9***, "For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's **husbandry**,"

B. The second analogy that Paul uses to describe what a New Testament Church is all about is that of **a building**.
   1. Notice again ***1 Cor. 3:9***, "For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's **building**."
   2. He goes on to tell us that we, as believers, as members of a New Testament church, are like **builders constructing a building**.
   3. Of course, the building that Paul has in mind here is not the kind of building in which we are meeting this morning.
   4. (Illus.- We are in the process now of building a new sanctuary for our church. The walls are up, the roof is on, the windows and doors are in, the brick is laid, the soffit work is in the process of being completed, but this building behind us here is not the kind of building that Paul has in mind.)
   5. Paul is referring to a **spiritual building**.
   6. He used this same analogy in ***Eph. 2:19-21***, "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;...And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;...In whom all **the building** fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord."

C. Now as we examine Paul's analogy more closely, there are at three things that we should learn. First of all, we should learn...

I. The Importance Of Building Our Church On The Right Foundation.

A. No matter what kind of building you are talking about, the foundation is the **most important part of the building**.
   1. Why is this true?
   2. It's true because the foundation is that upon which the entire building rests. (Amen?)
   3. If the foundation crumbles, then the entire building will come tumbling down.
   4. (Illus.- Have you ever looked at the brickwork of a house and noticed places where the bricks had separated, causing noticeable cracks in the wall? When you see that, it doesn't mean that the bricklayer did a poor job, but rather there is a problem with the foundation.)
   5. (Illus.- Have you ever looked at the walls in a house and noticed places where the sheet rock was cracked? When you see that, it doesn't mean that the sheet rock finisher did a poor job, but rather there is a problem with the foundation of the house.)
   6. There's no doubt about it, the foundation is the most important part of a any building.

B. Now what is the right foundation for a New Testament church (upon what foundation should we be building our church today)?
   1. There is only one right foundation for the church, and that is our Lord Jesus Christ! (Amen?)
   2. Look again at ***Vrs. 10-11*** of our text, "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....For **other foundation can no man lay** than that is laid, which is **Jesus Christ**."

C. This should remind us of what Jesus told His church in ***Mat. 16:18***.
   1. Jesus had asked them the question, "Whom do **men** say that I the Son of man am?" ***(Mat. 16:13)***
   2. They answered Him, "Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets." ***(Mat. 16:14)***
   3. Jesus then asked them this question, "But whom say **ye** that I am?" ***(Mat. 16:15)***
   4. Peter spoke up and said, "Thou art **the Christ, the Son of the living God**." ***(Mat. 16:16)***
   5. It was then that Jesus spoke these words, recorded in ***Mat. 16:18***, He said, "That thou art Peter, and **upon this rock I will build my church**; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."
   6. Jesus said, "...upon **this rock I will build my church**."
   7. Of course, Jesus was not referring to Peter, as our Catholic friends erroneously believe.
   8. While Peter's name did mean "stone," Peter was a just a little stone in God's plan.
   9. The rock to which Jesus referred to was **none other than Himself**.
   10. And so, the **only right foundation** for the church is the **Lord Jesus Christ** Himself. (Amen?)

D. You know, people try to build churches on a lot of different things.
   1. For example, some try to build a church on **the personality of the pastor**.
   2. This is especially a problem in those cases where the pastor happens to have what we would refer to as **a "charismatic" personality**.
   3. But there are at least two problems that you encounter when you build a church on the personality of the pastor.
   4. The first problem is, **only people who happen to like the pastor's personality** will be drawn to the church.
   5. Jesus said in ***John 12:32***, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will **draw all men** unto me."
   6. However, if a church is being built on the personality of the pastor, the only people who will be drawn are those who happen to like the pastor's personality.
   7. There is another problem.
   8. If a church is built on the personality of the pastor, if anything ever happens to the pastor, the church will fall apart.
   9. (Illus.- Over the years, I have been aware of several churches that were built on the personality of the pastor, but when that pastor, for whatever reason, was **no longer in the picture**, the church began to **crumble away**. Why? The church had a faulty foundation.)

E. Other people try to build a church on **special promotions**.
   1. Now please don't misunderstand what I am about to say, because there is nothing wrong with having special promotions within the church, as long as they do not become the main focus of the church.
   2. We have had our share of special promotions here at FBC over the years, and that's okay, as long as they do not become that upon which we are depending to bring people into the church.
   3. "What's wrong with using special promotions to bring people into the church?" someone asks.
   4. The problem with doing that is that you will have to continue having special promotions in order to keep them in the church.
   5. (Illus.- I have heard of churches that have some kind of a special promotion going on almost every Sunday. Almost every Sunday is a "big day." Almost every Sunday something "special" is going on. Almost every Sunday there is a special emphasis, or a special speaker, or a special singer, or a special something or other.)
   6. Now again, there is certainly nothing wrong with having special promotions from time to time, but it is unwise to depend on these promotions to bring people into the church.

F. Someone says, "Wait a minute, pastor. If we do not have a charismatic pastor or a special promotion of some sort, how are we going to draw people into our church?
   1. What's wrong with Bible teaching?
   2. What's wrong with Bible preaching?
   3. Let me tell you something, folks, I may not have a charismatic personality, but every Sunday is a "big day" here at FBC!

4. Know why? Because every Sunday God's Word is taught and every Sunday God's word is preached, and every Sunday God's Word is practiced as we demonstrate the love of Jesus to every soul who walks through our doors.

G. And so, first of all, we should learn the importance of building our church on the right foundation.

H. We should also learn...

II. The Importance Of Using The Right Materials When Building Our Church.

A. Not only is it important that we build our church on the right foundation (Jesus Christ), but it is also important that we use the right materials.

B. Notice again ***Vrs. 10*** of our text, "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**."

C. (Illus.- Let me illustrate. We are in the process of building a new sanctuary. Of course, it cost a lot of money to build a building because building materials are very expensive. Now there is a way that we could save money. We could use cheap materials. We could use 2X4s rather than 2X6s. We could use 8 penny nails rather than 16 penny nails. We could use 3/8 inch sheet rock rather than 5/8 inch sheet rock. We could use cheaper materials and cut a lot of corners and save a substantial amount of money, but is that what we really want to do? Of course not, and the reason being, we want to build something that will still be standing 50 years from now. Amen?)
   1. Well, the same thing is true when it comes to building a church.
   2. If we want our church to last, if we want our church to be here 50 years from now doing business for the Lord, it is very important that we use **materials that will stand the test of time**.

D. Notice again ***Vrs. 12*** of our text, "Now if any man build upon this foundation **gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble**;"
   1. There are two things that I want you to notice about these building materials.
   2. First of all, notice that they can naturally be divided into **two different groups**.
   3. The **first** group would consist of the "gold, silver," and "precious stones."
   4. The **second** group would consist of the "wood, hay," and "stubble." (The word "stubble" here refers to "straw.")
   5. Secondly, notice that these two groups are inherently different.
   6. For example, the first group (gold, silver, precious stones) represents that which is both **precious and permanent**, while the second group (wood, hay, stubble) represents that which is both **common and temporary**.
   7. (Illus.- Let me illustrate. Suppose you had a warehouse full of all six of these materials, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, and stubble. And suppose your

warehouse were to catch on fire and burn to the ground. Which of these material would survive the fire? The first group, of course, the gold, silver and precious stones would be unphased by the fire.)

E. Now what should we learn from this?
1. We should learn that when building **our church**, and also when building **our individual lives**, we should place the emphasis on that which is **permanent (eternal)** in nature.
2. In other words, we should place the emphasis on that which is of a **spiritual nature**.
3. Paul put it like this in ***Col. 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**."

F. So many churches today are being built by bringing the world into the church.
1. They are using worldly music, worldly entertainment, and worldly incentives to bring the people in, and you have to admit, they are growing by leaps and bounds.
2. But you have to ask yourself the question, "What are they building?"
3. Listen, if you use the "wood, hay" and "stubble" of this world to build a church, you are not building something that will last (something that will stand the test of time and eternity), but you are building something that, one day, will pass away (come to nought)!
4. Isn't that what the Bible says in ***1 John 2:15-17***, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world...For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world....And **the world passeth away**, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."
5. Notice again the words, "And the world passeth away."
6. Not only will the world pass away (come to nought), but everything that is built with the "wood, hay" and "stubble" of this world, including churches, will pass away as well.

G. And so, we should learn the importance of using the right materials when building our church.

H. There's one more thing we should learn from our text, and that is...

III. The Importance Of Being Ready For That Final Building Inspection.

A. (Illus.- When you obtain a building permit from the county and then build a building, there has to be a final inspection before you can move in. The building inspector will come out and inspect the building one final time. If everything meets with his approval, the building will pass inspection. However, if he finds something lacking, the building will fail the final inspection.)

B. According to ***Vrs. 13-15*** of our text, there is going to be final inspection of that which we are building for God today, whether it be our church or our individual lives.

1. Look at those verses again, **"Every man's work shall be made manifest**: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and **the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is**....If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward....If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire."
2. Why is it important that we...
   -build on the right foundation?
   -use the right materials when building?
3. Because one day there is going to be final inspection.
4. How will we know if what we have built passes the inspection?
5. We'll know because we will receive a reward.
6. These rewards are called crowns elsewhere in God's Word, but we will know because **we will receive a reward** (an eternal reward).
7. How will we know if what we are building fails the inspection?
8. We'll know because **we will receive no reward** (we will come away from the judgment seat of Christ empty handed).

C. Do you know what is really **sad**?

1. The fact that so many believers today are building houses out of the "wood, hay" and "stubble" of this world, and one day, **they are going to have nothing to show for it.**
2. It doesn't have to be this way!

Conclusion:

A. What kind of a house are you building this morning?

1. Is the house that you are building being built on the right foundation?
2. Is it being built out of the right materials?
3. If so, when the final inspection comes, you will receive a reward (an eternal reward)'
4. But if not, you will walk away from empty handed.
5. It's not too late to make some changes in your life.

"Ye Are The Temple Of God"

Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 3:16-17

Introduction:

A. In today's society, many people are engaged in, what I call, "body worship."
   1. In other words, they worship their bodies!
   2. (Illus.- One evidence of this is the amount of time that some people spend at the gym or the health club. Now don't misunderstand what I am saying. There is certainly nothing wrong with exercising your body to keep in shape [more of us need to do this], but some people take it to the extreme. It's like staying physically fit is **the most important thing in their life**. I call that "body worship.")
   3. (Illus.- Another evidence of the prominence of "body worship" is the number of people who are taking advantage of plastic surgery. There was a time when only Hollywood stars had plastic surgery, but now days many common people are having everything done from face lifts, to nose jobs, to breast implants, to lipo-suction, and who knows what else. **Why do people allow plastic surgeons to alter their bodies like this**? For many, it is simply "body worship." They worship their bodies.)
   4. (Illus.- Another evidence of "body worship" is the amount of attention that many people give to adorning their bodies. Now, again, don't misunderstand what I am saying. There is certainly nothing wrong with looking good, but many people go to the extreme when it comes to hair-dos, and jewelry, and flashy [and sometimes immodest] clothing. Why do people do this? They do it to **accentuate [draw attention] their bodies**. Again, it's what I call "body worship.")
   5. And so, in today's society, many people are engaged in, what I call, "body worship." (They **worship their bodies**!)

B. "Is it wrong to worship our bodies?" someone asks.
   1. **Of course, it's wrong!**
   2. It's wrong to worship anything other than our God.
   3. Jesus said in ***Mat. 4:10***, "Thou shalt **worship the Lord** thy God, and **him only** shalt thou serve."
   4. And so, clearly, "body worship" is contrary to Gods' law.

C. But having said that, **"honoring one's body"** is not contrary to God's law.
   1. In fact, the Scriptures command us to honor our bodies.
   2. What does it mean to "honor one's body"?
   3. I simply means to treat our bodies with a certain amount of respect.
   4. While we most certainly should not worship our bodies, our bodies do deserve a certain amount of respect.
   5. Why?
   6. Well, our text for this morning's message will answer that question.
   7. As we examine our text more closely, I want us to see at least three things.
   8. First of all, I want us to see that...

I. Our Bodies Are The Temple Of God.

A. Notice again the first part of ***Vrs. 16*** of our text, Paul asks a question, "Know ye not that **ye are the temple of God**?"

B. Now what did Paul mean when he said that we "are the temple of God"?
1. The word "temple" here is translated from the Greek word "**naos**," and literally means "**dwelling place**."
2. And so, when Paul said that we, as believers, "are the temple of God," what he meant was, we are the dwelling place of God.
3. In other words, **God lives within us**!

C. Now this raises a question.
1. **How (in what sense)** does God live within us?
2. Look again at ***Vrs. 16*** of our text, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that **the Spirit of God dwelleth in you**?"
3. God lives within us in the sense that **the Holy Spirit of God dwells within our heart**.

D. A lot of believers do not realize this, but when we **trusted Christ** as our Savior, the Holy Spirit of God **came into our hearts to live**.
1. Listen to what the Bible says in ***Gal. 4:6***, "And because ye are sons, **God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts**, crying, Abba, Father."
2. Paul put it like this in ***Rom. 5:5***, "And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts **by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.**"
3. Some misguided believers today are of the opinion that one does not receive the Holy Spirit until after he is saved.
4. In other words, they believe that you get saved, and then later on you receive the Holy Spirit. (They refer to this as receiving the second blessing.)
5. However, there is a real problem with this way of thinking, and that is, one cannot be saved today apart from receiving the Holy Spirit at the very moment of salvation.
6. How do I know this?
7. Listen to ***Rom. 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**."
8. And so, if you do not have the Holy Spirit of God dwelling within you, you cannot possibly be saved!

E. Now there was a time when believers were not indwelt by the Holy Spirit.
1. Do you remember what Jesus told His disciples in ***John 14:16-17***? He said, "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;...Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for **he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you**."
2. When did the Holy Spirit begin to indwell believers?

3. Apparently, this happened on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit empowered believers to carry out the great commission.
4. But whether it happened then, or before then, the fact is we, as believers today, are God's temple!
5. The Holy Spirit of God lives within us!
6. That's awesome, when you think about it.

F. Do you realize what this means?
1. It means that we are never alone.
2. It means that God is always with us.
3. It means that we have access, not only to the presence of God, but also to the power of God every moment of our lives!
4. That's awesome! (Amen?)

G. And so, the first thing that I want us to see is that our bodies are the temple of God.

H. The second thing that I want us to see is that...

II. Because Our Bodies Are God's Temple, We Need To Be Very Careful Not To Defile Them.

A. Notice how ***Vrs. 17*** of our text begins, "If any man **defile the temple of God**,"

B. Now what does it mean to "**defile** the temple of God"?
1. Well, the word "defile" comes from a Greek verb that can actually mean more than one thing, depending on how it is used.
2. As it is used here, it means "**to corrupt**," or "to engage in immorality."
3. And so, when Paul said, "If any man **defile** the temple of God," what he meant was, "If any man **corrupt** the temple of God."

C. How does one corrupt "the temple of God?"
1. One way that we can corrupt the temple of God is by engaging in **sexual** immorality.
2. I am convinced that this is primarily what Paul had in mind here.
3. Why do I say that?
4. I say that because when Paul wrote this letter, sexual immorality was **rampant** in the city of Corinth.
5. As I mentioned in the beginning of this study, there was an idol temple in Corinth dedicated to the worship of "**Aphrodite, the goddess of love (lust)**."
6. I'm told that there were over 1,000 "priestesses," who were actually nothing more than prostitutes, who lived in this temple, and that men from all over the city would come and defile themselves with these women.
7. It's no wonder that Paul warned the believers in Corinth against defiling the temple of God by engaging in sexual immorality.

D. Later on in this letter, Paul addressed this subject once again.

1. Turn with me for just a moment to ***1 Cor. 6:15-19***, and let's read what Paul wrote, "Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid....What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh....But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit....**Flee fornication**. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but **he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body**....What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you?"
2. And so, when Paul spoke of defiling "the temple of God," what he had in mind was using our bodies to engage in sexual immorality.

E. We, as believers today, need to realize that sexual immorality is **different from almost every other sin** that we will commit in this life.
1. Now don't misunderstand me.
2. All sin is bad, but the sin of sexual immorality is especially bad (in a class all it's own).
3. Why? Because it **is a sin against our body**.
4. In other words, it **defiles the temple of God**.
5. We should remind ourselves every day that **our bodies are the temple of God** (the Holy Spirit of God lives within us), and for that reason we should be very careful **not to defile them**.

F. Paul put it like this in ***1 Thess. 4:3-4***, "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should **abstain from fornication**:...That every one of you should **know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour**;"
1. Are you single?
2. Then **abstain from any form of sexual activity** until after you are married to that man or woman with whom you will spend the rest of your lives!
3. If you are married, then **stay true to your mate**.
4. Stay true to your promise to keep yourself for them only.
5. Why?
6. Because to do anything less is not only a sin against God, but **it is also a sin against your own body**, in that it **defiles the temple of God**!

G. And so, the second thing I want us to see is that because our bodies are God's temple, we need to be very careful not to defile them.

H. The final thing that I want us to see here is that...

III. God Will Judge Those Who Defile His Temple.

A. Let me ask you a question.
1. How do you think God feels when His temple is defiled?
2. We don't have to wonder about this, because the Bible tells us exactly how He feels.
3. Do you remember how our Lord responded when He entered the temple and found the money changers and those selling sacrificial animals?

4. ***John 2:15*** tells us that He "made a scourge of small cords, he **drove them all out of the temple**, and the sheep, and the oxen; and **poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables**;"
5. In other words, He responded with **righteous anger**!
6. Well, I'm convinced that's exactly how God feels today when His temple is defiled (**He feels righteous anger**).

B. This is why our text tells us that God will **judge** those who defile His temple.
1. Look again at ***Vrs. 17*** of our text, "If any man **defile** the temple of God, **him shall God destroy**; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are."
2. There's something very interesting about this verse that will not see unless you are reading from a Greek New Testament.
3. And that is, the word translated "destroy" here is **exactly the same word** that is translated "defile." (It is the exact same word.)
4. It's like God is saying, if you defile my temple, I will defile you.
5. If you corrupt my temple, I will bring corruption upon you.
6. **Sounds pretty serious, doesn't it**?
7. What exactly does the Bible mean when it says that those believers who defile God's temple will be destroyed by God?
8. It simply means that they will be **severely punished (chastened).**

C. Now in case you don't believe that a loving God is capable of severely chastening His children, may I remind you of **Ananias and Sapphira**.
1. I'm sure you remember this couple.
2. This is the couple who **sold a piece of property**, and then devised a plan whereby they would give part of the money to the church, but lead the church to believe that they were giving all the money.
3. Do you remember what happened to them?
4. Both of them **dropped dead**, and as a result of their punishment, the Bible says that "...**great fear came upon all the church**, and upon as many as heard these things." ***(Acts 5:11)***

D. Another example of God severely punishing His children can be found right here in ***1 Corinthians***.
1. You might remember that in ***1 Cor. 11***, Paul is dealing with the sin of **making light of the Lord's Supper**.
2. Listen to what happened to some in the church because of this sin, it says, "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and **many sleep**." ***(1 Cor. 11:30)***
3. By the way, when it says that many slept, it doesn't mean that they went "bedibye."
4. It means that **they died**!
5. And so, don't tell me that a loving God would not severely punish His children.
6. Listen, if God killed Ananias and Sapphira for lying, and if He killed some of the Corinthian believers for making light of the Lord's Supper, what do you think He might do to those who would defile His holy temple?
7. It's a **scary thought**! (Amen?)

E. And so, I want us to see that God will judge those who defile His temple.

Conclusion:

A. Now what have we learned this morning from God's Word?
   1. First of all, we've learned that **our bodies are the temple of God**. (In the person of His Holy Spirit, Almighty God lives within us.)
   2. Secondly, we've learned that **because our bodies are God's temple, we should be very careful not to defile them**. (We defile God's temple by engaging in sexual immorality.)
   3. Finally, we've learned that **God will judge those who defile His holy temple**. (He will severely chasten those who engage in sexual immorality.)

B. Now does this mean that we should worship our bodies?
   1. No. As I said earlier, we should only worship God.
   2. However, we should **"honor" our bodies**.
   3. In other words, we should realize that they are God's temple and treat them with the respect they are due.
   4. Do you honor your body?

"All Things Are Yours"

Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 3:18-23

Introduction:

A. The closing verses of ***1 Corinthians 3*** can easily be divided into **two sections**.
   1. The **first** section ***(Vrs. 18-20)*** deals with the **superiority** of God's wisdom over the world's wisdom.
   2. Notice again what Paul wrote, beginning with ***Vrs. 18***, "Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be **wise in this world**, let him become a fool, that he may be wise....For **the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God**. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness....And again, The Lord knoweth **the thoughts of the wise**, that **they are vain**."
   3. And so, the first section of these closing verses of ***1 Corinthians 3*** deal with the **superiority** of God's wisdom over the world's wisdom. (There really is **no contest**! Amen?)

B. The **second** section ***(Vrs. 21-23)***, however, deals with **three very interesting statements**.
   1. The **first** statement is found in the latter part of ***Vrs. 21***, where Paul wrote, "**...all things are yours**."
   2. The **second** statement is found in the first part of ***Vrs. 23***, where Paul wrote, "**...you are Christ's**."
   3. The **third** statement is found in the latter part of ***Vrs. 23***, where Paul wrote, "**...Christ is God's**."
   4. **First** statement, "...all things are yours."
   5. **Second** statement, "...you are Christ's."
   6. **Third** statement, "...Christ is God's."
   7. What I want us to do this morning is to take these three statements, one at a time, and **consider the significance of their meaning**.
   8. First of all, let's take the statement...

I. All Things Are Yours.

A. Look again at ***Vrs. 21***, "Therefore let no man glory in men. For **all things are yours**;"

B. Now what did Paul mean when he said that "all things are" ours?
   1. Well, let me tell you, first of all, **what he did not mean**.
   2. He did not mean that "all things are" ours in the sense that we are the owners.
   3. The Bible tells us very clearly that we do not own anything, because God owns everything! (Amen?)
   4. Listen to ***Psa. 24:1***, "**The earth is the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof**; the world, and they that dwell therein."
   5. Listen also to ***Psa. 50:12***, the Lord said, " If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for **the world is mine, and the fulness thereof**."

6. Finally, listen to ***Psa. 89:11***, "The heavens are thine, **the earth also is thine**: as for the world and the fulness thereof, thou hast founded them."
7. And so, clearly, **we do not own anything**.
8. Why not? Because **God owns everything**!!!

C. What then did Paul mean when he said that "all things are" ours?
1. He simply meant that **God has put all things at our disposal**.
2. In other words, everything that God has created, He has created for **our use, our benefit, and our blessing**.
3. (Illus.- I can illustrate it like this. Have you ever stayed at a really nice hotel? If so, you were probably told that if there was anything you needed, all you had to do was contact the front desk. If you needed a housekeeper, one was available. If you needed a maintenance man, one was available. If you needed a dry cleaner, one was available. If you needed an Internet connection, one was available. If you needed an exercise room, one was available. If you needed a swimming pool, one was available. Now these people and these services didn't belong to you [you couldn't take them home], but as long as you stayed at that hotel, these people and these services were at your disposal.)
4. That's what Paul meant when he said that "all things are" ours, he meant that everything that God has created, He created for our use, for our benefit, for our blessing.
5. Paul put it like this in ***2 Cor. 4:15***, "For **all things are for your sakes**, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God."

D. For example, God has put certain **ministers** (**evangelists, pastors and teachers**) at our disposal.
1. Look again at ***Vrs. 21*** and the first part of ***Vrs. 22***, "Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours;...Whether **Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas**."
2. Remember how the Corinthian believers were arguing over which of these preachers was the best? ***(1 Cor. 1:12)***
3. Some said that **Paul** was the best preacher.
4. Others said that **Apollos** was the best preacher.
5. Still others said that **Peter** was the best preacher.
6. But while they were arguing over who was the best, the fact was **God had placed all three of these ministers at their disposal**.
7. In other words, it was God's intention (plan) for the Corinthian believers to be benefitted (blessed) by **the ministry of all three** of these men.
8. Rather than arguing over who was the best, they should have been thanking God for all three of them.

E. You know, we also should **thank God** for the ministers whom He has placed at our disposal.
1. Whether it be the **evangelist** under who's preaching we came to know Christ.
2. Whether it be the **pastor** or **youth pastor** under who's preaching and teaching we sit week after week.

3. Whether it be **S.S. teacher** who stands before our class Sunday after Sunday.
4. We need to thank God for those men (and in some cases women) whom God has brought into our lives **to open the Word of God and minister to our needs**.
5. As Paul said, **they are "ours."**
6. **All things are ours!!!**

F. In addition to certain ministers, God has also placed **the whole world** at our disposal.
1. Look again at ***Vrs. 22*** of our text, "Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, **or the world**,"
2. Do you know why God created this world?
3. Of course, the primary reason He created it was **for His own glory** (all of His creation was **for His glory**).
4. But there was another reason He created this world, and that is He created it **for our use, for our benefit, and for our blessing**.
5. Do you remember what God told Adam and Eve in **Gen. 1:28-29**? He said, "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth....And God said, Behold, **I have given you** every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; **to you it shall be for meat**."
6. God reiterated this promise in ***Gen. 9:2-3***, when He told Noah, "all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; **into your hand are they delivered**. Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb **have I given you all things**."

G. You know, the environmentalist wackos of our day have this completely backwards, don't they.
1. They would have us to believe that God created man so that man can serve "mother earth."
2. This is why we now celebrate the pagan holiday called "earth day."
3. But listen, God didn't create man for the earth, but rather He created the earth for man.
4. God didn't command Adam and Eve to take care of the earth, but rather he commanded them to subdue it and to use it for their benefit.
5. And so, the world is our servant (Amen?)
6. **All things are ours!!!**

H. Not only has God placed at our disposal certain ministers, and not only has He placed at our disposal the world, He has also placed at our disposal **life and death**.
1. Look again at ***Vrs. 22*** of our text, "Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, **or life, or death**."
2. Now we don't have a problem understanding how life can be a blessing, but what about death?
3. How can death be a blessing (benefit us)?
4. Death can be a blessing in at least two ways.
5. First of all, death **frees us from the cares and burdens of this life**.

6. ***Rev. 14:13*** says it very well, "**Blessed are the dead** which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that **they may rest from their labours**;"
7. And so, death frees us from the cares and burdens of this life.
8. But death performs at least one more valuable service for us, as believers, and that is it **ushers us into the presence of our Savior, Jesus Christ**.
9. Do you remember what Jesus told the thief on the cross, just before he died?
10. He said, "Verily I say unto thee, **To day shalt thou be with me in paradise**." ***(Luke 23:43)***
11. This is why Paul was able to write in ***Phil. 1:21***, "For to me to live is Christ, and **to die is gain**."
12. And so, even death is our servant! (Amen?)
13. **All things are ours!!!**

I. Notice one more thing before I move on to my next point.
   1. Not only has God placed all of His present creation at our disposal, but **God is not finished creating yet**.
   2. Did you know that?
   3. Look again at ***Vrs. 22*** of our text, "Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or **things to come**;"
   4. And so, God is not finished creating yet.
   5. For example, listen to ***Rev. 21:1-2***, "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....And I John saw the holy city, **new Jerusalem**, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."
   6. ***Rev. 21:7*** goes on to say, "He that overcometh shall **inherit all things**;"
   7. And so, whether "things present, or things to come, **all things are" ours**!!!

J. But not only did Paul write that "all things are yours," he also wrote that...

II. You Are Christ's.

A. Look again at the first part of ***Vrs. 23*** of our text, "And **ye are Christ's**;"
   1. Now what did Paul mean when he said that we "are Christ's"?
   2. I think he meant **a couple of things**.
   3. First of all, I think he meant that we "are Christ's" in the sense that **we belong to Him**.
   4. Jump ahead, if you will, to ***1 Cor. 6:19-20***, "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**?...For **ye are bought with a price**:"
   5. Because of the price that Jesus paid for our redemption when He died on the cross, we now belong to Him.
   6. And so, first of all, we "are Christ's" in the sense that we belong to Him.

B. But we are also Christ's in another sense.
   1. We are His in the sense that **our primary purpose in life is to serve Him and bring honor and glory to Him**. (Amen?)

2. I quoted part of ***1 Cor. 6:20*** a moment ago, now let me quote the entire verse, it says, "For ye are bought with a price: **therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit**, which are God's."
3. Paul put it like this in ***1 Cor. 10:31***, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, **do all to the glory of God**."

C. I'm afraid that many believers today are not aware of the fact that their primary purpose in life is to serve Christ and to bring honor and glory to Him.
1. At least, that's not the way they are living.
2. Oh, they relish the things that are theirs.
3. They enjoy all that God has placed at their disposal.
4. They receive without hesitation all of the benefits and blessings of God's creation.
5. But they don't show their gratitude by the way they live.
6. Another way of putting it is like this: while they realize that **"all things are" theirs**, they don't acknowledge the fact that **they "are Christ's."**
7. Hey, not only did Paul say "all things are yours," he also said, "ye are Christ's." ***(Vrs. 21,23)***

D. Now, finally, I want us to look briefly at the third interesting statement that Paul made. He wrote...

III. Christ Is God's.

A. Look again at ***Vrs. 23*** of our text, "And ye are Christ's; and **Christ is God's**."

B. Now what did Paul mean when he said that "Christ is God's"?
1. He simply meant that just like our primary purpose in life is to serve Christ and to bring honor and glory to Him, **Christ's primary purpose in coming into this world was to do His Father's will and to glorify Him**.
2. But someone says, "Wait a minute, pastor, I thought Jesus came into this world to die on the cross and to save sinners."
3. He most certainly did, but that was not His primary purpose in coming.
4. His primary purpose in coming was to do His Father's will, and in so doing, bring honor and glory to Him.
5. Listen to what Jesus said in ***John 5:30***, " I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because **I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.**"
6. Do you remember what Jesus told His disciples when they returned from town to Jacob's well and tried to get Jesus to eat?
7. Jesus told them, "My meat is to **do the will of him that sent me**, and to finish his work." ***(John 4:34)***

C. Did Jesus do His Father's will while He was here on this earth?
1. He **most certainly did**, right up to the very end.
2. Do you remember how Jesus prayed in the Garden, just before they came to arrest Him?

3. He prayed like this, "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless **not my will, but thine, be done**." ***(Luke 22:42)***
4. And so, up to the very end, **He did His Father's will**.

D. What an example He has provided for us!
1. As Christ was God's, so we are His.
2. As Christ did His Father's will, so we should do His.
3. As Christ brought honor and glory to His Father, we should bring honor and glory to Him. (Amen?)

Conclusion:

A. Three very interesting statements.
1. First of all, Paul wrote, "**all things are yours**." ***(Vrs. 22)***
2. That is awesome, when you stop and think about it.
3. Everything that God has created, He has placed at our disposal.
4. Everything He has created, He has created for **our use**, for **our benefit**, for **our blessings**!
5. This is why Paul was able to say in ***Rom. 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."
6. All things are ours!!! Wow!!!

B. But let's not forget that second statement.
1. Paul also wrote, "**ye are Christ's**." ***(Vrs. 23)***
2. While all things are indeed ours, we must not forget that our primary purpose in life is to serve Christ and to bring honor and glory to Him.

C. How can we acknowledge the fact that we "are Christ's"?
1. This brings us to the third statement.
2. Paul wrote, "**Christ is God's**" ***(Vrs. 23)***
3. As Jesus submitted Himself to His Father's will while He was in this world, We should submit ourselves to His will for our lives.
4. All we have to do to acknowledge the fact that we "are Christ's," is to follow His example.

"Stewards Of The Mysteries Of God"

Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 4:1-6

Introduction:

A. The first thing that I want to do, this morning, is define the word "**minister**."
   1. Paul wrote in ***Vrs. 1*** of our text, "Let a man so account of us, as of **the ministers of Christ**," but what exactly is a "minister"?
   2. Most people today, when they hear the word "minister," think of a pastor, or an evangelist, or perhaps a missionary.
   3. Now it's true that pastors and evangelists and missionaries are "ministers," but the meaning of the word is **much broader** than that.
   4. A minister is **anyone who takes the Word of God and ministers to the spiritual needs of others**.
   5. A **soul winner** is a minister.
   6. A **Sunday school teacher** is a minister.
   7. A **children's church leader** is a minister.
   8. An **AWANA worker** who brings a lesson a minister.
   9. Anyone who takes the Word of God and **ministers to the spiritual needs of others** is a minister!

B. You've heard me say this before, but I will say it again, **every believer** in Christ should be a minister.
   1. **Every believer** should be involved in ministry.
   2. **Every believer** should be involved in some ministry whereby he or she takes the Word of God and ministers to the spiritual needs of others.
   3. Now what particular ministry you are involved in, that's between you and the Lord, and really **depends on how God has equipped you**.
   4. But **every one of us** should be ministers!

C. But someone says, "Wait a minute, pastor, I am not equipped to teach a Sunday school class?"
   1. That very well may be true, but if you are saved, **you are equipped to do something**.
   2. How can I be so sure?
   3. I'm sure because according to ***1 Cor. 12:1-11***, when God saved you, He gave you (as well as every believer) **at least one ministering gift**, if not the gift of teaching, then some other gift.
   4. Not only did God give you a gift, but **He expects you to use that gift** to minister to the spiritual needs of others.
   5. And so, **we are all ministers** (at least we should be)!

D. Now with this in mind, there are at least **three things** we can learn from our text, this morning.

E. First of all, we can learn...

I. The <u>Role</u> Of A Minister.

A. What is the **role** of a minister?
1. The answer is found in the latter part of ***Vrs. 1*** of our text, "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and **stewards of the mysteries of God**."
2. According to this verse, the role of a minister is that of a **"steward."**
3. Now **what** is a "steward"?
4. As we have seen in my Sunday school class the past few weeks, a steward is **a manager or an overseer**.
5. A steward is someone to whom something of value has been entrusted for his care, for his management, for his oversight.

B. Now this raises yet another question.
1. If a minister is a steward, and a steward is someone to whom something of value has been entrusted, what is this "something of value" that has been entrusted to us?
2. Well, look again at ***Vrs. 1*** of our text, "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards **of the mysteries of God**."
3. This, of course, is a reference to the Word of God.
4. We are stewards of the "Word of God."
5. We are managers or overseers of the "Word of God."
6. God has entrusted us with the care and the management and the oversight of His precious Word! (Amen?)

C. Turn with me to ***2 Cor. 5:18-19***, "And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;...To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; **and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation**."
1. Notice again that last phrase in ***Vrs. 19***, it says that God has "committed unto us." (In other words, God has placed in our care.)
2. Now what has God placed in our care?
3. It says, "and hath committed unto us **the word of reconciliation**."
4. Again, this is a reference to the "Word of God."
5. God has committed to us, He has placed in our care, He has **made us stewards of His precious Word**!

D. You know, this is a pretty serious responsibility! (Amen?)
1. What is more precious that the "Word of God"?
2. (Illus.- Suppose the Smithsonian were to call you and ask you to babysit the "hope diamond" for a few days while they do some renovating, how would you respond? If you are like me, you would say, "No way am I going to be responsible for something so precious.")
3. But did you realize that, as God's ministers, we have been entrusted with something far more precious than the hope diamond?
4. We have been entrusted with the precious Word of God.

E. And so, that's our role as ministers.
1. Our role is that of a stewards of God's Word.
2. God has entrusted us with His precious Word.

F. We can also learn from our text...

II. The <u>Requirements</u> Of A Minister.

A. What are the requirements of a minister?
1. In other words, what does God expect of us as His ministers?
2. The requirements of a minister are summarized in ***Vrs. 2*** of our text, "Moreover it is required in stewards, **that a man be found faithful**."
3. What does God expect of us as His ministers?
4. He expects us **to be faithful**
5. "Faithful to do what?" someone asks.

B. Well, first of all, He expects us to **be faithful to share His Word with others**.
1. In other words, He expects us to take His precious Word, which God has entrusted to us, and use it to minister to the needs of others. (Do you remember the definition of a minister that I gave you earlier?)
2. For example, we should be faithful to share God's Word with the unsaved as we seek to win them to Christ.
3. We must remember what Paul wrote in ***Rom. 10:17***, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing **by the word of God**."
4. The unsaved cannot be saved apart of hearing the Word of God, and as His ministers, God expects us to share it with them.
5. We should also be faithful to share God's Word with our fellow believers, as we seek to encourage them, instruct them, and edify them.
6. This might be done in **a Sunday school class**.
7. It also might be done in **someone's home** in a one on one discipleship situation.
8. It also might be done in **a hospital**, or **a nursing home**, or **anywhere** you find believers in need of lifting up.
9. And so, as His ministers, God expects us to be faithful to share His Word with others.

C. By the way, we should **not be selective** as far as with whom we share God's Word.
1. Whomever God brings across our path, no matter what their....
-race,
-social standing,
-cultural background,
-how they are dressed or how they wear their hair,
God brings these people across our path so that we can share God's Word with them and thereby minister to their spiritual needs.
2. There is absolutely no place for prejudice when it comes to ministry.

3. Jesus set the example time and time again during His ministry, by reaching out to **every soul** who came across His path, including **lepers**, and **publicans**, and **Samaritans**. (In fact, on more than one occasion He was criticized by His enemies for doing so.)

D. May I also say that, as ministers, God expects us to be faithful to rightly divide His Word as we share it with others.
1. In order to do this, we must be avid students ourselves.
2. This is why Paul admonished Timothy in ***2 Tim. 2:15***, "**Study** to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, **rightly dividing the word of truth**."
3. That phrase "rightly dividing the word of truth," means "**correctly interpreting the word of truth**."
4. This is a ministerial requirement that, as a pastor and teacher of God's Word, I take very seriously.
5. Every time I sit down to prepare a message on a particular passage of Scripture, I ask the Lord to **help me to correctly understand the passage**.
6. Why?
7. Because I don't want to tell you that it means one thing, when in fact it means something else.
8. But someone says, "Doesn't any given passage in God's Word have lots of different meanings?
9. No, it doesn't. It has **only one meaning**.
10. It may have **many applications**, but only **one meaning**.
11. This is why it is so important that we rightly divide it as we share it with others.
12. We want to get it right! (Amen?)
13. And so, God expects us to be faithful to rightly divide His Word, as we share it with others.

E. **One more thing**.
1. As His ministers, God expects us to be faithful to **live His Word** before those to whom we are ministering. (In other words, **exemplify His Word** in the way we live our lives.)
2. (Let me illustrate. This morning in my Sunday school class I taught on the subject of tithing. I gave my class five Biblical reasons why every believer should tithe. You know, I can teach those five Biblical principles correctly, yet if I do not practice tithing myself, my teaching will be ineffective.)
3. This is why Paul admonished the young preacher, Timothy, who was also a pastor, "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." ***(1 Tim. 4:12)***
4. In other words, he said, "Timothy, don't just preach the Word, but **live the Word**."

F. What are the requirements of a minister?
1. First of all, we are expected to be faithful to share God's Word with others (use the Word that God has entrusted to us to minister to the spiritual needs of others).

2. Secondly, we are expected to be faithful to rightly divide the Word (correctly interpret the Word so that we can teach it correctly to others).
3. Finally, we are expected to be faithful to live the Word (exemplify the Word in our own lives).

G. Finally, this morning, we can learn something about....

III. The <u>Review</u> Of The Minister.

A. Did you know that there is going to be a review?
1. (Illus.- Some of you have jobs which require you to be reviewed periodically by a superior. What they do is look at your job performance and grade you on how well you are doing. Any future promotions or raises, or even the security of your job itself, can rest very heavily upon these reviews.)
2. Well, one day we, as God's ministers, are going to have our job performance reviewed by a superior.
3. Someone says, "Pastor, are you going to review my job performance?"
4. No, Jesus is going to review both your job performance and mine.

B. Look again at ***Vrs. 3-5*** of our text, "But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self....For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but **he that judgeth me is the Lord**....Therefore judge nothing before the time, **until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts**: and then shall every man have praise of God.

C. This is not the only place in God's Word where we are warned about **a coming judgment for believers**.
1. As we saw a couple of weeks ago, Paul wrote in ***1 Cor. 3:13***, "Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and **the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is**."
2. Then there is ***Rom. 14:10***, which says, "But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for **we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ**."
3. Finally, listen to ***2 Cor. 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."
4. And so, one day, we, as believers, will **stand at the judgement seat of Christ**.

D. What will be the purpose of this judgement?
1. Among other things, it will be to **determine what kind of ministers we have been**, whether or not we have been faithful stewards of the Word of God.
2. In other words, whether or not we have been faithful to...
-share the Word with others,
-rightly divide (interpret) the Word,
-exemplify the Word in our daily lives.

E. What can we expect if we have been faithful stewards of God's Word?
   1. Notice again the very last phrase in ***Vrs. 5*** of our text, it says, "and then shall every man have **praise of God**."
   2. In other words, as Jesus put it in one of His parables, we can expect to hear these words, "**Well done**, thou **good and faithful** servant." ***(Mat. 25:21,23)***

Conclusion:

A. What have we learned this morning about ministers?
   1. First of all, we've learned **the role of a minister**. (He is steward of the Word of God.)
   2. Secondly, we've learned **the requirements of a minister**. (He is expected to be faithful, to be faithful to share the Word, faithful to rightly divide the Word, faithful to live the Word.)
   3. Finally, we've learned something about **the review of ministers**. (One day we are all going to be reviewed at the Judgement Seat of Christ.

B. If that judgement seat were held today, **how would you fare**?
   1. Would you pass the test?
   2. Would you receive praise from God?
   3. Would you hear those words, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant?"

"Some Are Puffed Up"

Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 4:6-7, 18-21

Introduction:

A. As we have already seen in our study of Paul's first letter to the Corinthian believers, **the church at Corinth had a lot of problems**.

1. Let me stop here and say this - every church, without exception, has problems.
2. Oftentimes, people will leave a church because of problems and join another church.
3. What they discover, however, once they have been in their new church for a while, is that it has problems too, sometimes far worse.
4. And so, every church, without exception, has problems.
5. Do you know why this is true?
6. It is true because every church is **made up of people**, and even though they are saved, they are still **imperfect**.
7. (Illus.- I heard a preacher say once, "If you find the perfect church, for heaven's sake, don't join it, because the moment you do, it will cease to be a perfect church." Amen?)
8. But as we have already seen in our study of Paul's first letter to the Corinthian believers, the church at Corinth had a lot of problems.

B. The first problem that Paul dealt with in his letter was **the problem of divisions**.
1. This is why Paul wrote what he did in ***1 Cor. 1:10***, listen as I read, "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all **speak the same thing**, and that there **be no divisions among you**; but that ye be **perfectly joined together** in the **same mind** and in the **same judgment**."
2. Another problem that existed in this church was **the problem of preacher worship**.
3. In fact, this was the cause of their divisions.
4. Listen as I read ***1 Cor. 1:12***, "Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am **of Paul**; and I **of Apollos**; and I **of Cephas**; and I of Christ."
5. A third problem that existed in this church was **the problem of spiritual immaturity**.
6. Listen as I read ***1 Cor. 3:1-2***, "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto **babes in Christ**...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."
7. The following verse tells us that because of their spiritual immaturity, there was both "**envying, and strife**" within the church family. ***(1 Cor. 3:3)***

C. Now we come to ***1 Cor. 4*** and discover that there was yet another problem in this church, and that is **the problem of pride**.
1. Look again at ***Vrs. 6*** of our text, "And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, **that no one of you be puffed up for one against another**."
2. And then we read again in ***Vrs. 18*** of our text, "Now **some are puffed up**, as though I would not come to you."
3. Notice the expression, "puffed up."
4. Do you know what it means to be "puffed up"?
5. Well, this expression is translated from a Greek word (phusioo) that literally means, "**blown up**" or "**inflated**."
6. In other words, **prideful**.
7. The Corinthian believers, at least some of them, were clearly prideful.

D. For the next few minutes, I want us to consider **the subject of pride**.
   1. While the Bible has much to say about pride, we will focus our attention on the passage before us this morning.
   2. First of all, I want us to consider...

I. The <u>Explanation</u> Of Pride.

A. In other words, what exactly is pride?
   1. If I were to ask you to give me **a simple definition** of pride, how would you define it?
   2. Well, let's go back to the expression that Paul used in our text, three times ***(Vrs. 6,18,19)*** he implied that at least some of the Corinthian believers were "**puffed up.**"
   3. As I said a moment ago, this expression is translated from a Greek word that literally means "**blown up**" or "**inflated**."
   4. Pride, therefore, can be defined as **"being inflated, or having an inflated ego."**
   5. (Illus.- Two different illustrations from nature come to mind. First of all, there is the illustration of **a bullfrog**. Have you ever watched a bullfrog when he croaks? If so, you've seen how that just before he croaks, he inflates himself. In other words, he puffs up. When Paul told the Corinthian believers, "some are puffed up," he was actually saying, "Some of you are like bullfrogs just before they croak. You are all puffed up!")
   6. (Illus.- Another illustration from nature is **the puffer fish**. Have you ever seen a puffer fish? I haven't, but according to what I have read, a puffer fish has a real interesting means of self defense. When a predator approaches and the puffer fish feels threatened, it swells up to several times it's normal size. I am told that some puffer fish reach an incredible size of 3 feet, which makes their swollen condition quite a sight to see. By the way, another name for the puffer fish is the "blow fish." And so, when Paul told the Corinthian believers, "some are puffed up," he was actually saying, "Some of you are like puffer fish when frightened by a predator. You are all puffed up.")
   7. And so, one way that we can define pride is "being inflated, or having an inflated ego."

B. Another way that we can define pride is **"thinking more of oneself than one ought to think."**
   1. Look again at ***Vrs. 6*** of our text, "And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us **not to think of men above that which is written**,"
   2. Paul put it like this in ***Rom. 12:3***, "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to **think of himself more highly than he ought to think**; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man."
   3. Now this raises a question. **How do we know** if our opinion of ourselves is higher than it ought to be?
   4. **What standard** do we have to go by? **What means** has God given us to help us in making this determination?

5. The standard that God has given us is **the standard of His Word**.
6. Let me illustrate.
7. The next time you begin feeling **righteous**, you should read ***Rom. 3:10***, which says, "There is **none righteous**, no, not one:"
8. The next time you begin feeling **wise**, you should read ***1 Cor. 1:20***, which says, "Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? **hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world**?"
9. The next time you begin feeling **strong**, you should read ***John 15:5***, where Jesus said, "...without me **ye can do nothing**."
10. The next time you begin feeling **beautiful**, you should read ***Pro. 31:30***, which says, "Favour is deceitful, and **beauty is vain**: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised."
11. And so, the best way we can avoid having too high an opinion of ourselves is to base what we think on the written Word of God. (Amen?)
12. God's Word will most certainly keep us sober!

C. What exactly is pride?
1. Pride is "being like a bullfrog or a puffer fish."
2. It is "being inflated, or having an inflated ego."
3. It is "thinking more of oneself than one ought to think."
4. (Illus.- As Lilly Nunn would say, pride is "being full of oneself.")

D. Now I want us to consider...

II. The <u>Error</u> Of Pride.

A. In other words, why is it wrong to be prideful?

B. It's wrong to be prideful because pride is **based on at least two fallacies**.
1. First of all, pride is based on the fallacy that **people are different**.
2. Now I realize that in many ways, people are different.
3. However, when it comes to those things that really matter, **people are not different**.
4. **People are the same**!
5. Notice the question that Paul asked in the first part of ***Vrs. 7*** of our text, "For **who maketh thee to differ from another**?"
6. In other words, "What makes you different from anyone else?"
7. The obvious answer to that question is, "Nothing!"

C. For example, **we all have the same parents**.
1. Of course, I'm talking about Adam and Eve.
2. (Illus.- I never cease to be amazed by the ignorance of "white supremacists." They think that simply because their skin color is light, they are somehow superior to those who are darker in color. What they don't realize is that genetically speaking, there is basically **no difference** between the races. Our skin color may be different. Our facial features may be different. Our cultural backgrounds may be different. But genetically speaking, we are **basically the same**.)

3. Do you know why this is true?
4. Because **we are all the children of Adam**.
5. Turn with me to ***Acts 17:25-26***, "Neither is worshiped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;...**And hath made of one blood all nations of men** for to dwell on all the face of the earth,"
6. And so, we all have the same parents.

C. Not only do we all have the same parents, but because we do, **we are all sinners**.
1. Listen to ***Rom. 5:12***, "Wherefore, as **by one man** (Adam) sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, **for that all have sinned**:"
2. Paul put it like this in ***Rom. 3:23***, "For **all have sinned**, and come short of the glory of God;"
3. Solomon put it like this in ***Ecc. 7:20***, "For **there is not a just man upon earth**, that doeth good, and **sinneth not**."
4. And so, pride is wrong because it is based on the fallacy that people are different.
5. People are not different. When it comes to the those things that really matter, **all people are the same**.

D. Pride is also based on another fallacy.
1. It based on the fallacy that **we are somehow responsible for the good things that have come into our lives**.
2. Look again at ***Vrs. 7*** of our text, "For who maketh thee to differ from another? and **what hast thou that thou didst not receive**? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?"
3. There is a verse of Scripture in the book of ***James*** that we need to read and think about every day of our lives.
4. It is ***Jam. 1:17***, listen to what it says, "**Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights**, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."
5. Do you understand what this verse is saying?
6. It is saying that if we have anything....
   -**good** in our lives,
   -**admirable** in our lives,
   -**commendable** in our lives,
   it is there because **God gave it to us**, and **we can't claim any credit for it whatsoever**!
7. (Illus.- Take my good looks, for example. If I had a mind to, I could become proud because of my good looks, but that would be wrong. Why? Because God gave me my good looks. I didn't have anything to do with it.)
8. Seriously, if you are **attractive**, God made you attractive.
9. If you are **rich**, God gave you your riches.
10. If you are **gifted**, God gave you your gifts.
11. If you are **strong**, God gave you your strength.
12. If you are **intelligent**, God gave you your intelligence.
13. Therefore, if you are going to do any bragging, you should brag on the Lord.

E. And so, that is the error of pride.
   1. It is based on at least two fallacies.
   2. First of all, it is based on the fallacy that **people are different** (we are all "**of one blood**").
   3. Secondly, it is based on the fallacy that **we are somehow responsible for the good things that have come into our lives** ("**every good gift and every perfect gift is from above**")

F. Finally, I want us to consider...

III. The <u>End</u> Of Pride.

A. Notice again what Paul told these Corinthian believers in ***Vrs. 18-21*** of our text, "Now some are puffed up, as though I would not come to you....But **I will come to you shortly**, if the Lord will, and will know, not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power....For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power....What will ye? **shall I come unto you with a rod**, or in love, and in the spirit of meekness?"
   1. Did you notice how Paul is talking to these believers?
   2. He is talking to them **like they were children**, and, of course, they **were** children in a spiritual sense.
   3. He said, "Lord willing, I am going to return to Corinth, and when I do, I'm bringing my "rod" with me!"
   4. Of course, he was not talking about a literal rod, but what he was saying was that, if necessary, he would use his authority as an apostle and administer discipline to those believers who were "puffed up."

B. But someone says, "I'm sure glad Paul is no longer around. I sure would hate to face his rod!"
   1. Well, it's true that Paul is no longer around, but if we continue to be "puffed up" (prideful), we will still have to face the rod.
   2. Not Paul's rod, but the Lord's rod!
   3. Listen to what the Bible says in ***Heb. 12:5-6***, "And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him:...For **whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth**, and **scourgeth every son** whom he receiveth."
   4. The choice that we have is the same choice that Paul gave to the Corinthian believers.
   5. We can either repent of our pride, or face our Heavenly Father's rod of correction.

C. Let us not forget Solomon's words of warning found in ***Pro. 16:18***, "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall."
   1. And let me tell you something, if we put God in a position where He is forced to bring us down, you can almost be sure that **He will bring us down hard**!
   2. It is far better that we correct ourselves! (Amen?)

Conclusion:

A. So, what we have learned about pride?
   1. First of all, we learned **the explanation of pride**. (It is being inflated, having an inflated ego, thinking more of ourselves that we ought to think.)
   2. Secondly, we learned **the error of pride**. (It is based on two fallacies. The first fallacy being that people are different. The second fallacy being that we are somehow responsible for the good things in our lives.)
   3. Finally, we learned **the end of pride**. (If we don't repent of or pride, we will face our Heavenly Father's rod, and He will surely bring us down.)

B. Are you guilty of the sin of pride?
   1. Are you puffed up?
   2. Are you like a bullfrog just before he croaks or a puffer fish when threatened by a predator?
   3. Do you have an inflated ego.
   4. Do you think more of yourself than you ought to think?
   5. Let me just put it like this: **Are you full of yourself**?
   6. If so, you have two choices.
   7. Correct yourself, repent of your pride, or face our Heavenly Father's rod.
   8. Which will it be?

"We Are Made A Spectacle"

Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 4:8-17

Introduction:

A. I will never forget the first time that I read ***Vrs. 16*** of our text.
   1. I was a new believer in Christ, and when I read the words, "...be ye followers of me," I couldn't help but think to myself, "This doesn't sound right!"
   2. Even though I had only been saved for a short period of time, **I knew enough to know** that we should not follow men, but that we should only follow God.
   3. However, there were a couple of things that **I did not know**.
   4. First of all, I did not know (understand) **who Paul was**.
   5. For example, I did not know that **he was an apostle**, and that as an apostle, he possessed **a certain authority that no man today possesses**.
   6. Not only did I not know that he was an apostle, but I also did not know that **he was a spiritual father** to most of these Corinthian believers.
   7. In other words, he was the instrument whom God had used to bring most of the Corinthian believers to Christ.
   8. As **an apostle** and as **their spiritual father**, Paul had every right to admonish these believers to follow him.

9. And so, I did not know who Paul was.

B. But there was something else that I did not know.
1. I did not know that when Paul wrote the words, "...be ye followers of me," it was understood that they should **only** follow him **as he followed Christ**.
2. In fact, later on in this same letter, Paul made this very clear, so no one would misunderstand what he meant.
3. Turn with me, if you will, to ***1 Cor. 11:1***, Paul wrote, "Be ye followers of me, **even as I also am of Christ**."

C. Now what did Paul mean when he said, "...be ye **followers of me**"? ***(Vrs. 16)***
1. The word translated "follower" here comes from a Greek word that literally means "imitator."
2. Another word we could use is "mimicker."
3. (Illus.- When I was a child, there was game that we used to play, especially if we wanted to irritate someone. What we would do is follow someone around, mimicking everything that they did. If they sat down, we sat down. If they walked, we walked. If they spoke, we spoke, repeating the exact words that they spoke. If they scratched their nose, we scratched our nose. It would drive the other person crazy, but it was fun!)
4. That's kinda of what Paul meant when he admonished the Corinthian believers to follow him.
5. He meant, "Imitate me, or mimic me."
6. He meant, watch me, and do what I do.

D. Now this raises a question.
1. What was there about Paul's life that was worthy of another believer imitating?
2. Of course, there were a lot of things about Paul's life that were worthy of emulation.
3. However, because we want to focus on our text, we will notice only three things this morning.
4. First of all, there was....

I. Paul's Willingness To Become A Spectacle For Christ.

A. Notice again ***Vrs. 8-10*** of our text, Paul wrote, "Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us: and I would to God ye did reign, that we also might reign with you....For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for **we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men**....**We are fools for Christ's sake**, but ye are wise in Christ; **we are weak**, but ye are strong; ye are honourable, but **we are despised**."
1. Notice again the latter part of ***Vrs. 9***, "...for we are made **a spectacle** unto the world, and to angels, and to men."
2. Did you notice the word "**spectacle**"?
3. Paul said, speaking of himself and the other apostles, "...for we are **made a spectacle** unto the world."
4. Do you know what that word "**spectacle**" means?

5. It is translated from a Greek word that literally means, **"a public showing or display**."
6. In fact, it is the very word from which we get our English word, **"theater."**
7. And so, when Paul said, "...we are **made a spectacle**," he was actually saying, "...we are **put on public display**. We are **providing entertainment for the unsaved world**."

B. Let me tell you something about the **unregenerate** of this world in which we live.
1. They think that we (believers in Christ) are **idiots**.
2. Not only that, but they think that we are **mindless fools** because we believe that....
   -the Bible is **the Word of God**,
   -Jesus is **the virgin born Son of God**,
   -Jesus **died and rose again for our sins**, and that those who **put their trust in Him** will **live forever**.
3. And they laugh at us!
4. (Illus.- How many of you older folks remember watching "The Three Stooges"? Remember how we used to laugh at their silly antics? It was great entertainment.)
5. Well, that's how the unsaved world looks at us, as idiots, as mindless fools, and don't you think for a moment that they are not laughing at us.
6. They may not be laughing out loud, but they are definitely laughing.

C. But you know what, Paul didn't care, did he?
1. He didn't care what the world thought of him.
2. He didn't care if he was made a spectacle unto the world.
3. He didn't care if he was put on public display, providing entertainment for the unsaved world.
4. He didn't care, **as long as he was doing it for the Lord Jesus Christ**. (Amen?)
5. Notice again what he wrote in ***Vrs. 10*** of our text, "We are fools **for Christ's sake**."
6. Paul was willing to become a spectacle for Christ, and so should we.

D. You know, I'm afraid that most believers in Christ are **not willing** to become a spectacle for Christ.
1. This is why when they go out into the public arena, they do everything within their power to **conceal their faith**.
2. This is why you will never see them....
   -pray in public,
   -read their Bible in public,
   -speak about their faith in Christ in public.
3. They don't want people to know that they are a Christian.
4. Why not? Because they are not willing to become a spectacle, not even for the Lord Jesus Christ.
5. (Illus.- Let me illustrate. Most Christians would not have wanted to be in the situation that I was in this past Friday morning. Bro. Billmyer and myself, for several weeks now, have been going to downtown Charles Town on Friday morning, standing in front of the Post Office, and stopping people on the street for the purpose of taking a religious survey. Of course, it's not the survey that we are

interested in, but rather sharing Christ with those who stop to talk with us. The way it works, when someone stops to talk with us, I ask the questions and Bro. Billmyer records the answers. It is really a neat way of sharing the gospel on the street. Well, Friday, when Bro. Billmyer and I met at the church, Steven Flanagan happened to be there. I made a mistake. I asked Steven if he would like to go with us. Of course, he happily accepted our invitation and off to the Post Office we went. What I didn't notice at the time was that instead of grabbing a small New Testament, Steven grabbed his Bible [which is huge]. If you drove past the Charles Town Post Office last Friday morning, here is what you would have seen. You would seen Bro. Billmyer standing there with clipboard and pen in hand. You would have seen me nabbing people as they came out of the Post Office. And you would have seen Steven all over the place waving his huge Bible in the air. Talk about a spectacle. I couldn't help but notice people slowing down as they drove past the Post Office, looking at us in the strangest way. I'm sure they wondered what in the world was going on! It was great!)

6. But most Christians would avoid situations like this at all cost.
7. Why? Because they are not willing to become a spectacle unto the world, not even for Jesus.

E. This is really sad.
   1. Know why?
      2. Because Jesus was willing to become a spectacle for us.
      3. Don't you think He was a spectacle when was hanging on the cross for us?
      4. And so, first of all, Paul's willingness to become a spectacle for Christ is worthy of emulation.
      5. There was something else about his life that is worthy of emulation, and that was...

II. His Willingness To Physically Suffer For Christ.

A. Look again at ***Vrs. 11-13*** of our text, " Even unto this present hour we both **hunger**, and **thirst**, and **are naked**, and **are buffeted**, and have no certain dwellingplace;...And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it:...Being defamed, we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day."

B. Paul certainly **knew what it meant to suffer** for Christ.
   1. Turn with me to ***2 Cor. 11:24-28*** and notice the extent to which Paul suffered for Christ, he wrote "Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one....Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep;...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;...In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness... Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches."

2. Now I'm sure that Paul **did not enjoy suffering**.
3. No one in his right mind would enjoy being beaten, or being stoned, or being robbed, etc.
4. However, Paul was **more than willing to suffer**, if that is what it took for him to **fulfill God's purpose for his life**.

C. Not only is Paul to be commended for his willingness to suffer for Christ, but he is also to be commended for **how he responded to those who abused him**.
1. Notice again ***Vrs. 12-13*** of our text, "And labour, working with our own hands: **being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it:...Being defamed, we intreat**:"
2. Paul said,...
   - "We **bless** (speak well of) those who revile us."
   - "We **suffer** (put up with) those who persecute us."
   - "We **intreat** (pray for) those who defame (speak evil of) us."
3. Does this sound familiar to you?
4. It should, because this is **exactly how Jesus tells us to respond** to persecution.
5. Listen to what Jesus said in ***Mat. 5:43-44***, "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy....But I say unto you, **Love** your enemies, **bless** them that curse you, **do good** to them that hate you, and **pray for** them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;"
6. And so, Paul's willingness to physically suffer for Christ is worthy of our emulation.

D. I'm afraid that most Christians are not willing to suffer for Christ.
1. This is why they refuse to take a stand for Christ.
2. This is why they would far rather compromise their convictions, than take a chance on...
   -losing **a friend**, or
   -losing **their job**, or
   -losing **their popularity among their peers**.
3. They want to be a Christian, but they **don't want to have to suffer** as a Christian.
4. Again, this is sad, when you consider what Jesus was willing to suffer for us.
5. And so, secondly, Paul's life was worthy of emulation because of his willingness to physically suffer for Christ.
6. Notice, finally, that Paul's life was worthy of emulation because of....

III. His Willingness To Be An Instrument Of God In Bringing Lost Souls To Christ.

A. Notice again what Paul said in ***Vrs. 14-15*** of our text, "I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you....For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus **I have begotten you through the gospel**."
1. Notice again the latter part of ***Vrs. 15***, Paul said, "...for in Christ Jesus **I have begotten you** through the gospel."
2. Now what did Paul mean by that?

3. He simply meant that **he had been God's instrument in bringing the Corinthian believers to a saving knowledge of Christ**.
4. Paul did not save them.
5. Nor did he impart spiritual life to them.
6. These things were accomplished by the Holy Spirit.
7. However, Paul did play a role in their coming to Christ.
8. **What role** did he play?
9. He **preached the gospel to them**.
10. Do you remember Paul's words to the believers in Rome, recorded in ***Rom. 10:13-14***? He wrote, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved...How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and **how shall they hear without a preacher**?"
11. And so, Paul was instrumental in bringing the Corinthian believers to a saving knowledge of Christ.
12. You might say that he was their "father in the faith."

B. Let me ask you a question, this morning.
1. How many **spiritual children do you have**?
2. How many **children have you fathered in the faith**?
3. How many **lost souls have you been instrumental in bringing to Christ**?
4. But you say, "I'm not a missionary, like Paul."
5. That may be true, but every one of us should emulate Paul.
6. What did he say?
7. He said, "...be ye **followers** of me." (***Vrs. 16***)
8. Jesus put it like this in ***Mat. 4:19***, "**Follow me**, and I will **make you fishers of men.**"
9. Forget about Paul's example, if we follow our Lord Jesus as we should, we will be fishers of men.

C. You know, every one of us can look to someone whom God used to bring us to Christ.
1. Perhaps it was a **parent**.
2. Perhaps it was a **pastor**.
3. Perhaps it was a **SS teacher**.
4. Perhaps it was an **evangelist**.
5. Perhaps it was a **close friend**.
6. Perhaps it was someone else, but every one of us can look to someone who was instrumental in our coming to Christ.
7. They are our "**father in the faith**."
8. Don't you think **we should do the same** for others???

Conclusion:

A. What was there about Paul's life that was worthy of our emulation.
1. He wrote, "...be ye followers of me." ***(Vrs. 16)***
2. But what was there about his life that was worthy of our imitating?

B. Three things.
1. His willingness to **be made a spectacle for Christ**.
2. His willingness to **suffer physically for Christ**.
3. His willingness to **be an instrument of God in bringing lost souls to Christ**.
4. Can these same things be said of you????

C. Perhaps you are **not saved**. Why not come to Christ today?

"A Little Leaven"

Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 5:1-13

Introduction:

A. There are several things that will cause a church to lose its testimony, as well as its effectiveness (power) for Christ.
1. One of the things that will cause a church to lose its testimony is **divisions within the church**.
2. As we have already seen, this was definitely a problem in the church at Corinth.
3. Look again at ***1 Cor. 3:1-3***, "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ....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....For ye are yet carnal: for whereas **there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions**,"
4. The word "**envying**" means "**jealously**" and the word "**strife**" means "**fighting and bickering**."
5. Let me tell you something, when a church gets a reputation in the community for being this kind of a church, it **loses all of its effectiveness** for Christ.

B. A second thing that will cause a church to lose its testimony is **immorality within the church**.
1. This also was a problem in the church at Corinth.
2. Notice again the first part of ***Vrs. 1***, "It is reported commonly that **there is fornication among you**,"
3. Not only was there fornication within this church, but as we shall see in a moment, it was **a particularly vile form of fornication**.
4. Let me tell you something, when a church gets a reputation in the community for being this kind of a church, again, it **loses all of its effectiveness** for Christ.
5. I'm convinced that this is the number one reason why so many churches today have **lost their spiritual power**.
6. In some cases it is the pastor who is caught up in immorality.

7. In other cases it is a deacon, or some other person of prominence within the church.
8. In yet other cases, it is the church membership in general.
9. But the result is always the same, the church loses its testimony, as well as its effectiveness for Christ.

C. There is a very good **Old Testament example** of this principle.
1. Do you remember a man named "**Achan**?"
2. The children of Israel had just experienced a great victory over the fortified city of Jericho, and the next order of business was the conquest of a city called "**Ai**."
3. Ai, however, proved to be a very different story.
4. For some reason, **Israel was defeated at Ai**, even though Ai was not nearly the military challenge that Jericho was.
5. Do you remember what happened after Israel was defeated?
6. Joshua threw himself down before the Lord and, in so many words, said, "Lord, what's going on here? Why did you let us down? Lord, when all the other Canaanite nations hear of our defeat, they are going to come upon us and **destroy us completely**." ***(Josh. 7:6-9)***
7. Do you remember how the Lord answered Joshua?
8. In so many words, He said, "Joshua, I'm not the problem! The problem is, **you have sin in your camp**!"
9. As it turned out, there was a man named "Achan" who had taken of the forbidden spoils of Jericho, and because of his sin, **Israel had lost its power** over its enemies.
10. Well, **the same thing happens** to a church when immorality invades its membership. (The church loses its power!)

D. With all of this in mind, I want us to notice, first of all,...

I. The Sin That Had Invaded The Corinthian Church.

A. Look again at **Vrs. 1**, "It is reported commonly that **there is fornication among you**, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife."

B. There are **three things** about this sin that I want us to see.
1. First of all, I want us to see **the <u>nature</u> of this sin**.
2. The sin that had invaded the church at Corinth was clearly **sexual in nature**.
3. Again, Paul said, "there is fornication among you."
4. The word "**fornication**" here is translated from the Greek word, "**porneia**."
5. As you have probably already guessed, it is the very word from which we get our English word, "**pornography**."
6. What is means is, "sins that are of a sexual nature."
7. Its meaning is very broad, and can include sins such as **pre-marital sex, adultery, homosexuality, and incest**."
8. You may remember that I pointed out in an earlier message that the city of Corinth was a city that was **wholly given over to sexual immorality**.

9. One evidence of this was an idol temple that was dedicated to the worship of "**Aphrodite**," the Greek goddess of love (lust).
10. I'm told that over **1,000 prostitutes** resided at this temple and that "worshipers" came from all over the city to have their **sexual cravings satisfied**.
11. It's no wonder that "fornication" had found its way into the church at Corinth.

C. Next, I want us to see **the <u>depravity</u> of this sin**.
1. Not only was it a sexual sin, but it was a sexual sin of **the vilest (basest) kind**.
2. Notice again ***Vrs. 1***, "It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and **such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife**."
3. In other words, Paul said, "This sin is so vile, that **even unbelievers**, as a general rule, **do not engage in it**!
4. What was the sin?
5. He said, "...that **one should have his father's wife**."
6. In other words, it was the sin of incest.
7. Now some have argued that this was **not his biological mother** with whom he was having a sexual relationship, but rather **his step mother**.
8. That may very well be the case, but it was **still incest**.
9. This is why the law of Moses stated in ***Deu. 27:20***, "**Cursed** be he that **lieth with his father's wife**;"

D. Thirdly, I want us to see **the <u>flagrance</u> of this sin**.
1. Notice again the first four words in ***Vrs. 1***, **"It is reported commonly** that there is fornication among you,"
2. In other words, this was no secret sin!
3. This sin was out in the open, and I even get the impression that the guilty party was **flaunting his sin**.
4. This reminds me of something that Absalom did when he forced his father, David, to abdicate the throne and flee Jerusalem.
5. ***2 Sam. 16:22*** says, "So they spread Absalom a tent upon the top of the house; and Absalom went in unto his father's concubines (wives) **in the sight of all Israel**."

E. And so, this is the sin that had invaded the church at Corinth.
1. It was a sexual sin!
2. It was a vile, sexual sin!
3. It was a flagrant, vile, sexual sin!
4. Now I want us to notice...

II. How The Church Reacted To This Sin.

A. The first thing we notice is that they were "**puffed up**."
1. Look again at ***Vrs. 2***, "And **ye are puffed up**,"
2. Now what does that mean, "puffed up"?
3. It simply means that they were **proud**.
4. "Proud of what?" someone asks.

5. They were proud of...
   -how **tolerant** they were,
   -how **accepting** they were,
   -how **open minded** they were.
6. (Illus.- A few months ago I was talking with a lady who told me that she belonged to the United Methodist Church. When I asked her how should could justify being a part of a church that condoned putting homosexuals in the pulpit, she kind of stuck her nose up in the air and in so many words said, "We Methodists are more open minded than you Baptists. Boy, that was an understatement!)
7. Now please don't misunderstand me.
8. I'm all in favor of tolerance and acceptance and open mindedness.
9. However, when it comes to the church, **there are some things that we absolutely cannot tolerate**, and sexual immorality is one of them! (Amen?)

B. Notice what Paul went on to say in ***Vrs. 2***, "And ye are puffed up, **and have not rather mourned**,"
   1. In other words, Paul said, "You are so proud of yourselves for being tolerant and accepting and open minded, but what you ought to be is **ashamed of yourselves**. You ought to be **mourning**, you ought to be **grieving**, you ought to be **broken hearted over the sin that has invaded your church**!"
   2. (Illus.- I met another Methodist lady week before last who had a totally different attitude about the "tolerance" of her church. She had given me a clear testimony of salvation. When I asked her where she attended church, she said, "I attend Asbury United Methodist Church, but I may not be attending for much longer. When I asked her why, she began to tell me **how upset she was because her church would not take a stand** against having homosexuals in the pulpit. She said, "I don't understand it, because the Bible is very clear! "This woman was not only angry, but she was heartbroken over her church's tolerance of sexual immorality. Now she had the right attitude! **That's the attitude believers should have** when it comes to sexual immorality in the church.)

C. Not only was this church "puffed up," but **they had no intention whatsoever of doing anything** about this brother who was flaunting his sin in the church family. (You might say that **their "reaction" to this sin was "inaction**.")

D. But someone asks, "Why was that a bad thing? What was the harm in doing nothing?"
   1. Well, as I have already stated, sexual immorality in a church robs the church of its testimony and effectiveness for Christ.
   2. But there is another reason why sexual immorality in a church must not be tolerated, even if it involves only one person.
   3. Look again at ***Vrs. 6***, "Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that **a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump**?"
   4. (Illus.- The illustration here is quite obvious. If you introduce a little leaven into a lump of dough, it will grow and eventually permeate the entire lump.)
   5. The same thing is true of sexual immorality in a church.

6. If you introduce a little sexual immorality in a church and allow it to remain, it will grow and eventually effect others in the church body. How does this happen?
7. When a church tolerates (refuses to deal with) this kind of behavior within the church family, it leaves the impression that it condones the behavior.
8. It is as though the church is placing its stamp of approval on the behavior.
9. This is especially true of **young people**.
10. Young people already have an **enormous amount of pressure** being put on them to engage in sexual immorality, **when they see the church tolerating such behavior among its members**, that's all the encouragement some of them need.

E. And so, the church's reaction to this sin was two-fold.
1. First of all, they **were "puffed up."**
2. Secondly, they **did nothing about it**!
3. Finally, this morning, I want us to notice....

III. How The Church Should Have Reacted.

A. Paul made this very clear in ***Vrs. 2-5***, "And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, **that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you**....For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed,... In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ,...**To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh**, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."
1. Now what is Paul telling this church to do?
2. He is simply telling them to **remove the erring brother** from the fellowship of the church.

B. Now I realize that in today's society, not very many churches practice this kind of church discipline.
1. In fact, most churches today, including many so-called Baptist churches, practice **no kind of church discipline**.
2. However, the Bible is very clear.
3. Churches **must not tolerate sexual immorality** within the church family, and if those who are guilty of doing so refuse to repent, **they should be removed from the fellowship of the church**.

C. And this is **not just for the good of the church**, though that is definitely a part of it.
1. It is also **for the good of the erring brother or sister**.
2. (Illus.- Do you remember when your Daddy used to whip you, and he would tell you, "This is for your own good."? I'm sure **you wondered at the time**, when he was laying the belt to your hide, how that could possibly be for your good. But now, as you look back, you see how it did work for your good.
3. How is church discipline for the good of the brother who engages in sexual immorality and refuses to repent?

4. It's like this - as long as the church tolerates and condones his sin, there is no incentive for him to repent.
5. **Why should he**?
6. He has the best of both worlds.
7. He can live like the devil, and at the same time enjoy the benefits of being a part of a church body (family).
8. However, if the church will **hold him accountable** for his sin and **exact some consequences**, then there will at least be **some encouragement** to repent.
9. This is what Paul meant in ***Vrs. 5***, when he wrote, "To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, **that the spirit may be saved** in the day of the Lord Jesus."
10. You see, the purpose of church discipline is not simply to punish the erring brother, but rather to **encourage him to repent of his and get right with God**.

D. And so, that's how the church should have reacted. They should have disciplined the erring brother. Notice again how Paul summarized his thoughts in the latter part of ***Vrs. 13***, "Therefore **put away from among yourselves that wicked person**."

Conclusion:

A. Now I realize that in today's society, churches that practice Biblical church discipline are going to be criticized by the world, and even some professing Christians.
1. They will accuse us of being....
-intolerant,
-unaccepting,
-close minded.
2. They will also accuse us of being unloving.
3. The truth is, however, we are not unloving.
4. You see, if we truly love the Lord's church, and desire to do everything within our power to preserve her testimony and her effectiveness for Christ, **we will practice church disciple**, however difficult it may be.

B. You know, church discipline is designed to deal with open sin in the church.
1. Your sin, however, may be **a secret sin**, known only to you and your God.
2. You need to realize that even though your sin is not out in the open (yet), it is still damaging to your relationship with God, and to the church.
3. While it may not affect the church's testimony, it does effect the church's power.
4. **Remember Achan's sin**? (His was a secret sin!)

C. Perhaps you need to be saved.
1. God loves you.
2. Christ died for you.
3. You can be saved this morning, if you will only trust Jesus and call upon Him.
4. ***Rom. 10:13*** says, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord **shall be saved**."

"The Saints Shall Judge The World"

Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 6:1-11

Introduction:

A. (Illus.- Several years ago, one of my favorite television programs was a show called, "The People's Court." How many of you remember that program? I used to love to put myself in Judge Wapner's shoes and come up with my own ruling on the cases. Of course, Judge Wapner and I didn't always see eye to eye, but he couldn't help it that he wasn't as wise as I am.)

B. (Illus.- Now a days the television airways are full of "court TV" shows. My favorite has got to be "Judge Judy." I think the reason that I like her so much is because she doesn't beat around the bush, she just "tells it like she sees it." Now I realize that it is television, but I still enjoy listening to her berate some of those who appear in her court.)

C. One of the things that disturbs me, however, when I watch Judge Judy, is that sometimes you see **family members suing other family members**.
1. **Parents** suing their **children**.
2. **Children** suing their **parents**.
3. **Siblings** suing their **other siblings**.
4. I don't know about you, but I find this **very disturbing**.
5. Why? Because **family members ought not be suing family members**! (Amen?)

D. There is something, however, that **disturbs me even more** than family members suing other family members, and that is **Christians suing other Christians**.
1. As we shall see this morning, this was a problem in the church at Corinth.
2. Look again at ***Vrs. 1***, "**Dare any of you**, having a matter against another, **go to law before the unjust**,"
3. In other words, "**How dare you take one another to civil court**!"
4. You can almost hear **the anger and the disgust** in Paul's voice as he **reprimands** these believers.
5. Now we don't know the details of the lawsuits that were being brought.
6. Perhaps they were suing one another over unpaid debts.
7. Perhaps one believer's chariot was crashed into by another believer's chariot, and he was suing for damages.
8. Perhaps one believer was bitten by another believer's dog, and he was suing to get his medical bills paid.

9. We don't know the details, but this we do know, they were definitely taking one another to civil court for some reason, and Paul's response was, "**How dare you**!!!"

E. Now this raises a question.
1. **Why is it wrong** for one believer to take another believer to civil court?
2. There are at least three reasons why it is wrong.
3. First of all, and this should go without saying, it is wrong because....

I. It Hurts The Testimony Of The Church.

A. (Illus.- Several years ago I read about a church that experienced a church split. The group that split away, even though they were the smaller group, felt like they should retain possession of the church property, so they took the other group to court. It made headlines in that community.)
1. Now I don't remember how the case came out, but this I'm sure of, whatever the outcome (whichever side won), the testimony of that church was **forever blemished** in the eyes of that community.
2. (Illus.- Think about this: Imagine that you were the judge who oversaw this case. In all likelihood, he was unsaved. Now imagine that after seeing and hearing all of this church's dirty laundry, all of the animosity, all of the unforgiveness, all of the unChristian behavior, imagine that a soul winner from that same church knocked on your door to tell you about Jesus. Would you listen to him? I certainly wouldn't, and most unsaved people wouldn't either.)

B. Why is it a bad testimony for believers to take other believers to civil court?
1. It is a bad testimony because **the unsaved world expects more from us.**
2. That's just the way the unsaved world is.
3. They think nothing of **lying** themselves, but they expect Christians to tell the truth.
4. They think nothing of **stealing** themselves, but they expect Christians to be honest.
5. They think nothing of **cheating** on their spouses, but they expect Christians to be faithful to their spouses.
6. They think nothing of **taking one another to court**, but **they expect Christians to be above that**.
7. Not only does the unsaved world expect more from us, but **our God** expects more from us as well.
8. Listen to what Jesus said in ***Mat. 5:46-47***, "For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?...And if ye salute your brethren only, **what do ye more than others**? do not even the publicans so?"

C. And so, the first reason that believers should not take other believers to civil court is because it hurts the testimony of the church.

D. Believers taking other believers to civil court also....

II. It Ignores God's Plan For Believers Settling Disputes With Other Believers.

A. But someone says, "I didn't know that God had a plan!"

1. Well, He most certainly does, and it is **a great plan**, **a plan that works** if one will follow it all the way through.
2. What is God's plan?
3. Generally speaking, God's plan is for **believers to settle their disputes among themselves**, without involving unsaved judges.
4. Look again at ***Vrs. 1*** of our text, "Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, **and not before the saints**?"
5. In other words, Paul said, "How dare you let the unsaved settle your disputes **instead of settling them among yourselves**.
6. And so, generally speaking, God's plan is for believers to settle their disputes among themselves, without involving the unsaved world.

B. But someone asks, "**Are believers qualified** to settle their own disputes? Don't you need a "Judge Wapner" or a "Judge Judy" to settle personal disputes?"

1. The answer is, "**Yes**, believers are qualified, and, **no**, you don't need a "Judge Wapner" or a "Judge Judy."
2. Notice again ***Vrs. 2-3***, "Do ye not know that **the saints shall judge the world**? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?... Know ye not that **we shall judge angels**? how much more things that pertain to this life?"
3. In other words, Paul said, "Don't you realize that one day believers are going to judge this wicked world in which we live, and not only that, but we are going to judge angels as well? If that be the case, **then surely believers are qualified to settle their own disputes**!"
4. When Paul said that believers would one day judge the world, he was clearly referring to **the millennial reign of Christ** upon this earth.
5. Listen to ***Rev. 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."
6. When Paul said that believers would one day judge angels, he was surely talking about the judgement of Satan, as well as the other fallen angels.
7. Are they going to be judged? The answer is, "Yes!"
8. Listen to ***Jude 1:6***, "And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath **reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day**."
9. And so, yes, believers are more than qualified to settle their own disputes.
10. If we are one day going to judge this world, and if we are one day going to judge angels, then surely we should be able to settle our disputes among ourselves.

C. Jesus taught this principle to His disciples.
   1. Turn with me to ***Mat. 18:15-17***, "Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, **go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone**: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother....But if he will not hear thee, then **take with thee one or two more**, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established....And if he shall neglect to hear them, **tell it unto the church**: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican."
   2. If you paid attention, you noticed that Jesus laid out a **three step process** for believers to follow in settling disputes among themselves.
   3. The **first step** is to for the brother who feels as though he has been wronged to go privately to the brother who has wronged him and **try to resolve the matter on a personal level**.
   4. This is normally **all it takes** to resolve the dispute.
   5. However, if this does not resolve the dispute, the **second step** is to **involve one or two more believers** in the church.
   6. The purpose of this is both **mediation** and **verification**.
   7. The extra party can **help mediate**, and can also **be a witness** to what goes on in the meeting.
   8. If step one fails, then normally step two will be successful in resolving the dispute.
   9. However, if step two fails, there is a **third and final step**, and that is to involve the church as a whole, and **let the church settle the dispute**.
   10. Someone asks, "Does the church have the authority to act in this manner?"
   11. **It most certainly does**!
   12. Notice what Jesus said in ***Mat. 18:18***, "Verily I say unto you, **Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven**: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."
   13. In other words, **whatever the church decides**, the church's decision will be recognized and honored in heaven!

D. But someone says, "I would rather not involve the church in any way in settling my dispute."
   1. Well, you have that option.
   2. But if you are going to choose that option, you have no other option (at least no other Biblical option).
   3. You have no choice but to drop the matter altogether!
   4. In fact, notice what Paul wrote in ***Vrs. 7***, "Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather **take wrong**? why do ye not rather **suffer yourselves to be defrauded**?"
   5. In other words, Paul said, "If you are not going to settle your disputes among yourselves (keep it within the church family), then **you would be better off just accepting the wrong**, **accepting your losses** and getting on with your life, than you would be taking the matter to a civil court.

E. And so, it is wrong for believers to take other believers to civil court because it ignores God's plan.

1. It hurts the testimony of the church.
2. It ignores God's plan as is outlined in ***Mat. 18.***
3. A third reason why believers should not take other believers to civil court is that...

III. It Is A Regression (It Takes Us Back) To Our Old Way Of Life.

A. In other words, that's how we would have settled our disputes **before we were saved**.
   1. Look again at ***Vrs. 9-11***, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,...Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God....**And such were some of you**: but ye are **washed**, but ye are **sanctified,** but ye are **justified** in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."
      2. In other words, Paul said, "When you take each other to civil court, you are acting like **unrighteous unbelievers**. You are acting like **fornicators**, like **idolaters**, like **adulterers**, like **thieves**, like **drunkards**. But you are not among that crowd any longer. You once were, but not any longer. You are now **saved**, you are now **washed**, you are now **sanctified**, you are now **justified**, **therefore it's time you started acting like it!**"

B. You know, we have to be very careful not to forget who we are!
   1. Who are we?
   2. We are children of God!
   3. We have been washed in the blood of Jesus and sanctified (set apart) unto the service of Almighty God, and we must not forget that! Why not?
   4. Because the moment we do, we will **begin to slip back into our old ways** (that old way of life).
   5. (Illus.- Last week Bro. Tod Parrish and I visited a young man who at one time attended this church. He was never a member, but he attended on a regular basis. He was saved at Johnsontown Bible Church in Hedgesville. I've heard his testimony, and it is a sound testimony. However, when Tod and I visited him, we found him in his back yard shooting pool [billiards] all by himself. While we talked, I couldn't help but notice two beer cans sitting on a table nearby. It's clear that this young man has **forgotten who he is** and has **slipped back** into his old way of life.)
   6. Yes, we need to be very careful not to forget who we are, lest we too slip back into our old way of life.

C. But it's wrong for believers to take other believers to civil court because it is a regression (it takes us back) to our old way of life.

Conclusion:

A. Now let me stop here and say something, lest you get the wrong idea.
   1. The Bible is not teaching us here that we should never take a matter to civil court.

2. Sometimes, when dealing with unbelievers, we have no other recourse.
3. However, when it comes to other believers, we should never take them to civil court.
4. Why not?
5. It hurts the testimony of the church.
6. It ignores God's plan for settling disputes.
7. It is a regression (it takes us back) to our old way of life.
8. It would be far better to just suffer the wrong (take the loss) and get on with your life, than to take a brother or sister in Christ to civil court.
9. Don't do it!!! Don't do it!!! Don't do it!!!

B. Perhaps you are not saved.

"All Things Are Lawful"

Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 6:12-13

Introduction

A. As a pastor, I get asked a lot of questions.
   1. Sometimes people will ask me what I call "**Bible**" questions. In other words, they will come to me, read me a Bible verse, and then ask me what it means.
   2. At other times people will ask me what I call "**problem**" questions. In other words, they will come to me, tell me about the problem that they are facing, and then ask me what they should do or how they should deal with the problem.
   3. Now I get asked a lot of "Bible" questions and a lot of "problem" questions, but there is another type of question that I get asked even more.
   4. They are what I call "**is it wrong**" questions. In other words, someone will come to me, mention a questionable practice, and then ask me if it if wrong.
   5. Sometimes these questions are very easy to answer, because the Bible specifically condemns the practice as being sinful.
   6. For example, if someone were to ask me, "Pastor, would it be wrong for me to have a sexual affair with my neighbor's wife?" I could say, "Yes, it would be wrong, because the Bible says in ***Exo. 20:14***, "**Thou shalt not** commit adultery."
   7. And so, sometimes these questions are very easy to answer because the Bible specifically condemns the practice as being sinful.
   8. But there are other times when these questions are not so easy to answer, simply because the Bible does not specifically condemn the practice as being sinful.
   9. Now, how do we answer those questions?

B. We do so by applying certain Biblical principles.
   1. In our text, this morning, Paul gives us two principles that can be very helpful in dealing with questionable practices.
   2. We find a third principle in ***1 Cor. 10:23***.
   3. Let's take a look at these three principles.
   4. First of all, let us consider...

I. The Principle Of <u>Expediency</u>.

A. Look again at the first part of ***Vrs. 12*** of our text, "All things are lawful unto me, but **all things are not expedient**:"
   1. If the Bible does not specifically condemn a certain practice as being sinful and you still have your doubts, you need to ask yourself this question, "Is it expedient?"
   2. What does the word "expedient" mean?
   3. It comes from a Greek word that literally means "bringing toward a desired destination.
   4. We get our English word "expedition" from the same root word.
   5. And so, when we ask ourselves the question, "Is it expedient?" we are actually asking, "will it bring us toward a desired destination."
   6. In other words, **will it help us to accomplish the goals** that we have set for ourselves in this life?

B. Now before I say anything else, let me say this.
   1. Every Christian should have some goals for his life.

2. Of course, these goals must be God honoring goals, as well as goals that are consistent with God's plan for our lives, but every Christian should have some goals for his life. (Amen?)
3. The apostle Paul had some goals for his life.
4. Listen to what he wrote in ***Phil. 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,...**I press toward the mark** for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."
5. We need to be like Paul.
6. We need to have goals for our lives.
7. We need to work toward realizing those goals.
8. (Illus.- Yogi Berra once said, "You have to be careful if you don't know where you're going, because you might actually get there.")

C. Now getting back to that questionable practice, the very first question that we should ask is, "Is it expedient?"
1. In other words, "Will engaging in this practice be beneficial (helpful) to me in accomplishing the goals that I have set for my life?"
2. If the answer is, no, then you most probably will want reject the practice, no matter what it is.
3. And if the practice actually hinders you in achieving your goals, you will surely want to eject it.

D. (Illus.- For example, over the years I have been asked to get involved in different causes not directly related to the pastoral ministry. Some were even very worthwhile causes, but in almost every case I chose not to get involved. Do you know why? Lots of reasons, but perhaps the primary reason was because I determined that they would not in any way have helped me in achieving the goals that I have set for my life, and in some cases, would have actually been a hindrance.)

E. And so, first of all, there is the principle of expediency (will it help me in accomplishing the goals that I have set for my life?).

F. There is also...

II. The Principle of <u>Enslavement</u>.

A. Look again at the latter part of ***Vrs. 12*** of our text, "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**."
1. If the Bible does not specifically condemn a practice as being sinful and you still have your doubts, you should ask yourself the question, "Will it enslave me?"
2. In other words, "Will engaging in this practice result in my becoming enslaved by it?"

B. Every now and then someone will ask me, "Pastor, is it a sin for a Christian to watch television?"

1. (Illus.- There is a church not too far from here that many of you are familiar with. If what I hear about this church is true, you cannot be a member of this church if you have a television in your home. I'm not absolutely sure that is true, but that's what I have heard.)
2. But every now and then someone will ask me, "Pastor, is it a sin for a Christian to watch TV?
3. Of course, we know that there are certain programs that Christians should not watch because of their content, but aside from that, is it a sin for a Christian to have a TV in their home?
4. The answer is, "It all depends."
5. If we allow television to control us, as it does so many people, then it is definitely wrong.
6. But someone says, "I don't watch any bad programs. All I watch is Andy Griffeth and I Love Lucy and Dick Van Dyke.
7. It doesn't matter.
8. If you are addicted to Andy Griffeth, it's wrong.
9. Perhaps you need to find yourself a local chapter of "Andy Griffeth Anonymous."

C. (Illus.- A few years ago I met a pastor friend at a restaurant for breakfast. I noticed that when he ordered, he did not order coffee. Knowing that this guy was a big coffee drinker, I asked him why he was not drinking coffee. I thought maybe he would tell me it was for health reasons, but that was not the reason he gave. Here's what he said, in so many words. He said, "I realized one day that I wasn't drinking coffee because I enjoyed the taste, but rather because I had to have it, especially early in the morning." He said, "That bothered me, so I decided to quit drinking coffee just to prove to myself that I could do without it [that I was the boss].)

1. Someone asks, "Preacher, are you saying that drinking coffee can be a sin?"
2. The answer is, "Yes!"
3. In fact, anything can become sinful, even something that is very innocent in nature, if we allow it to control or enslave us.

D. Do you know why this is true?

1. It's true because we should have no Master but Christ.
2. When God saved us, he delivered us from bondage to sin and Satan, so that we could serve our Lord Jesus Christ.
3. There's only one throne in our hearts, and we should see to it that only Christ occupies that throne. (Amen?)

E. And so, there is the principle of enslavement (will it enslave me?).

F. There is also...

III. The Principle Of <u>Edification</u>.

A. Turn with me to ***1 Cor. 10:23***, Paul wrote, "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: **all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not**."
   1. If the Bible does not specifically condemn a practice as being sinful, and you still have your doubts, you should ask yourself the question, "Is it edifying?"
   2. What does the word "edify" mean?
   3. It means "to build up," in a spiritual sense.
   4. And so, you need to ask yourself the question, "Will engaging in this practice build me up, spiritually? Will it make me spiritually stronger? Will it encourage me in my spiritual development and growth?"

B. The Bible teaches us that, as Christians, we should be constantly growing spiritually.
   1. For example, the Bible says in ***2 Pet. 3:18***, "But **grow in grace**, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."
   2. In ***1 Pet. 2:2*** we read, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, **that ye may grow thereby**:"
   3. And so, as Christians, we should be constantly growing spiritually, growing in...
      -knowledge,
      -strength,
      -Godliness,
      -our walk with the Lord.
   4. That being true, we should be extremely wary of any practice that does not encourage that spiritual growth.

C. One of the questions that I often ask people when they question me about whether or not a certain practice would be wrong, is, "Will it keep you out of church?"
   1. Why would I ask that question?
   2. Because I am convinced that church attendance is vitally important when it comes to spiritual growth.
   3. That being true, any practice that has a tendency to keep you out of church should be avoided, even though it may be entirely innocent in nature.
   4. (Illus.- One of the things that appreciate about living in West Virginia is the fact that it is against the law to hunt on Sunday. They are in the process now of trying to get that law changed, but I hope and pray that they never change it. I think it is a good law.)
   5. Now don't misunderstand me.
   6. I don't have a problem with hunting, in and of itself.
   7. In fact, as most of you know, I love to hunt as much as the next person, but if a person's passion for hunting keeps him out of church on a regular basis, then it becomes wrong.
   8. Why?
   9. Because it would discourage someone's spiritual growth.
   10. The same thing would hold true for other forms of recreation, such as fishing and camping.
   11. No, there is nothing wrong with fishing and camping, but when they begin to keep Christians out of church on a regular basis, then they become a bad thing.

D. And so, there is the principle of edification.
   1. "Is it edifying?"
   2. "Will it build me up, spiritually?"
   3. "Will it encourage me to grow in my walk with the Lord, or will it be a hindrance?"
   4. Important questions that must be answered.

Conclusion

A. This morning, I have given you three Biblical principles that, when applied to any questionable practice, can help you to decide whether or not to refrain.
   1. The principle of **expediency** (will it help me to accomplish the goals that I have set for my life?).
   2. The principle of **enslavement** (will it enslave me?)
   3. The principle of **edification** (will it build me up spiritually?)

B. The point is, there are a lot of practices that we should avoid, not because the Bible specifically condemns them as being sinful, but because they violate one or more of these three very important principles.

"Bought With A Price"

Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 6:15-20

Introduction:

A. (Illus.- We haven't had cable for over a year now, but when we still had cable, one of my favorite TV programs was one called Animal Planet [I think that's what it was called]. In fact, I liked all of those programs that, for whatever reason, focused on animals. Do you know why? Because animals sometimes exhibit a degree of intelligence that even some humans do no possess.)

B. Let me give you an example.

1. Do you remember what God said through the prophet Isaiah in ***Isa. 1:3***?
2. He said, "The ox **knoweth his owner**, and the ass his master's crib: but **Israel doth not know**, my people doth not consider."
3. In other words, He said, "A dumb ox is smart enough to know who it's owner is, but Israel is not that smart. Israel does not know who his owner is."

C. You know, Israel was not alone in not recognizing his owner.
1. **Many believers today are in the same boat**.
2. What do I mean by that?
3. Well, we will see later on this morning as we get further into this message.
4. This morning, at least **three things** stand out in our text.
5. First of all, we see....

I. An Undeniable Fact.

A. The undeniable fact is stated in the first part of ***Vrs. 20***, where we read these words, "For **ye are bought with a price**:"

B. Now what did Paul mean when he said that we are "**bought with a price**"?
1. In order to understand this, there is **something else** that we must understand first.
2. We must understand **our spiritual condition before we came to Christ** (before we were saved).
3. But someone says, "We were **lost**!"
4. It's true, we were lost, but we were more than lost.
5. Someone else says, "We were **spiritually dead**!"
6. It's true, we were spiritually dead, but we were more than spiritually dead.
7. Still someone else says, "We were **alienated** from
8. It's true, we were alienated from God, but we were more than alienated from God.
9. In addition to being....
-lost,
-spiritually dead,
-alienated from God,
we were also **in spiritual bondage**!

C. First of all, we were **servants of sin**.
1. Listen to what the Bible says in ***Rom. 6:16-17***, "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?...But God be thanked, that **ye were the servants of sin**, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you."
2. Paul told the believers in Rome, "...ye were (before you were saved) **the servants of sin**."
3. Sin was **your master**!
4. Sin was **in control of you**!
5. Sin was **calling the shots in your life**!
6. That was **also true of us** before we were saved.

7. And so, first of all, we were servants of sin.

D. We were also **servants of Satan**.
1. Do you remember what Jesus said to a group of unsaved Jews in ***John 8:44***? He said, "Ye are of your father the devil, and **the lusts of your father ye will do**."
2. Notice that He did not say, "The lusts of your father...
-"ye might do," or
-"ye will probably do," or
-"ye most likely will do,"
but rather, "The lusts of your father **ye will do**."
3. Do you know why this was true?
4. Because these unsaved Jews were not only children of the devil, but they were also servants of Satan.
5. The devil was **their master**!
6. The devil was **in complete control of them**!
7. The devil was **calling all of the shots in their lives**!
8. That was also true of us before we were saved.
9. And so, secondly, we were the servants of Satan.
10. This is what I mean when I say that before we were saved, **we were in spiritual bondage** (servants of sin and Satan).

E. Now what did Paul mean when he said that we were "**bought with a price**"? ***(Vrs. 20)***
1. The word "bought" in the Greek literally means "**purchased**" or "**redeemed**."
2. (Illus.- Let me use an illustration that will help us to understand the meaning of this word. I thank God that at least in our nation, slavery is a thing of the past. However, during the days of slavery, Africans were brought to this country and treated not as human beings, but rather as **other men's property**, and as other men's property, they were **bought and sold**. The only way that a slave could become a free man, was **if someone bought him [paid the asking price] and then set him free**.)
3. There is also **a Biblical example** of this.
4. In Old Testament days, if a man became indebted to another man, and had no other means of paying his debt, he could do so **by selling himself into servitude**. (In other words, in order to pay his debt, he would **become his debtor's servant or slave**.)
5. This being true, the Old Testament Law contained a provision which allowed **a near kinsman** of the man who had sold himself into slavery to redeem his relative (buy him out of slavery), that is if he could come up with the necessary funds. ***(Lev. 25:47-49)***
6. This man was referred to as a **"kinsman redeemer."**

F. Now back to **the question at hand**.
1. What did Paul mean when he said that we were **"bought with a price**"? ***(Vrs. 20)***
2. He simply meant that we have been bought out of slavery (spiritual bondage) and set free.

3. Our kinsman redeemer, Jesus Christ, has paid our sin debt ***(Rom. 6:23)*** in full, and because He did, we are no longer slaves to sin and Satan! ***(Gal. 3:13)***
4. Amen! Isn't that wonderful???

G. Now this raises yet another question.
1. What price did Jesus have to pay in order to redeem us?
2. Paul said that we are "bought with a price," but what was the price?
3. ***1 Pet. 1:18-19*** has the answer. Listen to what it this passage says, "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold,....But **with the precious blood of Christ**, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:"
4. The price that Jesus paid was **His own precious blood**!
5. Paul put it like this in ***Eph. 1:7***, "In whom we have redemption **through his blood**, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;"
6. In the words of the old hymn,...
Saved by the blood of the Crucified One!
Now ransomed from sin and a new work begun;
Sing praise to the Father and praise to the Son-
Saved by the blood of the Crucified One!

H. And so, we see an undeniable fact - we are bought with a price. We also see in this text....

II. An Unavoidable Conclusion.

A. The unavoidable conclusion is stated in the later part of ***Vrs. 19***, where we read these words, "**ye are not your own**."

B. Now what did Paul mean when he said that **we are not our own**?
1. He simply meant that because.....
-we are "bought with a price,"
-we have been bought out of bondage and set free,
-our kinsman redeemer, Jesus Christ, has paid our sin debt in full, and we are no longer slaves to sin & Satan,
because all of that is true, **we are now God's property**.
2. In other words, **we belong to God**.
3. Our **bodies** belong to God.
4. Our **spirit** belongs to God.
5. Our **lives** belong to God.
6. **Everything we have** and **everything we are** now belongs to God!

C. Do you realize what this means?
1. First of all, it means that we do not have the right to **live our lives** as we please.
2. (Illus.- Oftentimes, when parents are trying to encourage their children to make wise decisions, the child will respond by saying, **"Dad (or Mom), it's MY life!"**)

3. (Illus.- Children are not the only ones who try to use this argument for making bad decisions. More than once, as I have tried to encourage believers to make wise decisions, they have responded by saying, **"Pastor, it's MY life!"**)
4. There is only one problem with that argument.
5. **It's NOT our life**.
6. As we have already determined, **we belong to the Lord**, therefore **we do not have the right to live our lives as we please**.

D. I'll tell you something else, we do not have the right to **do with our bodies** as we please.
1. I've heard many people try to justify **abusing** or **defiling their bodies** in some way by saying, **"It's MY body!"**
2. (Illus.- For example, I've heard women try to justify **killing their unborn child** by saying, "It's MY body!")
3. (Illus.- I've also heard teenagers, when confronted with the reality of sexually transmitted diseases, try to justify their **promiscuity** by saying, "It's MY body!")
4. (Illus.- I've also heard smokers, when confronted with the reality that smoking causes cancer, try to justify their **addiction to nicotine** by saying, "It's MY body!")
5. Again, there is only one problem with that argument.
6. **It's NOT our body**.
7. As we have already determined, **we belong to God**, therefore **we do not have the right to with our bodies as we please**

E. And so, we see an unavoidable conclusion.
1. Because we are bought with a price, we are not our own.
2. We belong to God.
3. We should take to heart the words of the old hymn,
I am thine, O Lord, I have heard Thy voice,
And it told Thy love to me;
But I long to rise in the arms of faith
And be closer drawn to thee.

F. Last of all, this morning, we see in our text...

III. An Unalterable Responsibility.

A. The unalterable responsibility is stated in the latter part of ***Vrs. 20***, where we read these words, "...**.therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's**."

B. Notice that this responsibility is two-fold.
1. First of all, we have a responsibility to **glorify God in our body**.
2. Now how do we do this?
3. First and foremost, we do this by **keeping our bodies chaste**, by avoiding anything and everything that has the potential of sexually defiling our bodies.
4. This is really what this whole passage is about.

5. Let's go back up to ***Vrs. 15*** and read again the first four verses of our text, Paul said, "Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid....What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh....But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit....**Flee fornication**. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but **he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body**." ***(Vrs. 15-18)***
6. You teenagers here, this morning, listen to me.
7. Do you want to glorify God with your body?
8. I hope that you do, especially if you are saved.
9. Well, the best way to glorify God in your body is to **flee fornication (guard your chastity)**.
10. Keep yourself from all forms of sexual immorality.
11. **Refrain from any and all sexual activity** until you meet that young lady or young man with whom the Lord would have you to spend the rest of your life.
12. That's how you can glorify God with your body.

C. There is another way that we can glorify God in our body, and that is by dedicating our body to the service of God.
1. Do you remember what Paul wrote in ***Rom. 12:1***?
2. It says, "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**."
3. Paul put it like this in ***Rom. 6:12-13***, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof....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 (body parts) as instruments of righteousness unto God**."
4. (Illus.- I heard someone put it like this, he said, "I used my body to serve the devil for many years. Now that I'm saved, it's time that I use my body to serve the Lord.")

D. Not only do we have a responsibility to glorify God in our body, but we should do likewise in our spirit.
1. Notice again the later part of ***Vrs. 20***, "...therefore glorify God in your body, **and in your spirit**, which are God's."
2. How do we glorify God in our "spirit"?
3. The word translated "spirit" here is the Greek word "pneuma," which literally means "a breath" or "a breeze."
4. In our text, it refers to our "inner man," the person we are on the inside.
5. And so, what Paul is saying here is that not only should we be glorifying God on the outside, but we should also be glorifying God on the inside.
6. In other words, glorifying God in our thoughts, our attitudes, and our dispositions.
7. Let me ask you a personal question, this morning.
8. If I had the ability right now to look inside of you (into your inner most being), what would I see?

9. Would I see something that glorifies God?

E. And so, we have an unalterable responsibility.
1. Because we are bought with a price, and because we are not our own, we have a responsibility to glorify God, both in our body and in our spirit.
2. Are you fulfilling this responsibility???

Conclusion:

A. What have we seen this morning?
1. An undeniable fact ("ye are bought with a price").
2. An unavoidable conclusion ("ye are not our own").
3. An unalterable responsibility ("therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit").

B. Let me ask you a couple of questions.
1. First of all, **are you "bought with a price"**?
2. Are you saved? Have you trusted the Christ who shed His precious blood for your redemption when He died on the cross?
3. If you should die this very moment, are you sure that you would go to heaven?
4. Perhaps you are in need of redemption, this morning.

C. Secondly, if you have been bought with a price, **do you realize that you are not your own**, and that you belong go God.
1. Remember the ox?
2. As dumb as the ox is, it knows it's owner.
3. Do you know Who your owner is?

D. Last of all, **are you glorifying God** in your body and in your spirit?

"Seek Not A Wife"

Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 7:1-9,25-38

Introduction:

A. The apostle Paul is probably the most misunderstood of all the writers of the New Testament.
   1. For example, a lot of people are convinced that Paul did not like women.
   2. (Illus.- I'll never forget a conversation I had with a lady many years ago. She was a Pentecostal lady and we were having a rather lively discussion on the subject of women pastors. Of course, Pentecostals don't have a problem with women being pastors, and I was trying to show her from the Scriptures why that is not an acceptable practice. I'll never forget what she said when I quoted her ***1 Tim. 2:12***, which says, "But **I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man**, but to be in silence." When I quoted that verse, she said, "You can't believe that, because Paul wrote that and everyone knows that Paul was a woman hater.")
   3. This lady is not alone.
   4. There are many who believe that you can't take all of Paul's writings at face value because **he was biased against women**.

B. Another reason why many people believe Paul was biased against women is because of what he had to say about **"marriage versus the single life"** here in ***1 Cor. 7***.

1. This morning, as we examine part of this chapter, there are three things that we should learn.
2. First of all, we should learn...

I. The <u>Advantage</u> Of The Single Life.

A. Now before I say anything else, let me define what I mean by "the single life."

1. In today's society, this phrase means something entirely different than what it did in Paul's day.
2. In today's society, "the single life" simply means living one's life without the benefit of marriage (without entering into a marriage contract with another), and that's all it means.
3. (Illus.- Let me illustrate. Last Tuesday afternoon, a young couple [man and woman] stopped by the church looking for a handout. When they came into my office, I noticed that the young lady was wearing an engagement ring. At first, I thought that they might be looking for a preacher to marry them, but come to find out, they had no interest whatsoever in getting married. While she was wearing an engagement ring, I found out that they had been shacking up for several years and had even produced two children during that time.)
4. Now most people today would describe this kind of situation as living "the single life."
5. However, this is **definitely not what I mean** when I talk about the single life.
6. When I talk about the single life, I am talking a life where the person is not only unmarried, but is also **sexually inactive**, which means he (or she) doesn't...
   -shack up with someone,
   -have a sexual relationship with someone,
   -produce children as a result of having a sexual relationship with someone.
7. In other words, when it comes to sex, he (or she) **lives a life of total abstinence**.
8. That's what I mean when I talk about "the single life."

B. Now, what is the advantage of living the single life?

1. There **is** an advantage!
2. This is why Paul wrote in ***Vrs. 1*** of our text, "Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: **It is good for a man not to touch a woman**."
3. In other words, it is good for a man to **remain single**.
4. Now this raises the question, "**Why** is it good?"
5. **What is the advantage** of living the single life?
6. To put it as simply as I know how, the advantage of living the single life is that it **allows a believer to be more focused on His or Her own personal devotion and service to God.**
7. In other words, it allows a believer to serve the Lord **without the distractions that naturally come with being married**.

8. Look again at ***Vrs. 32-35*** of our text, "But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried **careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord**:...But he that is married **careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife**....There is difference also between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman **careth for the things of the Lord**, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit: but she that is married **careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband**....And this I speak for your own profit; not that I may cast a snare upon you, but for that which is comely, and that ye may **attend upon the Lord without distraction**."

C. Now please don't misunderstand what Paul is saying here.
1. He is **not** saying that it is wrong for a husband to want to please his wife, or a wife to want to please her husband.
2. In fact, he tells us in the first part of this chapter, as we shall see in a few minutes, that it is a husband's **God given responsibility** to please his wife and it is a wife's **God given responsibility** to please her husband.
3. And so, Paul is not saying that it is wrong.
4. He's simply saying that if you are married, you won't be able to concentrate only on yourself and how you are going to please God with your life.
5. Why not?
6. Because you will have a wife or a husband (and perhaps children) who will **naturally demand a good part of your attention**.
7. (Illus.- Let me illustrate. Suppose God were to lay it on my heart to go to Africa [let's say, Chad] as a missionary. Being married and having a family, **what is the first thing that I am going to consider**? How I'm going to raise the support that I will need? No. How I'm going to learn the language? No. How I'm going to adjust to a living in a new culture? No. The very first thing I am going to consider is **my family**. You see, I have a wife, as well as a son who still lives under my roof. I have to consider them. I have to think about them. That's just part of being married and having a family.)
8. (Illus.- I have known of several missionaries who took their wives to a foreign mission field, and then had to **come home** a few months later because their wives could not handle it. Either they could not handle being so far away from their families, or they could not handle the new culture.)
9. The point is, being single is a great advantage for the believer because it allows him (or her) to serve the Lord **without the distractions that naturally come with being married**.

D. This is not only true for men, but it is also true for women.
1. Notice again ***Vrs. 34*** of our text, "There is difference also between a **wife and a virgin**. The unmarried woman **careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit**: but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband."
2. (Illus.- As you know, two of the missionaries that we now support are single ladies. Last year Michelle Young was with us for our conference. This year, Karen Nolan was here. Someone said to me during this past missions conference, "**Isn't it sad**

that Karen is not married?" When I heard that, I almost said, "Yes," but I didn't. Thankfully, I caught myself and instead I said, "No, it's not sad at all!" Do you know what it is not sad? It's not sad because if Karen were married, she would **not be able** to do what she is now doing for the Lord. She would not be able **to devote her whole heart and her whole life** to serving the Lord in Mexico, because she would have a husband demanding a substantial part of her time and attention. Amen?)

3. We shouldn't feel sorry for Karen.
4. We shouldn't feel sorry for Michelle Young.
5. We shouldn't feel sorry for any young person who makes the choice to remain single, so that they can **devote themselves fully, without any distractions,** to serving the Lord and pleasing Him with their lives.
6. In fact, in some ways, we should envy them!
7. That's the advantage of the single life.

E. Secondly, this morning, we see...

II. The <u>Attraction</u> To Marriage.

A. Let me ask a question.
   1. After honestly considering the advantage of the single life, why would anyone want to get married?
   2. What is it about marriage that is so attractive?

B. Well, there are many things about marriage that most people find attractive.
   1. The one that Paul deals with in our text is the **physical** attraction to marriage. In other words, **the desire to have one's sexual desires satisfied**.
   2. But someone says, "Pastor, **how dare you** stand up in the pulpit and talk about something so dirty and so perverse as one's sexual desires!"
   3. Listen, there is nothing dirty or perverse about having sexual desires.
   4. We are all sexual beings.
   5. God created us with sexual desires.
   6. There's **nothing sinful** about having sexual desires as long as we satisfy those desires within the boundaries of the marriage relationship.

C. This is why Paul said what he did in ***Vrs. 2*** of our text.
   1. After having said that "it is good for a man not to touch a woman," he said, "Nevertheless, **to avoid fornication**, **let every man have his own wife**, and **let every woman have her own husband**."
   2. He said it again in ***Vrs. 8-9***, "I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I....But if they cannot contain, **let them marry**: for **it is better to marry than to burn**."
   3. In other words, if they cannot control their sexual desires, if they are not strong enough to say "no" to these desires, it is **better to get married** and satisfy those

desires within the boundaries of marriage, than to commit fornication. (This is something that the Catholic church has yet to learn. Amen?)

4. And so, there's nothing sinful about having sexual desires and satisfying those desires, as long as we do so **within the boundaries of marriage**.
5. This is why we read in ***Heb. 13:4***, "**Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled**: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge."

D. I'm going to say something now that I cannot prove, however, I am convinced it is true.

1. The vast majority of people are **not suited for the single life**.
2. This is especially true **when it comes to us guys**.
3. Let's face it, **men need women far more** than women need men. (Amen?)
4. Do you remember what God said soon after He had created Adam?

5. Listen to ***Gen. 2:18***, "And the LORD God said, **It is not good that the man should be alone**; I will make him an help meet for him."
6. As wonderful a creation as Adam was, **he was not complete** until God created a wife for him.
7. It's a good thing that God created Adam first, because if He had created Eve first, Adam would never have been created. (I'm kidding, of course!)
8. And so, that's the attraction to marriage.

E. But there is something else that we see in our text, this morning, and that is...

III. The <u>Accountability</u> Of Marriage Partners.

A. The first thing that Paul tells us in this chapter is that if we can handle it (if we are suited), there is a **great advantage** to remaining single.

1. However, he said, if we are not suited, if we cannot keep our sexual desires under control, **we should marry**, rather than commit fornication.
2. But then he takes it **a step further**.
3. He says, if we do decide to get married, **we are obligated to satisfy our partner's sexual desires**.
4. Look again at ***Vrs. 3-5***, "Let the husband render unto the wife **due benevolence**: and likewise also the wife unto the husband....The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife....**Defraud ye not one the other**, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, **that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency**."

B. There are three things I want you to notice in this passage.

1. First of all, notice the words, "**due benevolence**" in ***Vrs.3***, Paul said, "Let the husband render unto the wife **due benevolence**: and likewise also the wife unto the husband."
2. The word "due" here means "that which is morally obligated."
3. The word "benevolence," as it is used in this context, refers to one's "conjugal duty."

4. So what Paul is saying here is that it is a husband's moral duty to "be sexual" with his wife, and it is a wife's moral duty to "be sexual" with her husband.
5. But someone says, "Pastor, there's a lot more to marriage than just "being sexual."
6. That's true, however, "being sexual," according to this passage, is an extremely important part of marriage.

C. The second thing that I want us to notice about this passage is the word "**defraud**" in ***Vrs. 5***, Paul said, "**Defraud ye not** one the other,"
1. The word "defraud" here means "to deprive" or "to keep back by fraud."
2. This is a strong word here.
3. So what Paul is saying is that when a husband or a wife refuses to "be sexual," or refuses to "fulfill their conjugal duty," they are guilty of **defrauding their mate**.
4. In other words, they are guilty of **sinning against** their mate!
5. (Illus.- Oftentimes a husband will do something that hurts or disappoints his wife, and she will punish him by refusing to "be sexual" with him.)
6. Have you ever heard the expression, "**Two wrongs** don't make a right?"
7. That is certainly true in this situation.

D. Not only is it a sin to refuse to "be sexual" with your mate, it is also **asking for trouble**.
1. Notice again what Paul said in the latter part of ***Vrs. 5***, "Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, **that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency**."
2. While there is certainly no justification (ever) for a husband or a wife looking for sexual gratification outside of the marriage relationship, **we can understand how this could be a very real temptation** when he or she is not getting their needs met at home.
3. Wives should do **everything within their power to spare their husbands from this temptation**, and husbands should do likewise.
4. That's the accountability of marriage partners.

Conclusion:

A. What have we learned this morning?
1. First of all, we learned **the <u>advantage</u> of the single life**.
2. Being single allows a believer to be **more focused** on His or Her own personal devotion and service to God.
3. It allows a believer to serve the Lord **without the distractions** that naturally come with being married.
4. We also learned **the <u>attraction</u> to marriage**.
5. The primary attraction to marriage is physical.
6. In other words, it allows a believer to have his or her sexual desires satisfied without committing fornication.
7. Finally, we learned **the <u>accountability</u> of marriage partners**.
8. Once two people enter into marriage, they each have a moral obligation to satisfy their partner's sexual desires.

9. To fail to do so is to defraud your partner and to sin against God.

B. Are you single?
   1. Consider the advantage of remaining single.
   2. However, if you are not suited to the single life, it would be **far better** for you to get married than to commit fornication.
   3. There is **no sin or shame** in getting married for this reason, providing you marry someone who shares your Christian faith and values.

C. Are you married?
   1. Then **stay married**!
   2. One of the best ways that you can maintain a healthy marriage is to **be faithful in satisfying your partner's sexual desires**.
   3. This not only makes for a happy marriage, but it also **lessens the temptation** that your partner will face out in the world. (Amen?)

"Unto The Married I Command"

Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 7:10-16, 39-40

Introduction:

A. Last Sunday morning, as we began our study of ***1 Corinthians 7***, we noticed that Paul began his discussion of the subject of marriage by **pointing out the advantage of the single life** (remaining unmarried).

1. Notice again how Paul began this chapter in ***1 Cor. 7:1***, "Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: **It is good for a man not to touch a woman**."
2. In other words, "It is **good for a man to remain single**."
3. **What** is the great advantage in remaining single?
4. Paul answered this question in ***1 Cor. 7:32-34***, "But I would have you without carefulness. **He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord**, **how he may please the Lord**:...But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife....There is difference also between a wife and a virgin. **The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit**: but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband."
5. To put it simply, the great advantage in remaining single is it allows a believer to **devote his (or her) life fully to the Lord** and to serve Him **without the distractions that naturally come with being married**.
6. And so, Paul began his discussion of the subject of marriage by pointing out the advantage of the single life.

B. However, he goes on in this same chapter and points out that if one decides against the single life and **takes a wife or husband**, he is **bound** to his wife (or she is **bound** to her husband) **for life**.

1. This is why believers should **think (and pray) long and hard** before going to the altar and saying, "I do."
2. As we continue our study of ***1 Corinthians 7*** this morning, we will learn at least three great truths concerning marriage.
3. First of all, we will learn that....

I. Marriage Between Believers Is A Life Long Commitment!

A. Now I realize that **in our society today**, marriage is **not** looked upon as a life long commitment.
   1. When two people get married today, while they may speak the words, "till death do we part," in their minds they are thinking, "**If this doesn't work out** the way that we want it to, **we can always get a divorce and try it again** with someone else."
   2. That's the attitude that the vast majority of people today have when they enter into marriage, and it saddens me to say this, but **even some professing believers** have the same attitude.

B. God's Word, however, teaches us that marriage between believers is a life long commitment.
   1. Notice what Paul wrote in ***Vrs. 39*** of our text, "The wife is **bound** by the law **as long as her husband liveth**."
   2. The same thing is true concerning the husband, he is **bound** by the law **as long as his wife is alive**.
   3. Now **what law** is Paul talking about here?
   4. Well, he is **certainly not talking about man's law**.
   5. Man's laws concerning marriage are so loose that you don't any grounds (justifiable reasons) for divorce.
   6. Anyone can get a divorce for any reason!
   7. When Paul said that the "wife is **bound** by the law **as long as her husband liveth**," he was talking about God's law, not man's law.
   8. Jesus put it like this in ***Mat. 19:6***, "Wherefore they (man and wife) are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, **let not man put asunder**."

C. This is why Paul wrote what he did in ***Vrs. 10*** of our text, "And **unto the married** I command, yet not I, but the Lord, **Let not the wife depart from her husband**:"
   1. In other words, "Wives, don't...
      -**leave** your husband,
      -**separate from** your husband,
      -**get a divorce from** your husband."
   2. The same thing would apply to husbands.
   3. Husbands, don't...
      -**leave** your wife,
      -**separate from** your wife,
      -**get a divorce from** your wife!
   4. Marriage between believers is a life long commitment!

D. But someone says, "Pastor, what if, for one reason or another, I feel compelled to leave my husband? Or what if I feel compelled to leave my wife?"
   1. Paul addresses this as well.

2. Notice what he wrote in ***Vrs. 11*** of our text, "But and if she depart, **let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband**: and let not the husband put away his wife."
3. In other words, Paul said, "If, for some reason, you feel compelled to leave (divorce) your husband or wife, at that point you **only have two options**.
4. You must either **remain single**, or **be reconciled** to your former spouse, one or the other.
5. **You have no other options**. (At least, not Biblically.)

E. But someone says, "Pastor, that's **not fair**! It's not fair that I should have to be settle for the single life **just because my former husband (or my wife) didn't treat me right**!"
1. Let me say a couple of things in response.
2. First of all, you should have considered that **before** you went to the altar and said, "I do."
3. You knew what kind of a man you were marrying. You knew what kind of a woman you were marrying, or at least you would have known, had you taken the time to get to know them before you said, "I do."
4. So let's not accuse God of being **unfair**.
5. And let's not try to blame God for **our own stupidity**!
6. (Illus.- Have you ever heard the expression, **"You made your bed, now sleep in it**"? While this is not a Biblical saying, as far as I know, it certainly applies to what we are talking about here!)
7. The second thing I want to say is, **what's wrong with settling for the single life**?
8. As we have already seen, there are many advantages to being single.
9. What you need to do, instead of accusing God of being unfair, is to begin taking advantage of being single.
10. As we saw last week, there are many things that a single person can do that a married person cannot do.
11. But someone says, "I don't want to be single!!!"
12. Okay, then **be reconciled to your husband**!
13. That's the only other option that you have.

F. Unless, of course, your former spouse dies before you.
1. If your former spouse dies before you, then **you are free to marry someone else**, as long as you marry another believer.
2. Look again at ***Vrs. 39*** of our text, "The wife is bound by the law **as long as her husband liveth**; but **if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will**; only in the Lord."

G. And so, marriage between believers is a life long commitment, however...

II. There Is One Exception To This Rule.

A. Now Paul does not deal with this exception in our text, however, Jesus did in ***Mat. 19:3-9***, "The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it

lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?...And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female,...And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?...Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder....They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?...He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so....And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, **except it be for fornication**, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery."

1. Notice again the phrase in ***Vrs. 9***, "...**except** it be for **fornication**."
2. Now what did Jesus mean by this?
3. He simply meant that while it is contrary to God's original design for marriage, **it is permissible** for a husband to divorce his wife, or a wife to divorce her husband, **if there has been sexual infidelity**.
4. In other words, if there has been "cheating."

B. Now please understand something here.

1. Sexual infidelity **does not mean** that a marriage **has** to end in divorce (that there is no other choice).
2. In some cases, if there is **true repentance** on the part of the erring spouse, and **a willingness to forgive** on the part of the other, **the marriage can be salvaged**.
3. And so, Jesus did not mean that when there is sexual infidelity, the marriage has to end in divorce.
4. He simply meant that in this case, **divorce is an option**.
5. The wife or husband who has been cheated on **has a moral right** to divorce their spouse, if they so choose.
6. Not only do they have a moral right to divorce their spouse, **they also have a moral right to marry again**, if they so choose.

C. Someone asks, "Pastor, **is there any other situation**, in addition to sexual infidelity, wherein it would be permissible for one believer to divorce another believer?

1. The answer to that question is, "No!"
2. But someone says, "My husband is **mean to me**!" Not Biblical grounds for divorce.
3. But someone says, "My husband has **a drinking problem**!" Not Biblical grounds for divorce.
4. But someone says, "My husband has **a gambling problem**! Not Biblical grounds for divorce.
5. But someone says, "My wife **treats me like dirt**!" Not Biblical grounds for divorce.
6. But someone says, "My wife **absolutely refuses to cook for me and she never cleans the house**!" Not Biblical grounds for divorce.
7. But someone says, "My wife **doesn't satisfy my sexual needs**!" Not Biblical grounds for divorce.
8. Beginning to get the picture???

9. When you are talking about two believers, the **ONLY** Biblical grounds for divorce is **sexual infidelity**.

D. But someone says, "I don't care what you say, preacher, I'm going to get a divorce anyway!"
1. Let me read to you again what Jesus said in ***Mat. 19:9***, "Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, **committeth adultery**: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth **commit adultery**."
2. If you divorce your spouse without Biblical grounds, and then marry again, **you become an adulterer or an adulteress**.
3. Pretty strong words, if you ask me.

E. So what have we learned so far.
1. We've learned that marriage between believers is a life long commitment.
2. We've also learned that the one and only exception to this rule is when there is sexual infidelity, the spouse who has been cheated on has the Biblical right to divorce his or her spouse and remarry.
3. There is one more thing that we need to consider this morning, and that is the case of....

III. A Believer Who Is Married To An Unbeliever.

A. Now let me say, first of all, a believer should never marry an unbeliever.
1. The Bible makes this very clear.
2. Paul wrote in ***2 Cor. 6:14***, "**Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers**: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?"
3. And so, a believer should never marry an unbeliever.

B. However, suppose two unbelievers get married, and then later on one (and only one) of them gets saved.
1. **What does the Bible have to say** about this situation, where a believer is married to an unbeliever?
2. It's amazing how thorough the Bible is in dealing with various life situations, because in our text, Paul deals with this very situation.
3. He tells us exactly what we are to do in this situation.
4. What did he say?
5. Notice what he wrote in ***Vrs. 12-16***, "But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away....And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him....For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy....But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace. ...For what knowest thou, O wife,

whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?"

C. First of all, Paul said, "If your unsaved spouse doesn't mind being married to a Christian and wants to continue in the marriage, you should stay with them (not leave them or divorce them).
   1. Someone asks, "Why would God want a Christian to remain married to an unbeliever?"
   2. One reason is, in the case where the unbeliever is content to live with a believer, there is a very good opportunity that the saved spouse can win the unsaved spouse to the Lord.
   3. Notice again the question that Paul asked in ***Vrs. 16***, "For what knowest thou, O wife, **whether thou shalt save thy husband**? or how knowest thou, O man, **whether thou shalt save thy wife**?"
   4. Do you remember what Peter wrote in ***1 Pet. 3:1-2***? He wrote, "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**;...While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear."
   5. And so, first of all, if your unsaved spouse is pleased to continue in the marriage, you should stay with them.
   6. You should be the best wife or the best husband you can be, and by doing so, there is a chance that you can bring them to Christ as well.

D. However, Paul goes to say that if the unsaved spouse is not content to live with a Christian and wants out of the marriage, then the saved spouse should let them go (not stand in their way, but willingly grant them a divorce).
   1. Notice that Paul said in this case, the saved spouse "is **not under bondage**." ***(Vrs. 15)***
   2. In other words, they are released from their obligations to their former spouse, and are **free to remarry**, if they so desire.

Conclusion:

A. What have we learned about marriage, this morning?
   1. First of all, we learned that **marriage between believers is a life long commitment**.
   2. Secondly, we learned that **the only exception to this rule is when one of the partners is guilty of sexual infidelity**.
   3. Where there is sexual infidelity, the offended partner has the **Biblical right to a divorce** and afterwards may remarry, if they so desire.
   4. Finally, we learned that in the case where a believer finds himself or herself married to an unbeliever, **if the unbelieving partner desires to continue in the marriage, then the believing partner should stay with them and try to win them to Christ**.
   5. However, if the unbelieving partner wants out of the marriage, **the believing partner should not stand in their way, and once the divorce is final, is free to marry again.**

B. Considering what we have learned about marriage, are you living within the will of God for your life?

"Abide In The Same Calling"

Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 7:17-24

Introduction:

A. Have you ever wondered **why you were born an American, instead of some other nationality**?
   1. I assume that all of here this morning were born to parents who were US citizens, thus making us US citizens, but have you ever wondered why?
   2. Have you ever wondered why you were not born a Canadian, or a Mexican, or a Peruvian, or a German, or a Russian, or an Egyptian, or a South African, or a Korean, or an Australian?
   3. (Illus.- Every now and then I will watch a news broadcast where they are talking about problems that people in other countries are having to deal with, and I think to myself, "Thank God that I was born an American!")
   4. But have you ever wondered why you were born an American?

B. Let me ask you another question.
   1. Have you ever wondered **why you were born with your particular cultural background**?
   2. Even though we are all Americans, we come from different cultural backgrounds.
   3. Some of us, probably most of us, come from a European background.
   4. However, others of us come from an Asian background.
   5. Still others of us come from an African background.
   6. We are all Americans, but if you go back far enough, our cultural backgrounds are very different, and in some cases our skin color is different as well.
   7. Have you ever wondered why you were born with your particular cultural background?

C. Let me ask you yet another question.
   1. Have you ever wondered **why you were born into your particular social rank or class**?
   2. Some of us were born poor (at least by US standards).
   3. Others of us, probably most of us, were born into middle class homes (weren't rich, but weren't poor).
   4. Still others of us may have been born to wealthy parents.
   5. (Illus.- I'll never forget what Ann Richards said about George Bush when they were both running for governor of Texas. She said, "Poor George, he was born with a silver spoon in his mouth.")
   6. (Illus.- Just the other day, on one of the news channels, they were talking about Prince Charles' sons. I thought to myself, "Why wasn't I born into a Royal [and rich] family like that?")
   7. But have you ever wondered why you were born into your particular social rank or class?

D. I'm sure **we've all wondered about these things** from time to time.
1. In our text, this morning, we find that answer to these questions, among other things.
2. As we examine carefully ***1 Cor. 7:17-24***, the first thing that I want us to see is that...

I. God Has Appointed To Each Of Us A Particular Lot In Life.

A. We often speak of our "lot in life" as being purely accidental, or merely a matter of fate or chance.
1. However, I don't believe in accidents.
2. Neither do I believe in mere fate or chance.
3. I believe everything that happens, and I mean everything, happens according to God's design or plan.
4. This, of course, does not mean that He decrees everything that happens.
5. However, that which He does not decree, He does allow to happen (this is called divine providence).

B. Look again at the first part of ***Vrs. 17*** of our text, "But as **God hath distributed to every man**, as the Lord hath called every one,"
1. Notice the word **"distributed."**
2. Paul said, "...as God hath distributed to every man."
3. That word "distributed" comes from the Greek word **"merizo,"** and literally means, **"apportioned, bestowed, or dealt."**
4. Now what is Paul saying here?
5. He is saying that whatever **"hand we have been dealt"** in this life, **it was dealt to us by God**.
6. Not by **accident**, not by **mere fate or chance**, but by **God**!

C. There are so many examples of this in the Scriptures, I really don't know where to begin.
1. Do you remember Esther?
2. While Esther certainly wasn't born into a royal family, due to circumstances beyond her control she found herself in the palace of the king of Persia.
3. Someone asks, "What was she, the king's maid?"
4. No, you aren't even close.
5. The fact is, she was the king's wife (the queen).
6. How did she get to be the queen of Persia?
7. Was it an accident? **No!**
8. Was it mere fate or chance? **No!**
9. Was it the result of anything that she did? **No!**
10. It was **all of God**. (Amen?)
11. It was God who **apportioned** to her this privilege.
12. It was God who **bestowed** upon her this great honor.
13. It was God who **dealt** to her this particular hand in life.
14. Do you remember what Mordecai said to her in ***Est. 4:14***? He said, "...who knoweth whether **thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this**?
15. In other words, "Esther, it's not an accident that you are now the queen of Persia, but **God has brought you to this place**."

D. There are so many other examples in the Bible.
   1. Do you remember what the Lord told the prophet Jeremiah in ***Jer. 1:5***? He said, **"Before I formed thee in the belly** I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb **I sanctified thee**, and **I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations**."
   2. Do you remember what the angel told Zacharias, even before she became pregnant with John? He said, "Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and **thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John**....And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth....For **he shall be great in the sight of the Lord**, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb." ***(Luke 1:13-15)***

E. The point that I am trying to make here is that **God has appointed to each of us a particular lot in life**.
   1. Whatever "hand we have been dealt" in this life, we were not dealt by fate or chance, but rather **by God Himself**!
   2. The second thing that I want us to see this morning is that....

II. God Had A Purpose In Each And Every Appointment.

A. Let's consider Esther again for just a moment.
   1. God had a purpose in putting her where He did.
   2. He put her there **so that He could use her to save the Jews in Persia from being annihilated**.
   3. If you know the story of Esther, you know how Haman came up with this wicked plot to exterminate the Jews in the kingdom.
   4. God used Esther to **foil his wicked plot**.
   5. If Esther hadn't been where she was **at precise moment in history**, the Jews in Persia would have been destroyed.

B. The same thing is true of Jeremiah the prophet and John the Baptist.
   1. God put **Jeremiah** where He did, so that he could warn the nation of Judah of coming judgment and call them back to God.
   2. God put **John the Baptist** where He did, so that he could prepare the way for the coming of Christ (Messiah) on the world's scene.
   3. Now, what's true of Esther, and what's true of Jeremiah, and what's true of John the Baptist, is also true of every believer today.
   4. God had a purpose in **bringing us to our particular place in life**. He put us where we are at right now **for a very specific purpose**.

C. What is our purpose?
   1. Of course, it is different for each one of us, but I can summarize it like this.
   2. God put us where we are at right now **so that He can use us to reach out to and minister to the needs of others**.
   3. You see, even though we are all different, we all have something in common, and that is, we all have what I call a **"sphere of influence."**

4. In other words, we all have a group of people, people...
   -who are within our reach,
   -with whom we have contact on a regular basis,
   -whom we have the opportunity in influence in one way or another.
5. This group includes, but is not limited to, our family, our friends, our neighbors, our co-workers, our fellow students (if we are in school), etc.
6. Having said that, the reason God has brought us to our particular place in life is **so that we can influence those people in our "sphere of influence" for Christ**.

D. This is why you were born into your particular family.
1. This is why you were born in your particular country.
2. This is why you were born with your particular skin color and cultural background.
3. This is why you were born into your particular social and economic class.
4. To put it simply, this is why you are who you are today, so that you can influence those people in your "sphere of influence" for Christ.

E. Did you realize that there are people **you can influence** for Christ whom **no one else** in this world can influence?
1. They are your mission field.
2. They are your reason for living.
3. They are the reason God put you where He did.

F. The final thing that I want us to see this morning is that....

III. We Should Be Content With Our Particular Lot In Life And Serve God To The Best Of Our Ability.

A. Look again at ***Vrs. 17*** of our text, "But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, **so let him walk**."
1. Now look again at ***Vrs. 20***, "Let every man **abide in the same calling wherein he was called**."
2. Now look again at ***Vrs. 24***, "Brethren, let every man, **wherein he is called, therein abide with God**."
3. Three times in this passage, Paul pretty much said, "Stay where you are at. Be content where you are at. Serve God where you are at!"

B. Now this does not mean that, if we have the opportunity to improve our situation or circumstances in life, it is wrong to do so.
1. In fact, in ***Vrs. 21*** Paul said to servants (slaves), "If you can obtain your freedom, then by all means do it." (I'm paraphrasing, of course.)
2. If you can improve your situation or circumstances in life, then by all means do it.
3. However, if you cannot, don't be discontent.
4. Humbly accept your situation, humbly accept your circumstances in life, **be content where you are at**, and serve God to the best of your ability.
5. He put you where you are at for a purpose!

6. Paul admonished believers in ***Heb. 13:5***, "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and **be content with such things as ye have**:"
7. That includes being content with your particular lot in life.
8. Let me tell you something, if you cannot be content where you are right now, **you will never be content**, no matter how many changes you make in your life.

C. (Illus.- Several months ago I was counseling a brother in our church who was having some real struggles with his job situation. To say that he was unhappy with his job would be an understatement, but at that time he really didn't have any other options. I told him that as unpleasant as his job was, God had a purpose in him being there, and that he should look at his job, not just as a job, but also as a ministry opportunity. He told me later that when he made the attitude adjustment, it really changed things. Instead of dreading going to work, he said he actually looked forward to going to work.)

D. The fact is, there are a lot of things about our particular lot in life that we cannot change, even if we wanted to.
1. For example, we cannot change the circumstances of our birth.
2. We cannot change where we were born, who our parents were, or the color of our skin.
3. These things are **not that important**, anyway.
4. Look again at ***Vrs. 19***, "Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, **but the keeping of the commandments of God**."
5. Paul said, "It doesn't matter whether you were born a Jew or a Gentile. The only things that matters is keeping God's commandments."
6. Are you doing that?
7. Are you obeying God where you are?
8. Are you serving God where you are by reaching out to those people within your particular "sphere of influence"?
9. That's what really matters!!! (Amen?)

Conclusion:

A. What have we learned this morning?
1. First of all, we learned that **God has appointed to each of us a particular lot in life**. (There is no such as fate, it is all the providence of God at work in our lives.)
2. Secondly, we learned that **God had a purpose in each and every appointment**. (God put us where we are at so that we can influence those around us for Christ.)
3. Finally, we learned that **we should be content with our particular lot in life** and serve God to the best of ability where we are. (The important thing is that we obey God.)

B. Are you content where you are, this morning?
1. Are you serving God where you are?
2. Are you reaching out to those within your "sphere of influence"?
3. If not, why not?

C. So many believers waste the opportunities that God has given them now because of discontent. Don't let this happen to you!

"If Meat Make My Brother To Offend"

Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 8:1-13

Introduction:

A. In order to fully understand what Paul is teaching us here in ***1 Corinthians 8***, we must first of all understand something about **the culture in which the Corinthian believers lived**.

1. To begin with, we must understand that the Corinthian believers, for the most part, were **saved out of idol worship**.
2. They were not Jewish converts, but rather Gentile converts who were **very much involved in the worship of idols** before they came to Christ.
3. Secondly, we must understand that in many idol temples, **animal sacrifices were offered to idol gods**, and while part of the animal being offered were **consumed by the sacrifice itself**, another part of the animal was actually **consumed (eaten) by the idol worshipers**.

B. This is what led to **the controversy** in the church at Corinth.
1. It seems that some of the believers in Corinth, even though they had been saved out of idol worship, **continued to go to the idol temples and eat the meat** that been offered to idols.
2. How do I know this?
3. Look again at the first part of ***Vrs. 10*** of our text, Paul said, "For if any man see thee which hast knowledge **sit at meat in the idol's temple**,"
4. Now why would these believers who had been saved out of idol worship continue to go to the idol temples and eat this meat that had been offered to idols?
5. Well, here's how they justified their actions.
6. They said, "We know that an idol is nothing. We know that there is only one God, the true God, the Creator of the universe. We know and understand that, and we are not going to the temple to worship idols, we are going there **merely to get a free meal**."
7. And so, there were some believers within the church at Corinth who **saw nothing wrong** with going back to the idol temples and eating the meat that had been offered to idols. (It was probably pretty good meat!)
8. On the other hand, there were other believers within the church who were convinced that **to eat the meat offered to idols was the same as actually worshiping the idols**. (In their way of thinking, you could not separate the two.)
9. And so, you had this **ongoing controversy** between these two groups within the church at Corinth (those who believed it was **okay** to eat the meat offered to idols, and those who believed it was **wrong**).

C. Now **how** did the apostle Paul **deal with this controversy**?
1. Well, first of all, he pointed out that **the "meat eaters" were partially right**, and that eating meat offered to idols was **not a sin in and of itself**.
2. That is, as long as those who partook **knew and understood that an idol is nothing**, and that there is only one true and living God, the Creator of the universe.
3. Notice again what Paul wrote in ***Vrs. 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**....For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,)...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."

4. In other words, Paul said, "We know that **an idol is nothing**, therefore there is no sin in merely eating meat that has been offered as **a sacrifice to nothing**!"
5. It's just meat, that's all!
6. And so, first of all, Paul pointed out that the "meat eaters" were partially right.

D. However, in this same passage, Paul also **reprimanded the "meat eaters**." **Why** did he reprimand them? Well, first of all, he reprimanded them because...

I. They Were Proud.

A. Notice again what Paul wrote in ***Vrs. 1-2***, "Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. **Knowledge puffeth up**,.....And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, **he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know**."

1. In other words, Paul said, "You think you are so smart (knowledgeable), and you are knowledgeable up to a certain point. However, **your knowledge has gone to your head**, and **you don't know nearly as much as you ought to know**."
2. Someone asks, "How was their knowledge lacking? Weren't they right when they said that an idol is nothing?"
3. Yes, there were right in saying that, but at the same time there was something they failed to consider.
4. Turn with me to ***1 Cor. 10:19-21***, "What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing?...But I say, that **the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils**, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils....Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: **ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils**." (Wow!)
5. In other words, Paul said, "You are right when you say that an idol is nothing. However, these animal sacrifices are not only sacrificed to idols, **they are also sacrificed to devils (demon spirits)**."
6. That sort of sheds a whole new light on things.

B. But the point is, they were proud.

1. You know, knowledge is **a wonderful thing**, but one has to be **very careful not to let it go to his head**, as these Corinthians did.
2. (Illus.- A few years ago a certain gentleman began visiting our church. While he never joined, he did attend for quite some time, at least on Sunday nights and Wednesday nights. There's no doubt that this man was saved, and that he had acquired a significant amount of Bible knowledge since his conversion. However, he had clearly allowed what he had learned to "go to his head." He had become, as Paul put it, "puffed up," and because of this you couldn't tell him anything. You see, in his mind, he already knew it all! Just between you, me and the fencepost, I was kind of glad when he stopped attending.)
3. And so, while knowledge is a wonderful thing (especially Bible knowledge), we need to be **very careful** that we don't let it go to our head (become "puffed up").

C. Isaiah the prophet wrote in ***Isa. 5:21***, "Woe unto them that are **wise in their own eyes**, and **prudent in their own sight**!"

D. Paul issued this warning in ***Rom. 12:16***, "Be of the same mind one toward another. **Mind not high things**, but condescend to men of low estate. **Be not wise in your own conceits**."

E. Why does God's Word give us such **stern warnings** about becoming prideful?
1. One reason is because pride **sets us up for a fall**!
2. When we become filled with pride, we also become easy prey for Satan, as well as easy targets for his fiery darts.
3. Solomon wrote in ***Pro. 16:18***, **"Pride** goeth before **destruction**, and an **haughty spirit** before a **fall**."
4. Paul put it like this in ***1 Tim. 3:6***, when he was laying down the qualifications for being a pastor, "Not a novice, **lest being lifted up with pride he fall** into the condemnation of the devil."

G. And so, first of all, Paul reprimanded the "meat eaters" because they were proud. He also reprimanded them because...

II. They Lacked Love.

A. Notice again ***Vrs. 1*** of our text, "Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but **charity (love) edifieth**."

B. How do we know that they lacked love?
1. We know because if they had truly loved their brethren as much as they should, **they would have been more considerate** of their "conscience" (convictions) when it came to eating meat offered to idols.
2. As it was, they just **"thumbed their noses"** at them.
3. Their attitude was, "If you have a problem with what we are doing, then **that's just too bad**! We can't help it that you are not as knowledgeable (enlightened) as we are! Why don't you baby Christians grow up?"
4. It's pretty apparent that these "meat eaters" were thinking only of themselves, and had very little consideration for the feelings of their fellow brethren.

C. Notice again what Paul wrote in ***Vrs. 7*** of our text, "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."
1. In other words, Paul said, "Not every one has your convictions when it comes to eating meat offered to idols. Some of your brethren, in their minds, **cannot separate the meat from the idol** to which it was offered. In their eyes, **eating the meat constitutes worshiping the idol**. That being the case, you need to be more considerate of their feelings (weak conscience), and **abstain from this practice**."
2. But someone asks, "Why should I give up something...
-that I do not consider sinful,

-that I have every right to partake of,
-that's not going to hinder my relationship with God,
simply because some of my weaker brethren are offended by it?"

3. Why should I do that?
4. How about, **simply because you love them**, and you don't want to do anything that might hinder their relationship with God?
5. Listen to what Paul wrote in ***1 Cor. 13:4-5***, "Charity suffereth long, and is **kind**; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is **not puffed up**,...Doth not behave itself unseemly, **seeketh not her own**,"
6. Did you notice those words, "...**seeketh not her own**"?
7. Love **is not selfish**.
8. Love **thinks of others**.
9. Love **considers the needs and feelings of others**.

D. And so, Paul reprimanded the "meat eaters" because they lacked love. Notice, finally, that Paul reprimanded them because....

III. They Were Setting A Bad Example.

A. Remember now, that these believers were not just buying the meat in the market place and taking it home to cook and eat in the privacy of their own homes, they were actually **going back into the idol temple itself and partaking of this meat at a table alongside of idol worshipers**.

1. "What was wrong with this," someone asks, "as long as they knew that an idol was nothing?"
2. Let me remind you again what Paul said later on in this letter, "But I say, that **the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils**, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils....Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: **ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils**." ***(1 Cor. 10:20-21)***
3. And so, it wasn't just meat offered to idols, it was meat that had been sacrificed to devils (demon spirits).
4. But even aside from that, even if you could somehow explain away the connection between eating this meat and the worship of demons, it was **still wrong** what they were doing.
5. Why? Because **it didn't look good**, and because it didn't look good, they were **setting a bad example for the younger believers in the church**.

B. Listen to what Paul wrote in ***1 Thes. 5:21-22***, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good....**Abstain from all appearance of evil**."

1. Notice that Paul didn't say, "Abstain **from all evil**," but rather, "Abstain **from all appearance** of evil."
2. (Illus.- I have had more than one conversation with believers who told me that they didn't see anything wrong with going to the race track, as long as they didn't bet on the horses or play the slots. I asked them, "Why would you even want to

go, if you weren't going to gamble?" They told me that the food was good and they just enjoyed watching the horses run.")

3. Now let me say, first of all, I question the honesty of these folks. Why?
4. Because while the food may be good, **you can't convince me that anyone goes just to watch the horses run**! (How long does a race last? Two minutes? Horse racing has got to be one of the worse spectator sports there is!)
5. But even if believed these people when they told me that they only reason they went to the track was to have a good meal and watch the horses run, it is still something that believers should not do!
6. Why not?
7. Because it looks bad.
8. While it may not be evil in and of itself, it definitely has the appearance of evil.
9. (Illus.- Years ago I was asked by two of our local politicians, a WV delegate and one of our county commissioners, to attend a meeting of the WV racing commission that was being held here in Jefferson County. They not only wanted to attend, but they also wanted me to speak to the commission against allowing Penn National to bring in more slot machines. Initially I said, "Yes," but then they told me that the meeting was going to be held at the track. I said, "Wait a minute, fellows, I can't go there, not even for something as important as this." They asked me why not? I said, "If someone saw me go into that place, or if someone saw my car parked in the parking lot, it wouldn't matter why I was there, my testimony would be hurt, at least in their eyes." However, they insisted, and when one of them offered to let me ride with him [so my car wouldn't be parked in the parking lot], I finally consented to go. But let me tell you something, the whole time I was inside that place, I felt guilty. I felt like I was betraying my Lord just by being in that place. After we spoke, the county commissioner tapped me on the shoulder and said, "Let's get out of this place!" We left long before the meeting was over.)

C. Do you know what we've got to remind ourselves of from time to time.
   1. Everything we do, everything we say, every place we go, will have some affect on others, good or bad.
   2. Paul put it like this in ***Rom. 14*:7**, "For **none of us liveth to himself**, and no man dieth to himself."
   3. In other words, "No man is an island unto himself. Everything that we do, whether it be good or bad, effects those around us, especially those who are the closest to us (family, friends, fellow believers)."

D. Notice again what Paul wrote in ***Vrs. 9-10*** of our text, "But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak....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**;"
   1. How would you like it if a younger believer **fell into sin because of your bad example**?
   2. How would you like that on your conscience?
   3. I don't think any of us would like that, would we???

Conclusion:

A. Why did God reprimand the "meat eaters" within the church at Corinth?
   1. After all, it was only meat!
   2. He reprimanded them for three reasons.
   3. First of all, because they were proud. (While they did possess some knowledge, what knowledge they possessed went to their head, and they didn't know as much as they should have.)
   4. Secondly, because they lacked love. (If they had truly loved their brethren as they should, they would have been more considerate of their weaker conscience.)
   5. Finally, because they were setting a bad example. (At the very least, they were not avoiding the appearance of evil, and were setting a bad example for the younger believers in the church.)

B. Are you **proud**? Do you **lack love** for your brethren. Are you **setting a bad example**????

"They Which Preach The Gospel"

Scripture Text: ***1 Corinthians 9:1-14***

Introduction:

A. Some of you are probably going to **misinterpret my motives** for preaching the message that I am about to preach.
   1. Some of you, by the time I finish this morning, are probably going to think that I'm **bucking for a raise**.
   2. However, I assure you, that is **not the case**.
   3. God has always **"more"** than provided for me and my family, and I'm absolutely convinced that **He will continue to do so**, whether He does so through this church, or through some other means.
   4. And so, I assure you, I am not bucking for a raise.
   5. In fact, my motive for preaching the message that I am about to preach is **essentially unselfish**.

6. You see, I realize that one of these days I am not going to be your pastor.
7. One of these days, I am going to have to **step away from this pulpit** and **step down from this platform**, and turn over the reins of leadership to someone else.
8. And I realize that if I teach (train) you to treat **me** the way that you ought to as your pastor, **those who follow me will also benefit from that training**.
9. Now having said that, some of you are still probably going to misinterpret my motives.
10. All that I ask is that you listen carefully to what I am about to share with you this morning, not just for my sake, and not just for Pastor Cawley's sake, but also for the sake of those who will one day follow us.

B. As usual, my message today will have three points.
1. First of all, we will learn that **pastors should not be motivated by greed**.
2. Secondly, we will learn that **while pastors should not be motivated by greed, they do have a right to be compensated for their service**.
3. Finally, we will learn the **Biblical guideline for determining how much pastors should be compensated**.
4. And so, first of all, let us learn that...

I. Pastors Should Not Be Motivated By Greed.

A. Turn with me, if you will, to ***1 Tim. 3:1-3***.
1. Paul is giving Timothy **the Biblical qualifications for a pastor**, when he writes, "This is a true saying, If a man desire **the office of a bishop**, he desireth a good work....**A bishop then must be** blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;...Not given to wine, no striker, **not greedy of filthy lucre**;"
2. Notice the phrase, "...**not greedy of filthy lucre**."
3. In other words, "**Not motivated by a desire for money**."

B. Now let me say, as a general rule, pastors do not earn a lot of money, especially Baptists.
1. (Illus.- In his book entitled, "Today's Pastors," George Barna writes, "Those who wish to get rich....are well advised to **avoid the ministry**.")
2. As a general rule, that is very true.
3. However, even pastors who earn **very modest salaries**, should not be motivated by that.
4. In other words, they should not be in the ministry, they should not be doing what they are doing, **simply as a means of earning a paycheck**.
5. This is wrong!

C. Turn with me to ***1 Pet. 5:1-3***.
1. In this passage Peter is admonishing the "**elders**" (pastors) of his day, when he writes, "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:...Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; **not for filthy lucre**, but of a ready

mind;...Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock."

2. Notice the phrase in ***Vrs. 2***, "...**not for filthy lucre**,"
3. Peter is saying here exactly the same thing that Paul said to Timothy, and that is **elders (pastors) should not be motivated by a desire for money**.

D. I'm going to say something now that some will consider a bold statement, however, I am convinced it is true.

1. A pastor who is motivated by a desire for money, in other words, a pastor who views his ministry simply as a means of earning a paycheck for himself and his family, cannot possibly be a good pastor.
2. Why not?
3. Because **their hearts are not in it**!
4. They may...
   -have a **good personality**,
   -have a **good knowledge of the Bible**,
   -be **very capable preachers of the Word**,
   however, if their hearts are not in it, they cannot possibly be good pastors. (Something very important is missing!)

E. They are just like the spiritual leaders of Israel during the days of Isaiah the prophet.

1. Listen to the indictment that God brought against them in ***Isa. 56:11***, "Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are **shepherds that cannot understand**: they all **look to their own way**, every one **for his gain,**"

2. And I will tell you something else, if they are in the ministry for the wrong reason, unless they are being **very well compensated**, they will probably **call it quits** somewhere down the road.
3. Just as soon as the trials of being a pastor come their way, they will call it quits. Why? Because to be very honest with you, **the average Baptist pastor is not paid nearly enough to justify putting up with what he has to put up with in the average congregation today**.

F. And so, first of all, let us learn that pastors should not be motivated by greed. Secondly, let us learn that while pastors should not be motivated by greed,...

II. Pastors Should Be Compensated For Their Service.

A. I want us to go now to our text and notice that Paul begins this section of his letter to the Corinthian believers by **asserting some of his rights as an apostle**.

1. Notice again ***Vrs. 1-5***, "**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?...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....Mine answer to them that do examine me is this,...Have we not **power to eat and to drink**?...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?"

2. In other words, he said, "Don't Barnabas and I have the same rights as the other apostles? Don't we have a right to eat and to drink? Don't we have a right to take a sister in Christ to be our wife, just like Cephas (Peter)?"
3. By the way, isn't it interesting that our Catholic friends insist that Peter was the first pope of the Catholic Church, yet Peter was most certainly married? (I wonder how they explain that one!)
4. But Paul begins this section of his letter by asserting some of his rights as an apostle.

B. Now one of his rights as an apostle was **the right to be financially compensated for his service** to the churches.
1. Notice again ***Vrs. 6***, "Or I only and Barnabas, **have not we power to forbear working**?"
2. In other words, "Don't we have the right to **quit our secular jobs** and require you to support us financially?"
3. The answer to that question was a resounding, **"Yes!"**
4. Paul and Barnabas **had every right to expect this**!
5. It was Paul's right as an apostle.
6. It was Barnabas's right as a missionary.
7. They had every right to expect this.
8. By the way, not only was it their right then, but it is also the right of every **true God called pastor today**.
9. Every true God called pastor today has **the right to expect his church to support (compensate) him financially, while he devotes himself fully to his pastoral ministry.**

C. Notice how Paul uses **three illustrations from every day life** to develop and reinforce this truth.
1. First of all, he uses the illustration of **a soldier**.
2. Notice again the first part of ***Vrs. 7***, "Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges?"
3. (Illus.- Our nation currently has approximately 160,000 soldiers in Iraq. Why are they there? They are there to serve our country. They are there to defend our country. They are there to fight the war against terrorism for each and every one of us. Do you think it would be right to ask these dedicated soldiers to pay there own way while they are there? Would it be fair to ask them to buy their own uniforms, their own weapons, their own ammunition, their own "humvees," their own food? **Of course not**!)
4. Well, **neither would it be right** to ask a dedicated pastor to pay his own way, while he ministers on behalf of his congregation.

D. Paul also uses the illustration of **a farmer**.
1. Notice again ***Vrs. 7***, "Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? **who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof**?"
2. (Illus.- We have a lot of apple orchards here in Jefferson County. Do you think it would be right to tell the man who planted those orchards and who cares for those orchards that he cannot eat some of the apples that are grown in those orchards? **Of course not**!)

3. Well, **neither would it be right** to tell a pastor who plants a church and cares for that church that he cannot partake of the fruit that is produced in the lives of its members.

E. Finally, Paul uses the illustration of **a shepherd**.
1. Notice again ***Vrs. 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**?"
2. (Illus.- We still have a few dairy farms here in Jefferson County. Do you think it would be fair to tell the man who feeds those cows and who milks those cows twice a day that he cannot drink some of the milk produced by those cows. **Of course not**!)
3. Are you beginning to get the picture.

F. Not only does Paul use three illustrations from every day life to reinforce this truth, he also points out that this truth was **even taught in the Old Testament**.
1. Notice again ***Vrs. 8-10***, "Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also?...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?...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."
2. In Old Testament days, they used oxen to grind corn, as well as other grains.
3. The law of Moses specifically stated that they were not to put a muzzle on the ox, but were to allow it to eat the grain.
4. This was only right, considering the ox was the one doing the grinding.
5. Paul then asked the question, "Did God establish this law merely for the benefit of oxen?"
6. The answer is, "No. God established this law, not for the benefit of oxen, but for our benefit, to teach us that those who "plow in hope" and those who thresh "in hope" should be partaker of this hope. (In other words, they should be able to partake!)
7. And so, even the Old Testament teaches us that pastors should be compensated for their service.

G. Let me ask you a question.
1. The Old Testament priests who ministered in the tabernacle and in the temple, how were they supported? Did they have night-time jobs where they worked to support themselves?".
2. Notice again what Paul wrote in ***Vrs. 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**?"
3. These priests did not support themselves.
4. They were supported by those Israelites who brought their tithes and their offerings and their sacrifices to the temple.
5. And so, again, even the Old Testament teaches us that pastors should be compensated for their service.

H. But that's not all.
1. Our Lord Jesus Himself also taught this truth.
2. Notice again ***Vrs. 14*** of our text, "**Even so hath the Lord ordained** that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel."
3. When did Jesus teach this?
4. Do you remember what He told His disciples when He sent them forth to preach His Word?
5. He said, "Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses,...Nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for **the workman is worthy of his meat**." ***(Mat. 10:9-10)***
6. In other words, Jesus said, "You don't need to take any provisions with you, because **the people to whom you minister will provide for your needs**!"

I. And so, while pastors should not be motivated by greed, pastors should be compensated for their service.

J. One more thing I want us to learn this morning. I want us to learn...

III. The Biblical Guideline For Determining How Much Pastors Should Be Compensated.

A. The Biblical guideline is found in ***1 Tim. 5:17***. Turn there with me as I read, "Let **the elders that rule well** be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who **labour in the word and doctrine**."

B. I have heard several different opinions as to how a church should decide how much to pay the pastor.
1. (Illus.- One deacon told me many years ago, and he really believed it, that the pastor should just enough to barely get by. I asked him, "Why?" His answer was, "It is the church's responsibility to keep the pastor humble.")
2. Thankfully, this deacon is in the minority.
3. The most common belief is that the pastor should be paid in accordance with what the average church member earns.
4. But what does the Bible teach?

C. According to the verse we read a moment ago, a pastor should be paid **in accordance with how well he performs his job (ministry)**, especially in the area of **teaching the Word of God**.
1. Isn't that what Paul said?
2. Let's read that verse again, "Let the elders that **rule well** be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who **labour in the word and doctrine**." ***(1 Tim. 5:17)***
3. But someone says, "This verse doesn't say anything about a pastor's pay (compensation)."
4. It **most certainly does**.

5. The word translated "honour" here is the Greek word "**time**" (tee-may'), and it literally means "**money paid**."
6. It is the same word that is translated "**price**" in ***1 Cor. 6:20***, where it says, "ye are bought with **a price**."
7. And so, when Paul said that "the elders that rule well" are worthy of "**double honour**," what he meant was that they are worthy of "**double pay**."
8. In other words, a pastor who has served his church well, and has served his church faithfully, and has been a faithful preacher and teacher of the Word of God, should be rewarded (compensated) accordingly.
9. That is **the Biblical standard**!

Conclusion:

A. What have we learned this morning?
   1. First of all, we have learned that pastors should **not be motivated by greed**.
   2. Secondly, while pastors should not be motivated by greed, they should be **compensated for their service**.
   3. Finally, pastors should be **compensated in accordance with how well they perform their job (ministry), especially in the area of teaching the Word of God**.

B. But someone says, "Pastor, you must be bucking for a raise."
   1. The truth is, I'm not bucking for anything.
   2. I'm just teaching you what the Bible says, not just for my sake and Pastor Cawley's sake, but for **the sake of those who will one day follow us.**
   3. Churches who have been blessed with faithful pastors, should **thank God** for those pastors, as well as **demonstrate their gratitude** in the way they take care of them.
   4. That's what the Bible says!

"For The Gospel's Sake"

Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 9:15-23

Introduction:

A. I want to begin this morning by asking you a very personal question.
   1. We all know how important the preaching of the gospel is to God.
   2. It is so important to God that when He commissioned His church, the very first thing that He commanded them to do was to **preach the gospel**.
   3. Listen to what Jesus told His church in ***Mark 16:25***, "Go ye into all the world, and **preach the gospel to every creature**."
   4. And so, we know how important the preaching of the gospel is to God, but let me ask you this question, **"How important is it to you**? Just how important is the preaching of the gospel to you?"
   5. Now you may want to wait until the end of my message to answer that question.
   6. In fact, I would recommend that you do so, and when we get to the end of my message, **I will come back to this question**.

B. In the meantime, I want us to notice how important the preaching of the gospel was to Paul. The first thing that I want us to notice is that the preaching of the gospel was so important to Paul that....

I. He Was Willing To Forfeit His Right To Be Compensated Financially For His Preaching.

A. Last Sunday we learned that while those who preach God's Word (missionaries, pastors, evangelists, etc.) should not be motivated by greed, they do have a right to be compensated financially for their service.

1. In fact, Paul goes to great lengths to defend this right.
2. Do you remember how he used **three illustrations from every day life** to teach and to reinforce this principle?
3. Look again at ***1 Cor. 9:6-7***, "Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to **forbear working**?...**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?"
4. First of all, he used the illustration of **a soldier**.
5. He asked the question, "Who goeth a warfare any time **at this own charges**?"
6. In other words, "What soldier goes to war, and puts his life on the line for his country, **at his own expense**?"
7. The answer is, "No soldier does that!"
8. He then uses the illustration of **a farmer**.
9. He asked the question, "Who planteth a vineyard, **and eateth not of the fruit thereof**?"
10. Again, the answer is, "None!"
11. Finally, he uses the illustration of a shepherd.
12. He asked the question, "Who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?"
13. Again, the answer is, "None!"

B. After using these three illustrations from everyday life, Paul then gave **two Old Testament examples** of this principle.
   1. First of all, he gave the example of the oxen.
   2. Look again at ***1 Cor. 9:8-9***, "Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also?...For it is written in the law of Moses, **Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn**."
   3. In Old Testament days, they used oxen to grind corn and other grains.
   4. The law of Moses specifically stated that they were not to put on muzzle on those oxen, but were to allow them to partake of the fruit of their labor.
   5. And so, first of all, Paul gave the example of the oxen.
   6. He then gave the example of the priests who served in the tabernacle and the temple.
   7. Look again at ***1 Cor. 9:13***, "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**?"
   8. And so, Paul goes to great lengths to defend the right of those who preach God's Word (gospel) to be financially compensated for their service.
   9. He summed it all up in ***1 Cor. 9:14*** like this, "Even so hath the Lord ordained that **they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel**."

C. However, even though Paul defended his right to be financially compensated for his preaching, there were times when he **forfeited this right**.
   1. He certainly did so in the case of the case of the Corinthian believers.
   2. Notice again the first part of ***Vrs. 15*** of our text, Paul said, "But **I have used none of these things**:"
   3. In other words, "Even though I have a right to be financially compensated for my service, **in your case I have chosen to forfeit this right**."

D. Now this raises the question, "Why?"
1. In the case of the Corinthian believers, why did Paul choose to forfeit his right to financial compensation?"
2. He answered this question in ***1 Cor. 9:12***, he said, "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**."
3. In other words, "We didn't want anything to hinder our ministry (preaching of the gospel) in Corinth, and because we feared that some might misinterpret our motives, **we decided that we wouldn't take any pay from you**!"
4. Wow!
5. On the basis of this, I would say that Paul placed **a very high priority** on the preaching of the gospel! (Amen?)
6. The preaching of the gospel was **so important to him**, that he was willing to **forfeit his right** to be compensated financially for his preaching.

E. We need to ask ourselves a question, this morning.
1. **"What are we willing to forfeit so that gospel might be preached?"**
2. "What **rights** are we willing to give up?"
3. "How much of our **time**, and our **money**, and our **resources** are we willing to sacrifice?"
4. "To what degree are we willing to **place our own personal agendas on hold**, so that we might participate in the propagation of the gospel of Jesus Christ?"

F. Notice also, that the preaching of the gospel was so important to Paul that...

II. He Had No Choice But To Preach.

A. Notice again what Paul said in ***Vrs. 16*** of our text, "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**!"
1. This is an interesting verse.
2. Did you notice what Paul said?
3. He said, "Even though I have been a faithful preacher of the gospel, I cannot take any credit for myself, because the truth is, **I have no choice** in the matter, **I can do nothing but preach**!!
4. That's what he meant when he said, "...necessity is laid upon me."
5. He went on to say, "...**woe is unto me**, **if I preach not** the gospel."

B. Paul sort of reminds me of Jeremiah the prophet.
1. According to ***Jer. 20:9***, there came a time in Jeremiah's ministry when he became so discouraged that he was seriously considering quitting.
2. Did he quit? No, he did not!
3. Why didn't he quit, if he was so discouraged?

4. Jeremiah answered this question in that same verse, listen to what he said, "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**."
5. In other words, he said, "I wanted to quit, but I couldn't. God's Word is **like a fire burning inside of me**, and **I have no choice but to preach**!"
6. And so, Paul and Jeremiah had something in common.
7. Neither one of them could take any credit for the fact that they were faithful preachers of God's Word, because the truth is, **they had no choice but to preach**!

C. We need to ask ourselves a question, this morning.
1. **"How much like Paul and Jeremiah are we?"**
2. I couldn't help but think **how different** from Paul and Jeremiah **most believers today** are.
3. Paul and Jeremiah **felt compelled to share the Word**, while most believers today feel compelled not to share the Word.
4. Paul and Jeremiah **considered sharing the Word a necessity**, while most believers today consider it an option (an option which they usually reject).
5. Paul and Jeremiah **couldn't keep their mouths shut when it came to sharing the Word**, while most believers today can't seem to get their mouths open.
6. Don't you agree that there is something wrong with this picture?

D. Someone says, "Poor Paul. He spent all that time preaching the gospel in the city of Corinth and **received absolutely no reward (compensation)**?"
1. Don't feel sorry for Paul.
2. While he received no financial reward, he was **greatly rewarded** for his service.
3. Look again at ***Vrs. 17-18*** of our text, "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....**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."
4. In other words, Paul said, "My reward is the sheer delight it gives me to be able to spiritually bless and enrich others without taking a penny in return."
5. You might say that Paul's reward was **"the joy of giving**."
6. This should remind us of the words of our Lord Jesus, when He said, "It is **more blessed to give** than to receive." ***(Acts 20:35)***
7. (Illus.- We are only a few days away from Christmas, and some of you are still probably trying to decide what gifts to give. Can I make a suggestion. If one or more of those on your giving list is unsaved, why don't you do as Paul did, and give them the gift of God's Word. I don't mean give them a Bible [though there's nothing wrong with that], but rather give them a gospel witness. Share the gospel with them and make an earnest effort to win them to Christ.)

E. And so, the preaching of the gospel was so important to Paul that he had no choice but to preach.
1. He said, "...**necessity** is laid upon me."
2. He said, "...**woe is unto me**, if I preach not the gospel!"

3. Now notice, finally, this morning, that the preaching of the gospel was so important to Paul that...

III. He Was Willing To Become All Things To All Men.

A. Notice again ***Vrs. 19-22*** of our text, "For though I be free from all men, yet **have I made myself servant unto all**, that I might gain the more...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;...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....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."

1. Now what did Paul mean when he said, "...I am made all things to all men"?
2. Well, let tell you, first of all, what he did NOT mean.
3. He did not mean that he stooped to their level in the sense that he adopted their sinful lifestyle.
4. (Illus.- I had a man try to tell me one time that it was okay for him to frequent "honky tonks" as long as he made an effort to witness to someone while he was there. He quoted Paul's words, "I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some," as a justification for his actions. Of course, this was not what Paul had in mind here!)
5. It should be pointed out that Paul didn't say, "...unto **the bar hopper** I became a bar hopper."
6. Nor did he say, "...unto **the fornicator**, I became a fornicator."
7. Nor did he say, "...unto **the drug user**, I became a drug user."

B. What then did Paul mean when he said, "...I am made all things to all men"?

1. He simply meant that he was willing to identify himself with any group or any class or any race of people, in order to more effectively share the gospel with them and possibly win them to Christ.
2. (Illus.- A good example of this would be the well known **missionary to China, J. Hudson Taylor**. When Hudson Taylor went to China, his desire to reach the Chinese people for Christ was so great, that he did something that no missionary before him had ever done. He went into the interior of China, **adopted their dress, as well as many of their ways and customs**. In other words, for all practical purposes, **he became Chinese**. While many of his fellow missionaries criticized him, God used Hudson Taylor to **reap a great harvest of souls** in China.)
3. (Illus.- I received a letter from **Donnie Stout** last week. Donnie used to be with "Rock of Ages" prison ministry. He resigned from "Rock of Ages" in order to become the pastor of a Baptist Church. Well, apparently, he couldn't get away from this calling, because he has resigned his church and has begun going back into the prisons of WV to reach people for Christ. You know, the only way to reach convicts for Christ is to "become as a convict." In other words, **you have to actually go into the prisons and develop relationships with the prisoners**.")
4. But someone says, "I would never go into a prison!"

5. You would, if your desire to share the gospel with convicts was great enough!

C. This is what Paul meant when he said, "I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some."
   1. His desire to preach the gospel and win people to Christ was so overwhelming that he was willing to identify himself with any group, any class, any race of people.
   2. If you know anything about Paul's ministry, you know that he preached the gospel to kings, as well as slaves.

D. We need to ask ourselves a question, this morning.
   1. Is there any group, any class, or any race of people whom we would not be willing to identify ourselves with, put ourselves on their level, develop relationships with, if it meant we might be able to win them to Christ?
   2. I'm afraid that most believers could only say, "I have made myself servant to **some**," or "I am made **some** things to **some** men, that I might by **some** means save **a few**."

Conclusion:

A. How important was the preaching of the gospel to Paul?
   1. It was so important that **he was willing to forfeit his right to be compensated financially for his preaching**.
   2. It was so important that **he had no choice but to preach**.
   3. It was so important that **he was willing to become all things to all men.**
   4. I would say that the preaching of the gospel was **VERY** important to Paul!

B. Now let me go back to my original question to you.
   1. How important is the preaching of the gospel **to you**?
   2. Notice again how Paul concluded this discussion in the first part of ***Vrs. 23*** of our text, "And this I do **for the gospel's sake**,"
   3. What are you willing to do "for the gospel's sake?"
   4. What **rights** are you willing to forfeit?
   5. What **sacrifices** are you willing to make?
   6. What **groups or classes or races of people** are you willing to identify yourself with?
   7. I'm afraid that many believers, if they were honest, would have to say, "The preaching of the gospel is **not important to me at all**. All that is important to me is my own life, my own desires, my own goals, my own personal agenda."
   8. I sincerely hope that is not you.
   9. If it is, I pray that God will get a hold of your heart this morning and **convict you** like you have never been convicted.

"Temperate In All Things"

Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 9:24-27

Introduction:

A. If you are at all familiar with the writings of the apostle Paul, you know that **one of his favorite sources of illustrations was athletics**.
   1. On several occasions, he used **an athletic event** to illustrate a spiritual truth.
   2. (Illus.- J.S. Howson, in his book entitled, "The Metaphores of St. Paul," said that sporting events "were almost a religion among the Greeks." The popularity of sports in Paul's day would be much like it is today. Athletics were a religion to many, and the athletes themselves were as gods.)

B. In our text, this morning, Paul used an illustration that he knew people could easily relate to, seeing that sports were so popular.
   1. The **Isthmian Games**, second only to the Olympics, were held in Corinth, so the athletic illustration Paul used here would have quickly caught the ear of the Corinthian believers.
   2. While these games no doubt included many events, the primary picture that Paul uses here is that of a runner.
   3. Paul illustrates the Christian life as that of **a runner running in a race**.

C. This image is also found in ***Heb. 12:1***, where we read, "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. And then, again, in ***Phil. 3:14***, where Paul wrote, "**I press toward the mark** for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." (In other words, "I have my eyes firmly fixed on the finish line!")
   2. And so, oftentimes, Paul compared the Christian life to **a race** and the believer as **a runner in that race**.
   3. As we look carefully at the text before us this morning, we will consider three spiritual truths that every runner needs to know.
   4. First of all, let us consider...

I. The <u>Drive</u> Of A Runner.

A. Let me ask you a question.
   1. What is it that **drives a runner in a race**?

2. What is it that **motivates him**?
3. What is it that **pushes him**?
4. (Illus.- Consider the race that we call a "marathon." What is it that keeps a marathon runner going when he "hits the wall" and every muscle in the body is crying out, "Stop! Stop!"?)
5. In every instance, the thing that drives a runner in a race is **the desire to win**, and not just to win, but also to receive the prize afterwards.

B. Look again at ***Vrs. 24*** of our text, "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth **the prize**? So run, that ye may obtain."
1. In the Isthmian Games that were held in Corinth, unlike our modern Olympic Games, there could only be **one winner**.
2. There were not three medals given, only one!
3. This is why Paul said that **only "one** receiveth the prize."
4. (Illus.- I read recently that when Mark Spitz, who won seven gold medals at the 1972 summer Olympic Games in Munich, was a young boy, his father would repeatedly say to him, "How many lanes in the pool, Mark?" Mark would answer, "Six." His father would then ask him, "How many lanes win, Mark?" Mark would reply, "Only one.")
5. And so, the thing that drives a runner in a race is **the desire to win the race and in so doing, win the prize**.

C. Now let me ask you another question.
1. What **drives a believer** to live the Christian life?
2. What is it that **motivates him**?
3. What is it that **pushes him**?
4. What is it that **keeps him going** when he becomes spiritually weary and part of him wants to quit?
5. The answer is the same as with a runner.
6. The thing that drives a believer to live the Christian life is **the desire to win**, and in so doing to **win a prize** (reward).
7. There is **one difference**, however.
8. Look again at ***Vrs. 25*** of our text, "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**."

D. **What is the difference** between the prize that a runner wins when he wins a race and the prize that a believer receives for living the Christian life?
1. The runner's prize is **"corruptible,"** while the believer's prize is **"incorruptible."**
2. What does this mean?
3. The Greek word that is translated "corruptible" here literally means **"perishable."**
4. (Illus.- Let's consider, for a moment, the gold medals that today's Olympic athletes win. Someone says, "Gold is pretty durable." That's true, but **it is perishable**! If it doesn't perish in this life, it will perish at the end of this age. Listen to what the Bible says in ***2 Pet. 3:10***, "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.")

5. And so, the runner's prize is **perishabl**e.
6. However, the believer's reward for living the Christian life is **nonperishable**.
7. In other words, it will be ours to enjoy forever and ever.
8. Listen to what the Bible says in ***1 Pet. 1:3-4***, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,...To an inheritance **incorruptible**, and undefiled, and that **fadeth not away**, reserved in heaven for you,"
9. Listen also to the promise that God made to faithful pastors in ***1 Pet. 5:4***, "And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive **a crown of glory that fadeth not away**."

E. There is another big difference between the runner's prize and the believer's reward.

1. As we have already seen, in a race, there can only be one winner.
2. However, when it comes to living the Christian life, there can be **many winners**.
3. "How can that be?" someone asks.
4. There can be many winners because we are not competing against one another.
5. We are only competing against ourselves.
6. We are the only ones who can prevent us from winning the prize!
7. And so, **the drive of the runner** is the desire to win the race, and in doing so, win a prize.
8. (Illus.- The famous tennis star, Chris Evert Lloyd, once said, "I think I feel emotions more than most players. I have a drive, a burning desire to win every time I step on a court.")
9. As believers, that should be our desire as well.

F. Now I want us to consider...

II. The <u>Discipline</u> Of A Runner.

A. Let me ask you this, "Is desire all it takes to be a good athlete?"

1. The answer, of course, is, "No! It takes more than desire, **it also takes discipline**."
2. The athlete must **discipline himself** if he is going to take home the gold.

B. Notice again the first part of ***Vrs. 25*** of our text, "And every man that striveth for the mastery **is temperate in all things**."

1. The Greek word translated "temperate" here literally means "self-restrained" or "self-controlled."
2. A good athlete is both self-restrained and self-controlled.
3. Every area of his life is disciplined.
4. His sleep is disciplined.
5. His diet is disciplined.
6. His exercise routine is disciplined.
7. His practice schedule is disciplined.

8. Every area of his life is disciplined (In other words, every area of his life is totally under his control.)
9. This is an absolute must, if he is to have any chance of taking home the gold.

C. The **same principle applies** to living the Christian life.
1. If we, as believers, are to be successful at living the Christian life, we too must **be temperate in all things**.
2. We too must **exercise self-restraint and self-control**.
3. We too must **be disciplined in every area of our lives**.
4. For example, we must be disciplined when it comes to our prayer life.
5. We must also be disciplined when it comes to reading, studying, and meditating up on God's Word.
6. We must also be disciplined when it comes to attending church.
7. We must also be disciplined when it comes to giving.
8. We must also be disciplined when it comes to being a witness for Christ.
9. But someone asks, "Does it really take discipline to do these things?"
10. It most certainly does, and I will tell you why!
11. It takes discipline because **all of these things** (prayer, Bible reading, church attendance, giving, witnessing) are **contrary to our fleshly nature**. (In other words, they do not come natural!)
12. (Illus.- I know this will surprise you, but there are times when I have to force myself to pray. There are times when I have to force myself to read God's Word. There are times when I have to force myself to come to church. There are times when I have to force myself to write that tithe check on Sunday morning. There are times when I have to force myself go soul winning. But someone says, "Pastor, I thought you were more spiritual than that!" While there are times when I am more spiritual and do these things because I want to do them, just like you, I still possess a fleshly nature that I have to do battle with every day of my life.)
13. And so, if we, as believers, are to be successful at living the Christian life, we must be disciplined in every area of our lives.
14. (Illus.- General George Washington, in a letter addressed to his Virginia Regiments, wrote these words, "Discipline is the soul of an army. It makes small numbers formidable; procures success to the weak, and esteem to all.")
15. Not only is discipline "the soul of an army," it is also the key to successful Christian living.

D. Finally, this morning, I want us to consider...

III. The <u>Disapproval</u> Of The Runner.

A. What if a runner refuses to discipline himself?
1. What if he stays out late every night partying?
2. What if he eats nothing but junk food?
3. What if he abandons his exercise routine and stops running altogether?
4. What can he expect then?
5. First of all, he can expect to become physically out of shape.

6. Secondly, he can expect to win no races and no prizes.
7. Finally, he can expect to become "washed up" as a runner.
8. That's what happens to an athlete when there is no discipline.

B. Did you realize that the same thing can happen to a believer if he refuses to discipline himself spiritually?
1. He will become spiritually out of shape.
2. He will not be successful at living the Christian life.
3. He will become "all washed up" as a Christian.
4. This was one of Paul's greatest fears.
5. Notice again ***Vrs. 27*** of our text, "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."
6. In other words, he said, "I discipline myself. I keep my natural instincts under control. Why? Because I don't want to become a castaway."
7. That word **"castaway"** comes from a Greek word that literally means, **"unapproved, rejected, worthless."**

C. I can identify with the apostle Paul because, like him, one of my greatest fears is becoming a spiritual castaway.
1. I want to have God's approval on my life.
2. I want my service for Him to be accepted.
3. I want to be a useful tool in His hands to accomplish whatever he desires to accomplish with my life.
4. I hope that you desire the same thing.
5. Well, if we want to avoid becoming disapproved, **we must discipline ourselves to be faithful in doing those things that will help us to stay spiritually fit**!

Conclusion:

A. What have we learned about a runner.
1. First of all, we have learned about **the drive of a runner** (the desire to win the race and win the prize).
2. Secondly, we have learned about **the discipline of a runner** (he must discipline every area of his life).
3. Finally, we have learned about **the disapproval of a runner** (what happens if he fails to discipline himself).

B. Let me ask you a question.
1. Do you desire to be successful at living the Christian life, and by doing so, earn the rewards that God has promised those who do?
2. If so, **are you willing to discipline yourself**?
3. Are you willing to...
-pray like you should?
-read God's Word like you should?
-attend church like you should?

-give like you should?
-witness like you should?

4. If you are not willing to discipline yourself spiritually, **you really shouldn't expect any "rewards"** when you stand at the judgment seat of Christ.
5. May God help each of us to **"go for the gold!"**

"That Rock Was Christ"

Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 10:1-5

Introduction:

A. (Illus.- Several years ago, I met a man who held a very unusual view of the Bible. We were talking about the Bible and its importance when he told me something that kind of took me by surprise. He said, in so many words, "While the New Testament is extremely important, **the Old Testament is of no importance to believers today**." When I got over my initial shock at what he said, I asked him, "Why do you say that?" His reply went something like this, he said, "The Old Testament is no longer relevant. Because we are living under the New Testament [covenant] today, the Old Testament [covenant] is of no value to us.")

1. Now part of what that man said was true!
2. **We are living under the New Testament** (covenant of grace) and not the Old Testament (covenant of the law).
3. However, to say that the Old Testament is **of no value** to believers today is **completely wrong**.

B. But someone asks, "**What value, then, is there in the Old Testament**? If we are no longer living under the Old Testament (covenant), why is the Old Testament still important to believers today?

1. Paul gives us one of the answers to this question in our text.
2. Notice how Paul begins this chapter.
3. He begins by giving the Corinthian believers (who, by the way, were Gentiles) a short lesson in Jewish history.
4. He talks about the "cloud" and the "sea" and "Moses," as well as the manna and the rock out of which they got water.
5. Now why would Paul give these Gentile believers a lesson in Jewish history?
6. He answers this question in ***Vrs. 11***, which we read earlier this morning, look at that verse again, "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."
7. In other words, **"The things that happened to God's people (Jews) under the old covenant (law) are recorded for us in the Old Testament so that we might learn from the things that they experienced."**
8. And so, the Old Testament **is important**.
9. It **is of value (great value)** to believers today!

C. Now let me point out something here.

1. When you are talking about examples, there are good examples and there are bad examples, and we can learn from both.
2. From the good examples, we learn what **to do** (what we should do) and from the bad examples, we learn what **not to do** (what we should not do).
3. This morning, I want us to focus our attention on the good examples.
4. In other words, I want us to look at some things that they Jews did right, so that we can do likewise.
5. Notice, first of all, that the Jews...

I. Allowed God To Guide Them Through The Wilderness.

A. Notice again ***Vrs. 1*** of our text, "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;"

1. Now what was this "**cloud**"?
2. Paul said, "...all our fathers were **under the cloud**."
3. Turn with me to ***Exo. 13:17-18,21***, "And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt:...But **God led the people** about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red sea: and the children of Israel went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt.....**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**:"
4. The "cloud" that Paul had in mind here was none other than the "pillar of a cloud" that God sent **to guide Israel** as they journeyed through the wilderness on their way to the promised land.
5. At night, we are told, this "pillar of a cloud" became a "pillar of fire," but its purpose was the same, **to guide Israel**.
6. When the cloud moved, Israel moved.
7. When the cloud stopped, Israel stopped and set up camp.
8. And so, the **first positive example** that we see here is that **Israel allowed God to guide them** through the wilderness.

B. You know, this is **an example that we need to follow**.

1. We too, as believers today, need to allow God to **guide us through this wilderness of this life** as we make our way to the promised land.
2. Now God has not given us a "pillar of a cloud" by day and a "pillar of fire" by night to guide us, however, He has given us at least **two very dependable guides**.
3. What are these guides?
4. Well, first of all, He has given us **His Word**.
5. I want you to listen to what the psalmist prayed in ***Psa. 119:105***, "**Thy word** is **a lamp** unto my feet, and **a light** unto my path."
6. Just like the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night guided the children of Israel through the wilderness, God's Word **lights our path and shows us the way that we should go.**
7. Solomon put it like this in ***Pro. 6:23***, "For **the commandment is a lamp**; and **the law is light**;"
8. (Illus.- Let me ask you a question. When you walk into a dark room at night, what is the very first thing you do? If you are like most people, the very first thing you do is turn on the light. Why? Because the light **makes getting around in the room a lot easier**. Amen?)
9. That's exactly what God's Word does for us today, it **makes getting through life a lot easier**.

C. Of course, if we are to benefit from the light of God's Word, **we must read it** and then **apply it's principles** as we make life's choices.
   1. This is why Peter gave us the admonition found in ***2 Pet. 1:19***, "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto **ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth** in a dark place,"
   2. God has given us the light of His Word to guide us through life, however, if we are to benefit from it, **we must read it and then heed it!**

D. I said earlier that God has given us, as believers today, two very dependable guides.
   1. As we have seen, the first dependable guide is God's Word, but what is the second?
   2. The second dependable guide is the Holy Spirit.
   3. When Jesus told His disciples that He must go away, He comforted them by promising to send them a "comforter" in His place.
   4. The "comforter," of course, is the Holy Spirit.
   5. With this in mind, listen to what Jesus told His disciples in ***John 16:13***, "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, **he will guide you** into all truth:"
   6. Now this raises a question.
   7. Exactly how does the Holy Spirit guide us?
   8. He guides us **through an inward prompting**?
   9. The Holy Spirit, of course, lives within every believer, and He guides us by prompting us from within.
   10. Now let me make something very clear.
   11. The Holy Spirit will **never prompt us to do anything contrary to God's Word**.
   12. If you feel "prompted" to do something that the Bible clearly forbids, then you can be absolutely sure that your prompting **did not originate with God**.
   13. This is why we are admonished in ***1 John 4:1*** to "....**try the spirits** whether they are of God:"
   14. The way we do this, of course, is by putting them to the test of God's Word.

E. And so, first of all, the Jews allowed God to guide them through the wilderness.
   1. This is **a positive example** that we should follow.
   2. We should allow God to guide us through life, by **reading and heeding His Word**, and by **paying attention to the inward prompting of His Spirit**.

F. Notice, secondly, that Israel...

II. Acknowledged The Authority Of God's Man.

A. Notice again ***Vrs. 2*** of our text, "And were all **baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea**;"
   1. Now I must admit that this verse is a little difficult to understand, and the reason being, we see the word "baptized" and we automatically think of water baptism.
   2. However, the expression, "baptized unto Moses...in the sea" does not mean that Moses literally baptized Israel in the Red Sea.
   3. There are two problems with that.
   4. First of all, do you realize how long it would have taken for Moses to baptize 3,000,000 people?

5. That would have been a very long baptism service.!
6. The second problem with that is the fact that when Israel crossed the Red Sea, **no one got wet**! (Not even a little bit!)
7. The Bible says that they walked across on dry ground!
8. And so, even though we are told that they were "all baptized unto Moses" it is definitely not talking about water baptism.

B. What then is it talking about?
1. In order to understand the meaning of this phrase, we must first of all understand something about **the purpose of baptism**.
2. The purpose of baptism is **identification**.
3. For example, when we were **baptized in water** after we were saved, the purpose of that baptism was to **publicly identify us with Christ**.
4. Listen to ***Rom. 6:3-5***, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?...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....For if we have been **planted together** in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:"
5. Notice the expressions "buried with him" and "planted together."
6. Water baptism identifies the new believer with Christ.
7. Now, when Paul said that Israel had been "baptized unto Moses," he simply meant that Israel had been **identified with Moses**.
8. In other words, they had **acknowledged his authority as God's man** and had **followed him** through the sea and through the wilderness until they came to the promised land.
9. Now there were a few who challenged his authority along the way (God dealt with these severely), however, for the most part, **they submitted themselves to his authority**.

C. This too, is **a positive example** that we, as believers today, should follow.
1. As they acknowledged the authority of God's man and willingly followed his leadership, we should do likewise.
2. **Who is God's man today**?
3. As far as the church is concerned, the pastor is God's man.
4. Turn with me to ***Heb. 13:7***, "Remember them which have the rule over you, **who have spoken unto you the word of God**: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation."
5. There's no doubt that this is a reference to **pastors**, or as they are sometimes called, **elders**.
6. After all, a pastor's primary responsibility to his church is to speak unto (teach) them the Word of God.
7. This is why Peter admonished pastors in ***1 Pet. 5:2***, "**Feed the flock of God** which is among you, **taking the oversight thereof**,"

8. And so, what Paul is telling us in ***Heb. 13:7*** is that we should acknowledge our pastors, acknowledge their spiritual authority over us, and willingly follow their leadership.
9. Look also at ***Heb. 13:17***, "**Obey them** that have the rule over you, and **submit yourselves**: for they watch for your souls,"

D. Now what does it mean to "**obey them** that have the rule over" us? **Exactly in what sense** are we to obey our pastor?
1. First of all, it means that we are to **obey (submit to) his teaching**, that is as long as he is teaching us God's Word.
2. (Illus.- Let me just stop here and say that you should never do what your pastor says merely because he says to do it. If your pastor, and this includes me, cannot give you a Biblical reason for doing something, you are not obligated to do it. However, if he can give you a Biblical reason for doing it, you are obligated, first of all because it is God's Word, but secondly because God expects you to "them that have the rule over you.")
3. And so, first of all, to obey your pastor means to obey his teaching, as he **expounds the Word of God** to you.
4. It also means to **obey (follow after) his example**, that is as long as he is providing us with a godly example.
5. You've heard me say many times that a pastor is to **lead by example**.
6. This is why Paul admonished Timothy in ***1 Tim. 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."
7. And so, we have a responsibility to "obey them that have the rule over" us, to...
-obey (submit to) their Biblical teaching,
-obey (follow after) their godly example.

E. There is one more thing that I want us to notice about Israel.
1. First of all, they allowed God to guide them through the wilderness.
2. Secondly, they acknowledged the authority of God's man.
3. Notice, finally, that they....

III. Assumed That God Would Take Care Of Them.

A. Now I realize that there were temporary **lapses in their faith**, but for the most part, they assumed **(relied) upon God to provide for their needs**.

B. Did God provide for their needs?
1. He most certainly did, and He did so in miraculous ways.
2. First of all, He provided manna from heaven.
3. Listen as I read ***Exo. 16:13-15***, "And it came to pass, that....in the morning the dew lay round about the host....And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost

on the ground....And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, **It is manna**: for they wist not what it was. And Moses said unto them, **This is the bread which the LORD hath given you to eat**."

4. And so, first of all, God provided them manna from heaven.
5. He also provided them water to drink, water which came from a rock
6. Listen to what the Lord told Moses in **Exo. 17:6**, "Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt **smite the rock**, and **there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink**."
7. This same verse goes on to say, "And **Moses did so** in the sight of the elders of Israel."
8. And so, God provided for Israel's material needs, and He did so in miraculous ways.

C. But that's not all.
1. God also provided for Israel's **spiritual needs**.
2. Notice again ***Vrs. 3-4*** of our text, "And did all eat the same **spiritual** meat;...And did all drink the same **spiritual** drink: for they drank of that **spiritual** Rock that followed them: and **that Rock was Christ**."
3. You won't find a greater text in all the Word of God to support **the pre-existence of our Lord Jesus Christ**.
4. Even before His birth in Bethlehem's manger, which we just celebrated, Jesus was present with His children as they journeyed through the wilderness.
5. And so, Israel assumed that God would provide take care of them.

D. This too, is a positive example that we, as believers today, should follow.
1. First of all, we should rely upon God to provide for our material needs.
2. I love the promise found in ***Phil. 4:19***, "But **my God shall supply all your need** according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."
3. Not only should we rely upon God to provide for our material needs, but we should also rely upon Him to meet our spiritual needs.
4. I am reminded of what Jesus said in ***Mat. 4:4***, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but **by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God**."
5. Aren't you thankful that our God is so great, that He is able to meet all our needs, both material and spiritual?

Conclusion:

A. This morning we have noticed three things that the Jews did right.
1. Three positive examples that we should follow.
2. First of all, **they allowed God to guide them through the wilderness**. (We too should allow God to guide us through the wilderness of this life through His Word and His indwelling Holy Spirit.)
3. Secondly, **they acknowledged the authority of God's man**. (We too should acknowledge the authority of our pastor, and in so doing obey His Biblical teaching and his godly example.)
4. Finally, **they assumed that God would take of them**. (We too should trust God to take care of us, meeting not only our material needs, but also our spiritual needs.)

B. From which of these positive examples do you need to learn a lesson.
   1. Perhaps you need to begin allowing God to guide you.
   2. Perhaps you need to begin acknowledging the authority of your pastor.
   3. Perhaps you need to begin trusting God to take care of you.

C. Perhaps you need to be saved.

"God Was Not Pleased"

Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 10:5-11

Introduction:

A. One of the things that we learned last Sunday, as we began our study of ***1 Corinthians 10***, is that one of the reasons God has preserved in His Word (Old Testament) the early years of Israel's history is so that **we can learn from their example**.
   1. Notice again ***Vrs. 11*** of our text, "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."
   2. In other words, Paul said, "The things that happened to Israel during the early years of their history are **recorded in the Old Testament for our benefit, so that we might learn from their experiences**."

B. For example, as we saw last Sunday, Israel **<u>allowed</u> God to guide them through the wilderness**.

1. Notice again ***1 Cor. 10:1***, "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. The "cloud" here is a reference to the "pillar of a cloud" that God gave to Israel to guide them during the day.
3. You may remember that this "pillar of a cloud" became a "pillar of fire" at night.
4. And so, Israel allowed God to guide them through the wilderness.
5. Israel also **<u>acknowledged</u> the authority of God's man**.
6. Notice again ***1 Cor. 10:2***, "And were all **baptized unto Moses** in the cloud and in the sea;"
7. In other words, they were identified with Moses as their spiritual leader, as the man whom God had appointed to lead them.
8. Finally, we noticed that Israel **<u>assumed</u> that God would take care of them**.
9. Notice again ***1 Cor. 10:3-4***, "And did all **eat the same spiritual meat**;...And did all **drink the same spiritual drink**: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ."
10. Not only did they rely upon God to provide for their material needs, they also trusted Him (Christ) to meet their spiritual needs.

C. Now all of these things are positive examples that we should follow today.

1. As Israel **allowed God to guide them**, we should allow God to guide us today.
2. As Israel **acknowledged the authority of God's man**, we should acknowledge the authority of God's men today.
3. As Israel **assumed that God would take care of them**, we should assume that God will take care of us today.
4. All **positive examples**.
5. All **examples that we should follow**.
6. All **examples that we should emulate** in our own lives.

D. However, Israel also gave us **some negative examples**, examples that we should **not** follow.

1. Look again the first part of ***Vrs. 5*** of our text, "But **with many of them God was not well pleased**:"
2. Now what did Israel do that we should not do?
3. What did they do that God was not well pleased with?
4. Whatever they did, we certainly want to avoid doing the same thing.

D. Notice, first of all, that they...

I. Lusted After Evil Things.

A. Look again at ***Vrs. 6*** of our text, "Now these things were our examples, to the intent **we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted**."

1. Now what does it mean when it says that Israel "**lusted...after evil things**"?
2. It doesn't mean what you might think.
3. Turn with me to ***Num. 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**?...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:...But now our soul is dried away: **there is nothing at all, beside this manna**, before our eyes."
4. We saw earlier that while Israel was in the wilderness, God provided for their material needs, which **included the "manna"** from heaven.
5. However, some of them **became dissatisfied** with the manna.
6. They said, "We're tired of this old manna. We want some **flesh (meat)** to eat! We want some **fish**! We want some **cucumbers**! We want some **melons**! We want some **leeks**! We want some **onions**! We want some **garlic**! Give us something to eat besides this old manna!"
7. In other words, they were not satisfied with what God had given them.
8. And so, when it says that Israel "lusted...after evil things," it simply means that **they were not satisfied with God's provision for their lives**.

B. Many believers today have the same problem, they are not satisfied with God's provision for their lives.
1. God has given them a job, but they want a better job.
2. God has given them food, but they want better food.
3. God has given them clothing, but they want better clothing.
4. God has given them a house, but they want a better house.
5. God has given them a car, but they want a better car.
6. God has given them **every thing they need to live**, but they are not satisfied with what God has given them, they want more!

C. (Illus.- By the way, this is how people get themselves in trouble with credit cards and other forms of credit. They are not happy with what God has given them, so they use credit to buy things that they really cannot afford. It's not that they need the things that they buy on credit, they just **want** them.)

D. Turn with me to ***1 Tim. 6:6-8***, "But godliness with contentment is great gain....For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out....And **having food and raiment let us be therewith content**."
1. The word "**content**" comes from the Greek word "**arkeo**," which literally means, "enough" or "sufficient."
2. In other words, "If God has given us what we need, and He has, then **we should consider that to be enough**."
3. The writer of Hebrews put it like this in ***Heb. 13:5***, "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and **be content with such things as ye have**:"

E. And so, Israel **lusted after evil things**. They were not satisfied with God's provision for their lives. Notice also that Israel...

II. Worshiped Idols.

A. Notice again **Vrs. 7** of our text, **"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."

B. Now when did Israel worship idols?
1. Israel worshiped idols on many occasions, but the occasion referenced by our text is **the time when Moses went on the Mount** to receive the law.
2. Do you remember what happened?
3. Turn with me to ***Exo. 32:1-6***, "And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, **make us gods**, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him....And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me....And all the people brake off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron....And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had **made it a molten calf**: and they said, **These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt**....And when Aaron saw it, he **built an altar before it**; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, To morrow is a feast to the LORD....And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; **and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play**."
4. And so, while Moses was on the Mount receiving the law of God, Israel fashioned themselves a golden calf and began worshiping it.

C. But someone says, "Idol worship is not a problem among believers today."
1. It may not be a golden calf that is being worshiped, but the worship of idols **is** a problem among some believers today.
2. "What idols?" you ask.
3. Anything that becomes more important to us than our relationship with God and our service to Him.
4. It could be our **job**.
5. It could be our **family**.
6. It could be our **amusement**.
7. It could even be our **own selves** that we are worshiping.
8. Anything at all, that we put before God, becomes an idol.
9. This is why Jesus admonished us in ***Mat. 6:33*** to **"seek ... first** the kingdom of God, and his righteousness;"
10. The apostle John admonished believers in ***1 John 5:21***, "Little children, **keep yourselves from idols**."

D. And so, not only did Israel **lust after evil things**, but they also **worshiped idols**. Notice, thirdly, that Israel...

III. Committed Fornication.

A. Notice again ***Vrs. 8*** of our text, "**Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed**, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand."

B. When did Israel "commit fornication"?
1. Turn with me to ***Num. 25:1-5***, "And Israel abode in Shittim, and **the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab**....And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and **bowed down to their gods**....And Israel joined himself unto Baalpeor: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel....And the LORD said unto Moses, Take all the heads of the people, and hang them up before the LORD against the sun, that the fierce anger of the LORD may be turned away from Israel....And Moses said unto the judges of Israel, **Slay ye every one his men that were joined unto Baalpeor**."
2. And so, not only did Israel commit fornication in the physical sense of the word, but **they also committed spiritual fornication** when they bowed down to the god of the Moabites.
3. As a result of their sin, **thousands of them died**!

C. We, as believers today, should learn from what happened to Israel and **avoid sexual sins at all costs**.
1. How can we avoid sexual sins?
2. It's really very simple.
3. If you are you single, simply **abstain** from any and all sexual activity until **after you are married**.
4. If you are married, simply **stay faithful to your spouse**.
5. (Illus.- In our society today, sexually transmitted diseases are a real problem, and in some cases are even fatal. But did you realize if everyone followed God's plan [did things God's way], there would be no sexually transmitted diseases? God's way is best.)

D. And so, not only did Israel **lust after evil things**, not only did they **worship idols**, but they also **committed fornication**. Notice, fourthly, that Israel also...

IV. Tempted Christ.

A. Notice again ***Vrs. 9*** of our text, "**Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted**, and were destroyed of serpents."

B. Now when did Israel "tempt Christ"?
1. They actually tempted the Lord many times.
2. However, the occasion referenced by our text is found in ***Num. 21:4-6***, listen as I read, "And they journeyed from mount Hor by the way of the Red sea, to compass the land of Edom: and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way....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....And **the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died**."

3. What does it mean when it says that they tempted Christ?
4. It simply means that they **tested God's patience**, and while God is certainly a patient (longsuffering) God, Israel **discovered the hard way** that there is a limit to His patience!
5. That's when God **sent poisonous serpents** among the people, which resulted in many of them dying in the wilderness.

C. We, as believers today, certainly need to **learn a lesson from what happened to Israel** here.

1. Yes, **God is a patient (longsuffering) God**.
2. Listen to what the psalmist wrote in ***Psa. 86:15***, "But thou, O Lord, art **a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering**, and plenteous in mercy and truth."
3. However, there is a limit to His longsuffering.
4. If we tempt Him, if we deliberately test His patience, if we just keep pushing and pushing and pushing, **we are in great danger of experiencing His chastening**.
5. I am reminded of what the writer of Hebrews wrote in ***Heb. 10:30-31***, "The Lord shall **judge his people**....It is **a fearful thing** to fall into the hands of the living God."

D. And so, not only did Israel **lust after evil things**, not only did they **worship idols**, not only did they **commit fornication,** they also **tempted Christ**. Notice, finally, Israel also...

V. Murmured To God.

A. Notice again ***Vrs. 10*** of our text, "**Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured**, and were destroyed of the destroyer."

B. Now **when** did Israel murmur to God?

1. While there **many times** that Israel murmured to God, the occasion referenced by our text is **when they com-plained to Moses and Aaron about how the Lord had handled the rebellion of Korah and his followers**.
2. You might remember that God caused the earth to open and literally swallow them up.
3. When the people murmured about this, God **sent a plague** among the congregation and **14,700** of them died.
4. Many more would have died had Moses and Aaron not **intervened** on their behalf.

C. Again, we need to learn a lesson from what happened to Israel.

1. We need to learn **not to "murmur" to God**.
2. What does the word "murmur" mean?
3. It simply means "**to complain**."
4. As we have already seen, we should not complain about God's provision for our lives, but neither should we complain about other things.

5. Instead of complaining, we should be thankful.
6. The Bible says in ***1 Thes. 5:18***, **"In every thing give thanks**: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."
7. Notice it says, "In **every thing** give thanks:"
8. Not just for the good, but also for the bad.
9. (Illus.- When I was in seminary, there was sign up over the door going into the fellowship area which read, "A complaining person is never thankful, and a thankful person never complains." That's very true.)

Conclusion:

A. And so, we see that Israel not only gave us some positive examples to follow, they also gave us some negative examples not to follow.
   1. First of all, they **lusted after evil things** (were not satisfied with God's provision for their lives).
   2. Secondly, they **worshiped idols** (golden calf).
   3. Thirdly, they **committed fornication** (with Moabites).
   4. Fourthly, they **tempted Christ** (tested God's patience).
   5. Fifthly, they **murmured to God** (complained to Him).
   6. Five negative examples that we should not follow.

B. Perhaps you need to **take a lesson** from Israel in one of these five areas.
   1. Perhaps you need to...
      -learn to be content.
      -begin putting God first in your life.
      -commit yourself to living a life of sexual purity.
      -stop trying (testing) God's patience.
      -stop complaining, and start being thankful.
   2. What do you need to do, this morning???

C. Perhaps you need to be saved!

"God Is Faithful"

Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 10:13

Introduction:

A. I want to speak to you this morning on a subject with which I'm sure **every one of us can identify**, and that is the subject of **temptation**.
   1. Why do I say that every one of us can identify with temptation?
   2. I say that because, if the truth were known, **every one of us** has to deal with temptation **every day of our lives**.
   3. Now I realize that there are some temptations that **we can avoid altogether**, if we use the common sense that God has given us.
   4. This is why Jesus taught us to pray, "And **lead us not into temptation**, but deliver us from evil:" ***(Mat. 6:13)***
   5. In other words, "Lord, **help us to avoid** those **places** and **situations** wherein we might be tempted to sin against you."
   6. (Illus.- For example, I have never been tempted to play a slot machine. Do you know why I have never been tempted to play a slot machine? Because I have never put myself in a situation where I could play a slot machine, even if I wanted to. I **stay away from those places**, and so should you!)
   7. (Illus.- Let me give you another illustration. I have never been tempted to be unfaithful to my wife. Never! Do you know why? Because I have never allowed myself to get in a situation where I could be unfaithful to my wife, even if I wanted to. I **avoid those situations** like the plague, and so should you.)
   8. And so, **there are** some temptations that we can **avoid altogether**, if we will use the common sense that God has given to us.

9. However, while it is true that we can avoid some temptations, **we cannot avoid all temptation** (we will be tempted every day of our lives).
10. Temptation is **a fact of life** for every believer.

B. Now because that is true, the verse before us this morning is a very important verse.
   1. As we examine this verse carefully, I want to call your attention to at least three things.
   2. First of all, I want to call your attention to...

I. The <u>Commonness</u> Of Temptation.

A. Notice again how our text begins, "There hath no temptation taken you but **such as is common to man**:" ***(1 Cor. 10:13)***
   1. Notice again the expression, "...such as is **common to man**."
   2. This whole expression is translated from one Greek word, the word "anthropinos," which literally means "human" or "after the manner of men."
   3. And so, what Paul is saying here is that **the reason we are tempted, is because we are human.**
   4. (Illus.- Every now and then a new believer will come to me and say something like this, "Pastor, **something is wrong with me.** I'm afraid that I'm not really saved." When I ask him why he would say something like that, he answers, "**I still have these sinful desires and I still find myself being tempted to sin**." Of course, I immediately explain to him that **this does not mean he is not saved**, it simply means he is still human. It simply means that he still possesses a human nature, which is a sinful & depraved nature, inherited from his great great grandfather, Adam.)

B. Turn with me to ***Jam. 1:13-14***, "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:...But every man is tempted, **when he is drawn away of his own lust,** and enticed."
   1. The word "**lust**" here is translated from the Greek word "**epithumia**," which literally means "**a longing for that which is forbidden**."
   2. Why do we still have these longings for that which is forbidden, even after we are saved?
   3. It is because we are **still human**!
   4. It is because we **still possess a fallen nature**!
   5. It is because we are **still descendants of Adam**!

C. Not only are we tempted because we are human, but when we are tempted, that temptation **comes at us through three different facets of our humanity** (humanness).
   1. Listen as I read ***1 John 2:15-16***, "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....For all that is in the world, the **lust of the flesh**, and the **lust of the eyes**, and the **pride of life**, is not of the Father, but is of the world."
   2. First of all, temptation comes at us through the **"lust of the flesh**."

3. In other words, Satan tempts us by appealing to our **fleshly appetites**.
4. Do you remember when Jesus was tempted of the devil?
5. Because Jesus had been fasting for forty days, the devil knew that He would be hungry.
6. And so, he tempted Him by saying, "If thou be the Son of God, **command that these stones be made bread**." ***(Mat. 4:3)***
7. He appealed to His fleshly appetites.
8. Well, Satan hasn't changed a bit, because he still tempts us by appealing to our fleshly appetites.
9. He comes to us, dangling some sin before our eyes, and he says, "Wouldn't this taste (feel) good?"

D. Temptation also comes at us through the "**lust of the eyes**."
1. In other words, Satan tempts us by appealing to our **eyes**.
2. (Illus.- This is one reason why advertising is so successful. People see something in an ad, whether it be on TV or in a magazine or on a billboard, and it **looks good** to them. It **appeals to their eyes**. They say to themselves, "I've got to have one of those!")
3. This is certainly how Satan approached Eve in the garden.
4. Listen as I read ***Gen. 3:6***, "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food [lust of the flesh], and that it was **pleasant to the eyes** [lust of the eyes]."

E. Temptation also comes at us through the "**pride of life**."
1. In other words, Satan tempts us by appealing to our **pride**.
2. Again, this is how Satan approached Eve in the garden.
3. Not only did Eve see that the forbidden "tree was **good for food**, and that it was **pleasant to the eyes**," she also saw it as a "tree **to be desired to make one wise**." ***(Gen. 3:6)***
4. And so, temptation comes at us through three different facets of our humanity (humanness).
5. It comes at us through the "lust of the flesh."
6. It comes at us through the "lust of the eyes."
7. It comes at us through the "pride of life."
8. But however it comes, it comes because we are human.
9. That's what I mean by the commonness of temptation.

F. Secondly, I want to draw your attention to...

II. The <u>Faithfulness</u> Of Our God.

A. Notice how our text continues, "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**;" ***(1 Cor. 10:13)***
1. Notice again the words, "...but **God is faithful**,"
2. I love those words, don't you?
3. "...God is **faithful**."

4. Now this raises a couple of questions.
5. First of all, to whom is God faithful?
6. God is faithful to us!
7. God is faithful to His children!
8. God is faithful to those whom He loves!
9. The Bible says in ***Deu. 7:9***, "Know therefore that **the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God**, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him."
10. The psalmist prayed in ***Psa. 36:5***, "Thy mercy, O LORD, is in the heavens; and **thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds**."
11. Yes, **God is faithful** to us.

B. But this raises another question.
1. **How does God demonstrate His faithfulness** to us?
2. He does so in many ways, but according to our text, he does so by **making sure that no temptation comes our way that we, with His help, cannot overcome**.
3. Notice again our text, "but God is faithful**, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able**;" ***(1 Cor. 10:13)***
4. In other words, because God is faithful to His children, He will make sure that **we are never overwhelmed** by temptation.

C. Now this raises a question.
1. How is it that God can do that?
2. First of all, He can do that because **He understands the nature of temptation**, and the reason He understands the nature of temptation is because **He Himself has been tempted** (has experienced temptation).
3. Listen to what the Bible says in ***Heb. 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**."
4. When was Jesus tempted?
5. As we have already seen, He was tempted in the wilderness, just prior to beginning His public ministry. ***(Mat. 4:1-11)***
6. First of all, He was tempted to **turn stones into bread**.
7. Secondly, He was tempted to **cast Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple**.
8. Thirdly, He was tempted to **fall down and worship Satan**.
9. Three times Jesus was tempted, and three times He used the Word of God to withstand the temptation and not give in to it.
10. Yes, Jesus was tempted Himself, and because He was, He understands the nature of temptation (He understands what it is like to be tempted).

D. Not only does Jesus understand the nature of temptation, He also **understands the nature of our make-up**.
1. In other words, He understands...
-what we are made of,
-how we are constructed,
-what our fleshly limitations are.

2. Listen to what the Bible says in ***Psa. 103:13-14***, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him....For **he knoweth our frame**; he remembereth that we are dust."
3. If the truth were known, God knows us better than we know ourselves, and why wouldn't He?
4. He created us, didn't He?

E. And so, God has promised to make sure that we are never overwhelmed by temptation, that whatever temptation comes our way, it will not be greater than we, with His help, can handle.
1. This is one of the ways that God demonstrates His faithfulness to us.

2. (Illus.- I've heard people say, after they had given in to some temptation, "I couldn't help myself, the temptation was just too strong for me to overcome." Well, we know now that that is not the case!!!)
3. Now, finally, I want to call you attention to...

III. The <u>Assuredness</u> Of A Way Out.

A. Not only has God promised to limit our temptation to that which, with His help, we are able to bear, **He has also assured us** that along with the temptation, **He will provide us with a way out**!

B. Look again at our text, "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." ***(1 Cor. 10:13)***

C. (Illus.- Let me illustrate. If you go into any public building, you will see "exit" signs over the top of some doors. The law requires businesses to put these signs up. Why? So that, in case of fire, people will know where the exits are. Businesses are required by law to provide an adequate number of exits, and to plainly mark those exits in case of fire. If you find yourself in a burning building, **the wise thing to do is look for the exits, and then hi-tail it out**!)
1. God has done something similar for us.
2. He has promised us that whenever we find ourselves being tempted (with the burning fires of temptation all around us), **there will be...**
   -an exit,
   -a way out,
   -a way to escape the temptation.
3. Of course, we have to **want** a way out, and be willing to **look** for it and **take** it once we find it.
4. (Illus.- Joseph is a perfect Bible example of this. When he found himself within the grips of Potiphar's wife, he looked for a way out, and once he found it, he didn't

waste any time taking it! In fact, when he fled the scene, he left so quickly that he left Potiphar's wife holding his outer garment.)

5. (Illus.-A preacher who lived many years ago once said, "God always makes a way of escape and sometimes the way of escape is the king's highway and a good pair of heels." In other words, we should let the devil see our heels as we run as hard as we can to get away from the temptation.)

D. Let me give you a word of caution here.
   1. If we fail to take advantage of God's way out of temptation, **we will surely be burned**.
   2. (Illus.- Just like if you are in a burning building and fail to follow the exit signs and exit the building, you will surely be burned.)

E. You know, when you consider these last two points, the...
   -faithfulness of our God,
   -assuredness of a way out,
   you must come to the conclusion that when we fall to temptation, **we sin because we choose to sin**, not because we couldn't help ourselves. (We can't blame it on anyone but ourselves!)

Conclusion:

A. We've looked at three things, this morning.
   1. The **commonness of temptation** (we are tempted because we are human).
   2. The **faithfulness of our God** (to limit our temptation to that which we are able to bear).
   3. The **assuredness of a way out** (God will provide a way to escape the temptation).

B. Are you struggling with temptation, this morning?
   1. If we have learned anything, this morning, we have learned that **it is possible, with God's help, to win the victory** over any temptation.
   2. Will you **claim that victory**, or will you **surrender** to that temptation?
   3. The choice is yours!!!

"Flee From Idolatry"

Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 10:14-22

Introduction:

A. As we continue our study of Paul's first letter to the church at Corinth, we notice that Paul again turns to the subject of idolatry.
   1. Why did Paul have so much to say about idols and idolatry in this letter?
   2. It was because the majority of the Corinthian believers had been **saved out of idol worship**. (In other words, before they came to Christ, they **participated in** and were **devoted to** the worship of idols.)
   3. Now this raises a question.
   4. What all was involved in their worship of idols?
   5. First of all, their idol worship involved **actually going to the temples** where the idols were housed.
   6. You might remember that the city of Corinth was filled with idol shrines and temples, the most prominent being **the temple of Aphrodite** (the Greek goddess of lust).
   7. Not only did their idol worship involve going to an idol temple, but it also involved **committing fornication with the temple prostitutes**.
   8. I'm told that in the temple of Aphrodite alone, there were over 1,000 "priestesses" (prostitutes), with whom the worshipers would commit fornication.
   9. Not only did their idol worship involve going to the temple and committing fornication with the temple prostitutes, it also involved **partaking in idol feasts**, where meat that had been offered to an idol would be served.
   10. This is how these Corinthian believers lived (behaved) before they came to Christ!
   11. They would....
       -**go to idol temples**,
       -**commit fornication with temple prostitutes**,
       -**partake in idol feasts**, and in so doing **consume meat that had been offered to idols**!
   12. **Is it any wonder** that Paul had so much to say about idolatry in his letter to them?

B. Now as we examine our text more closely this morning, I want to call your attention to **three things**. First of all,....

I. A <u>Command</u> To Obey.

A. Notice again ***Vrs. 14*** of our text, "Wherefore, my dearly beloved, **flee from idolatry**."
1. Now what did Paul mean when he said, "...**flee from idolatry**"?
2. Well, let's define a couple of words here.
3. First of all, the word "**idolatry**."
4. By "idolatry" Paul was referring to **their former way of life**.
5. As I just pointed out, before these Corinthian believers came to Christ, they **made a habit out of** going to idol temples, committing fornication with temple prostitutes, and partaking in idol feasts.
6. This was their **former way of life** (a life of idolatry).
7. Now the word "**flee**."
8. The word "**flee**" simply means to "**run away**."
9. Now let's put these two words together.
10. When Paul admonished these Corinthian believers to "...**flee from idolatry**," he was simply telling them to "**run away from their former way of life**."
11. He was telling them to "run away from the practice of going to idol temples, committing fornication with temple prostitutes, and partaking in idol feasts.

B. Now let me point out something here that you may have missed.
1. The word "flee" **implies a sense of urgency**!
2. It's interesting that Paul did not say...
   -**stay away** from idolatry,
   -**avoid any more involvement** in idolatry,
   -**refrain from participating** in any form of idolatry,
   but rather, "...**flee (run away)** from idolatry."
3. Again, that word "**flee**" implies a sense of **urgency**!
4. (Illus.- Let me illustrate. Suppose you were watching your child playing in your yard, and while you were watching him (or her), you noticed your neighbor's pit bull running full speed toward your child. How would you react to that situation? Would you say, "Honey, I think it would be wise for you to begin making your way toward me."? I think not! What you would do is scream as loudly as you can, "**RUN! Honey, RUN!!!**")
5. That's kind of what Paul is doing here.
6. He is screaming as loudly as he can to these Corinthian believers, "**RUN! Brethren, RUN!!!**"

C. Now, **why** such a sense of urgency?
1. Because Paul knew that these young believers could **very easily be drawn back** into their former way of life (a life of idolatry).
2. This is why he told them what he did in ***Vrs. 12*** of this same chapter, look at that verse again, he said, "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth **take heed lest he fall**."

3. In other words, don't think that you are such a strong believer that you can go back into those idol temples and partake of those idol feasts without it affecting you adversely! Remember now, some of these Corinthian believers were actually doing this. ***(1 Cor. 8:10)***
4. Paul said, "Don't do it! Don't go back to those idol temples, but rather **run away** from them as fast as you can and **keep running**!!!"

D. There is most certainly a lesson for us here.
1. After we come to Christ, if we are wise, we will **run away, as fast as we can**, from our former way of life and just **keep running**! (Amen?)
2. **Why** do I say this?
3. I say this because of **the very real danger of our being drawn back** into our former way of life! (Don't think it can't happen to you, because it can!)
4. (Illus.- I'm thinking of a young man now whom I had the privilege of leading to Christ a number of years ago. He was 19 or 20 years old and was pretty heavy into the "party scene" before he was saved. After I led him to the Lord, I advised him that he would be wise to get as far away as possible as quickly as possible from his old lifestyle. Well, as you have probably already guessed, he didn't take my advice. After a while, he began hanging out again with some of his old drinking buddies, and not long after that he was back to his old ways. Does this mean that he was never saved in the first place. Not necessarily. You see, it is possible for someone is truly saved to be drawn back into his former way of life.)
5. Again, this is why Paul admonished these Corinthian believers to "flee fornication."
6. He knew that they could very easily be drawn back into idolatry.

E. And so, we see a command to obey. We also see...

II. A <u>Communion</u> To Enjoy.

A. Someone asks, "Why doesn't God want us to be drawn back into our old way of life?"
1. Well, there are many reasons.
2. However, one reason is because **He desires to fellowship (commune) with us**, and He knows that as long as we are having fellowship with this sinful world, we **cannot enjoy fellowship with Him**.

B. As we think about our communion with the Lord, there are three things we can learn here about this communion.
1. First of all, we can learn that it is a **<u>costly</u> communion**
2. In other words, communion with God is only possible because of **a very costly sacrifice** that Jesus made on our behalf.
3. What sacrifice am I talking about?
4. I'm talking about **His sacrifice on the cross**!
5. Notice again ***Vrs. 16*** of our text, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not **the communion of the blood of Christ**? The bread which we break, is it not **the communion of the body of Christ**?"

6. Of course, Paul is making reference here to the ordinance of communion, or what we call "**the Lord's supper**."
7. What is the purpose of "the Lord's supper"?
8. Why do we eat the unleavened bread and drink the unleavened fruit of the vine?
9. We do so **to remind us of the costly sacrifice that Jesus made for us**, when His **sinless body** was broken and His **precious blood** was shed on Calvary's cross.
10. We absolutely could not have any communion with God, had it not been for that sacrifice.
11. And so, our communion with the Lord is a costly communion.

C. It is also a **common communion**.

1. In other words, it is a communion that **every believer in Christ** can enjoy, if he so chooses.
2. Notice again ***Vrs. 17*** of our text, "For we being many are one bread, and one body: for **we are all partakers of that one bread**."
3. Paul said it like this in ***Gal. 3:26-28***, "For **ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus**....For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have **put on Christ**."
4. One of the great things about being a member of God's family is the fact that every family member enjoys the same privileges and opportunities for fellowship.
5. No one believer has any advantage over another believer!
6. (Illus.- Every now and then I will hear someone say, "I sure do envy Bro. So & So. He has such a close walk with the Lord, I wish I could be more like him." Well, the truth is, you can be more like him! **You can enjoy the same degree of communion with God** that he enjoys, if you truly desire it.)
7. And so, our communion with the Lord is a common communion.
8. It is a costly communion and a common communion.

D. It is also a **consuming communion**.

1. In other words, it is a communion that requires us to consume or partake of the Lord.
2. Notice again ***Vrs. 18*** of our text, "Behold Israel after the flesh: **are not they which eat of the sacrifices** partakers of the altar?"
3. Old Testament believers, as a part of their worship and communion with God, would actually eat a portion of the sacrifice that they offered to God.
4. As New Testament believers, as a part of our worship and communion with God, we actually eat the bread and drink the fruit of the vine when we observe "the Lord's supper."
5. Now both of these practices, which are physical in nature, symbolize a spiritual consumption that should be taking place every day in the believer's life.
6. Now this raises a question.
7. How do we "spiritually consume the Lord," or how do we "spiritually partake of the Lord"?
8. We do so **by consuming or partaking of His Word**!
9. Do you remember what Jesus said in ***Mat. 4:4***? He said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but **by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God**."

10. The psalmist David put it like this in ***Psa. 119:103***, he prayed, "**How sweet are thy words unto my taste**! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!"
11. Do you want to enjoy sweet communion with God?
12. If so, then you must consume or partake of His Word on a daily basis.
13. And so, our communion with the Lord is a consuming communion.
14. It is a...
    -**costly** communion (sacrifice of Christ),
    -**common** communion (for every believer),
    -**consuming** communion (must feed on His Word).

E. And so, we see a communion to enjoy.
1. Thus far, this morning, we've seen a...
   -**command to obey**,
   -**communion to enjoy**.
2. Finally, I want to draw your attention to...

III. A <u>Call</u> To Separation.

A. If we see anything in this passage, we see a call to separation.
1. "A call to separate **from what**?" someone asks.
2. A call to separate from **the old way of life**, the life that we lived before you came to Christ.
3. In the case of the Corinthian believers, it was a life of idolatry.
4. In our case, it may have been...
   -a life of drugs and alcohol, or a
   -a life of sexual immorality, or a
   -a life of selfish and sinful ambitions.
5. Whatever our lives were like before we came to Christ, after we are saved, we should **separate from our old way of life**.
6. This is what Paul was alluding to in ***2 Cor. 5:17***, when he wrote, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: **old things are passed away**; behold, all things are become new."

B. Now why is it so important that we separate ourselves from our old way of life?
1. It is important because we can't fellowship with the world and fellowship (commune) with God at the same time.
2. Notice again ***Vrs. 19-21*** of our text, "What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing?...But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils....Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: **ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils**."
3. I'm afraid that some believers think they have it both ways.
4. They think that once they are saved, they can continue to live the same old sinful life that they lived before, and at the same time fellowship (commune) with God.
5. **That's impossible**!

6. Do you know why that is impossible?
7. It is impossible because the two are **diametrically opposed**.
8. Listen to what Paul wrote in ***2 Cor. 6:14-17***, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath **righteousness with unrighteousness**? and what communion hath **light with darkness**?...And what concord hath **Christ with Belial**? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?...And what agreement hath **the temple of God with idols**? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people....Wherefore **come out from among them, and be ye separate**, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,"
9. Jesus put it like this in ***Mat. 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."

C. By the way, when we try to serve God and serve the devil at the same time, it **makes God jealous**.
1. Notice again **Vrs. 22** of our text, "Do we **provoke the Lord to jealousy**?"
2. Someone says, "God is not jealous! Is He???"
3. Listen to ***Exo. 20:3-5***, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me....Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth:...Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for **I the LORD thy God am a jealous God**,"
4. Listen to ***Exo. 34:14***, "For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, **whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God**:"
5. Not only is God a jealous God, but **His name is jealous**.
6. (Illus.- Let me illustrate it like this. What if your wife, or your husband, whichever the case may be, began sharing her affections with another man or another woman? How would you react? You would be jealous, and rightly so. That's exactly how our God feels when we share our affections with **the false gods whom we served** before we came to Christ.)

D. And so, if we truly desire to fellowship and commune with our God, we must **separate ourselves from the life we lived before we were saved**. (This is why we see here a call to separation.)

Conclusion:

A. What have we seen in our text, this morning.
1. We saw a **command to obey** ("flee from idolatry").
2. We saw a **communion to enjoy** (a costly, and a common, and a consuming communion).
3. We saw a **call to separation** (we cannot be partakers of the Lord's table and the devil's table at the same time).

B. Where are you, spiritually, this morning?
   1. **Do you need to be saved**?
   2. You ask, "How can know whether or not I'm saved?"
   3. Answer this question, "Do you know for sure that if you were to die this moment, heaven would be your home?"
   4. If you cannot answer "yes" to that question, then you most likely are not saved.
   5. However, I have good news for you.
   6. God loves you, Christ died for you, and **you can be saved this morning if you will trust Him and call upon Him to save you**.
   7. The Bible promises in ***Rom. 10:13***, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord **shall be saved**.

C. Perhaps you are saved, but for whatever reason, **you have yet to answer God's call to separation**.
   1. You are saved, but you are **not separated**.
   2. You are saved, but you are **still living the old life**.
   3. You are saved, but you are **experiencing little or no communion with God**.
   4. If so, you need to answer God's call to separation this morning!

"All To The Glory Of God"

Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 10:23-33

Introduction:

A. While I don't do an inordinate amount of counseling, as a pastor, I am called upon from time to time to offer counsel to some member of our congregation.
   1. Most of the time, the person or persons who are coming for counsel are **struggling with a problem** that they don't know how to handle.
   2. Sometimes it is **a married couple** who are struggling with problems in their marriage.
   3. Sometimes it is **a father and mother** who are struggling with problems with one of their children.
   4. Sometimes it is **a single person** who is struggling with problems in his or her personal life.
   5. But most of the time, when someone comes to me for counseling, it is because **they are struggling with a problem** that they don't know how to handle.

B. There are other times, however, when the person or persons who are coming for counsel are **struggling with a decision** that they are not sure how to make.
   1. (Illus.- They will sit down in my office and tell me about this very important decision that they have to make, and then they will say something like this, "Pastor, I don't know what to do. What do you think I should do?")
   2. Now sometimes it is very easy to give them an answer, because sometimes it is overwhelmingly obvious what they should do.
   3. (Illus.- Let me illustrate. This has never happened, but suppose a young lady were to come to me and say, "Pastor, I've met this guy, and I think I want to marry him. Now he's not a Christian, but he did attend church occasionally when he was a child. Also, he just got out of jail, but his parole officer has assured me that he will keep an eye on him. Also, he is a crack cocaine addict, but he has promised me that he will go into rehab soon after we are married. Pastor, what do you think? Should I marry him?" This, of course, would be a "no brainer.")
   4. And so, sometimes it is very easy to tell someone what they should do (or not do), because it is overwhelmingly obvious.
   5. There are other times, however, when it is not so easy, because it is not overwhelmingly obvious what they should do.
   6. What do I do in those cases?
   7. I usually counsel them to **answer at least three questions** concerning the decision that they are inclined to make (leaning toward making), and if they cannot answer **"yes"** to all three of these questions, **they should not do it**!

C. **What are these three questions**? Well, first of all, we should ask ourselves the question,...

I. Will It Help Us?

A. Notice again what Paul told the Corinthian believers in ***Vrs. 23*** of our text, "**All things are lawful** for me, but **all things are not expedient**: all things are lawful for me, but **all things edify not**."

1. Now what did Paul mean by this statement?
2. First of all, what did he mean when he said, "All things are lawful for me"?
3. Let me tell you what **he did not mean**?
4. He did not mean **that he was free to do whatever he pleased**.
5. I've heard people quote this verse to try to justify **a life of extreme permissiveness**, but I assure you that's not what Paul meant.
6. What he meant was, "Except that which is **expressly forbidden by God's Word**, we are free to do as we please."
7. (Illus.- You know, there are those who would impose restrictions on believers that are **not found in God's Word**. For example, some would have us to believe that it is a sin to have a television in your home. Others insist that it is a sin for a woman to wear a pair of slacks. Still others will criticize or condemn you for drinking a cup of coffee, because it has caffeine in it.)
8. Now please **don't misunderstand** what I am saying.
9. I do believe that there are many TV programs that Christians absolutely should not watch.
10. I also believe that there are times when it is probably inappropriate for a woman to wear slacks.
11. I also believe that if you drink so much coffee that it becomes a health issue, you really should cut back, if not quit altogether.
12. However, none of these things are expressly forbidden by the Word of God.
13. And so, what Paul is saying here is, "Unless something is expressly forbidden by God's Word, **we can do it without being guilty of sinning against God**.

B. But that's not all that Paul said here.

1. Not only did he say, "All things are lawful for me," but he went on to say, "...all things **are not expedient**:" and then later in the verse, "...all things **edify not**." ***(Vrs. 23)***
2. Now what did he mean when he said that "...all things are **not expedient**"?
3. The word "**expedient**" comes from a Greek word that literally means "**conducive**" or "**advantageous**."
4. The English word means **"suitable for achieving a particular end**."
5. What Paul is saying here is, "While all things (except that which is expressly forbidden by God's Word) are lawful for me, they **may not be advantageous for me**, or they **may not be suitable for achieving the spiritual goals that I have set for myself**."
6. In other words, "...they may not **be in my best interest**."

C. Now what did Paul mean when he said that "...all things **edify not**." ***(Vrs. 23)***

1. The word "**edify**" comes from a Greek word that literally means "**be a house builder (build up)**."

2. The English word means "**to establish**" or "**to improve**."
3. And so, what Paul is saying here is, "While all things are lawful for me, they **may not result in me being spiritually built up or established or improved."**
4. In other words, "...they may not **help me to grow**."

D. Now what does all of this mean?
1. It simply means that when have a decision to make, we not only should consider what is lawful, but we should also consider what is expedient and what is edifying.
2. In other words, we should ask ourselves the question, "If I do this, will it...
-be helpful to me,
-be advantageous to me,
-suitable for achieving my spiritual goals,
-result in my being spiritually established or improved?"
3. In other words, will it help me to **grow** and **become everything** that God would have me to become for Him?
4. And so, we should ask ourselves the question, "Will it help us?"
5. If the answer is **"no,"** then **we shouldn't do it**!

E. We should also ask ourselves the question....

II. Will It Benefit Others?

A. Notice again ***Vrs. 24*** of our text, "Let no man **seek his own**, but every man **another's wealth**."
1. Now what is Paul telling us here?
2. You may notice that the word "**wealth**" is in **italics** in our King James Version, which means that although it is not found in the Greek text, it was added by the translators for the purpose of clarification.
3. What Paul is saying here is this, "Don't only be concerned about what is good for you, but be concerned also about what is good for others."
4. Paul put it like this in ***Phil. 2:4***, "Look not every man on his own things, but **every man also on the things of others**."
5. In other words, **"Don't just think about yourself!"**

B. You know, it is human nature to be selfish (self-centered).
1. I am reminded of what Paul wrote in ***Phil. 2:21***, **"For all seek their own**, not the things which are Jesus Christ's."
2. In other words, man by nature is selfish.
3. (Illus.- I once heard it said about a woman named Edith, that she lived in a very small world, bound on the north, south, east and west by Edith. In other words, she lived in her own little world!)
4. A lot of people are like Edith, even some believers, they live in their own little world, bound on every side by themselves.
5. (Illus.- A mother was preparing pancakes for her two sons, Kevin who was five, and Ryan who was three. Of course, the boys were arguing over who was going to get

the first pancake. The mother saw an opportunity here to teach her sons a moral lesson, so she said, "Boys, you know if Jesus were sitting here this morning, He would say, 'Let my brother have the first pancake.'" Immediately, Kevin turned to his younger brother and said, "Ryan, you be Jesus!")

6. We laugh at this, but the truth is, that's the way we all are by nature.

C. However, when it comes to making important decisions in life, we must not only ask ourselves, "**Will it help me**?" but we must also ask ourselves, "If I do this**, will it benefit others**?"

D. Paul then proceeds in our text to give us **a practical example** of being considerate of the needs and feelings of others.

1. Let's read again ***Vrs. 25-29***, "Whatsoever is sold in the shambles (market place), that eat, asking no question for conscience sake:...For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof....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....**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 ful-ness thereof:...Conscience, I say, **not thine own, but of the other**:"
2. Paul returns here to the subject of **eating meat offered to idols**, and once again he points out that even though we may have no problem with going into the "shambles" (market place) and buying meat that had been previously offered as a sacrifice to an idol god, **if it is going to offend our brother**, or if it is going to **cause our brother a problem in any way**, we should **not eat** that meat.
3. In other words, we should be considerate of others!

E. Paul put it like this in ***Vrs. 32-33*** of our text, **"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."

F. And so, when we have an important decision to make, we should ask ourselves, "If I do this, **will it benefit others**?"

1. If the answer is "**no**," then we should **not** do it!
2. You know, **Jesus is our supreme example** when it comes to considering the needs of others.
3. Paul wrote in ***Phil. 2:5-8***, "**Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus**:...Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:...But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:...And being found in fashion as a man, **he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross**."

G. There is one more question that we should ask ourselves when making important decisions.

1. First of all, will this **help me**?

2. Secondly, will this **benefit others**?
3. Finally, we should ask ourselves...

III. Will It Glorify God?

A. Notice again ***Vrs. 31*** of our text, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

B. Let me ask you a question.
1. Why did God create us?
2. Do you remember the heavenly scene that John described in ***Rev. 4:10-11***?
3. Listen as I read, "The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying,**...Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory** and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and **for thy pleasure** they are and were created."
4. Why did God create us?
5. According to this passage, He created us for two reasons, for His "**glory**" and for His "**pleasure**."
6. This being true, **every thing we do**, **every decision we make**, should be made with **the purpose** in mind of **bringing honor and glory to God**.
7. And if it doesn't glorify God, then we should **not** do it!
8. This is why Paul wrote in ***1 Cor. 6:19-20***, "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?...For ye are bought with a price: **therefore glorify God** in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

C. What does it mean to "**glorify God**"?
1. The Greek word translated "**glorify**" here literally means "**to render glorious**."
2. Webster's 11th Collegiate Dictionary defines the English word like this, "**to make glorious by bestowing honor, praise, or admiration**."
3. And so, to glorify God means "to **exalt**, to **praise**, to **magnify** the Lord."
4. The psalmist wrote in ***Psa. 34:3***, "O **magnify the LORD** with me, and let us **exalt his name** together."

D. Do you have an important decision to make?
1. Ask yourself this question before you make that decision, "If you do what you are thinking about doing, will it **glorify God**? Will it **somehow result in the bestowing of honor, praise and adoration upon Him**? Will it **magnify Him and exalt His name**?"
2. If the answer is "no," then you should not do it!

Conclusion:

A. Do you have an important decision to make, and you are not sure what to do?
1. Ask yourself these three questions.

2. **Will it help you** (is it expedient, edifying)?
3. **Will it benefit others** (does it take into consideration the needs of others)?
4. **Will it glorify God** (result in God being magnified)?

B. You know, I've shared these questions with you in the order in which we find the principles in our text, but the truth is, you should **reverse the order** when asking the questions.

1. The **first** question you should ask is, "**Will it glorify God**?"
2. Then you should ask yourself, "**Will it benefit others**?"
3. The **last** question you should ask yourself is, **"Will it help me**?"
4. This is the proper order.
5. **God first.**
6. **Others second.**
7. **Ourselves last.**

"The Head Of The Woman"

Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 11:1-16

Introduction:

A. In just a few short weeks, I will celebrate my 54th birthday.

1. In my short lifetime, I have seen the role of women in our society **undergo a drastic change**.

2. (Illus.- For example, when I was a child, the vast majority of homes in America had **a "stay at home" mom.** My own mother was a "stay at home" mom. While my dad went off to work each morning, my mom stayed home to take care of the children. She cooked our meals, washed our clothes, cleaned our house, made our beds, as well as many other things far too numerous to mention. She was truly a "stay at home" mom, and as such, fulfilled the role of **mother and homemaker**.)
3. Today, however, **this is the exception** and not the rule.
4. In our society today, the vast majority of wives and mothers **work outside the home**, leaving the responsibility of caring for the children in the hands of relatives or day care workers.
5. (Illus.- Many older children today are what we call **"latch-key" kids**. When they come home from school, they come home to an empty house, where they are **left unsupervised and forced to fend for themselves** for one, two, perhaps three hours, while they wait for mom or dad to return home from work.)
6. And so, during the past 50 years, we have seen the role of women in our society change drastically.

B. But that's **only half the problem**.
1. The other half of the problem is that this confusion over the roles of men and women has **spilled over from our secular society into the church** of the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. (Illus.- Let me illustrate. I read recently that in 1998, the Southern Baptist Convention drew tremendous criticism because of an amendment that it added to their "Baptist Faith and Message Statement of 1963." The amendment merely defined marriage exclusively in heterosexual terms and stated that husbands and wives, while equal before God, have different roles. Part of the amendment read like this, **"A wife is to submit graciously to the servant leadership of her husband, even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ."** Now you would think that every Southern Baptist Church in America would gladly embrace that amendment, however, the following year, the largest state group of Southern Baptist churches in America, the Baptist General Convention of Texas, voted not to accept the amendment. The Rev. Clyde Glazener, pastor of the Gambrell Street Baptist Church in Fort Worth, who was elected president of the Texas Convention, said this, "Those barbs (referring to the amendment) were intended to hammer women.")
3. And so, this confusion over the roles of men and woman has spilled over from our secular society into the church.
4. It's not unheard of today, to walk into a "Baptist" church and find a woman pastor standing behind the pulpit.

C. Now this raises a very important question.
1. Exactly what are the proper (Biblical) roles of men and women, especially when it comes to the family and the church?
2. Both the roles of husbands and wives can be defined like this: they are **roles of submission**.

3. The **husband** is to be in **submission to Christ**, and the **wife** is to be in **submission to her husband**.
4. Now with this in mind, let us consider, first of all,....

I. The <u>Definition</u> Of Submission.

A. Notice again ***Vrs. 1-3*** of our text (especially ***Vrs. 3***), "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ....Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you....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**."

1. Notice how Paul begins this chapter.
2. He begins this chapter by admonishing the Corinthian believers to follow him as he followed Christ. ***(Vrs.1)***
3. He then commends them for remembering the things that he had taught them while he was with them. ***(Vrs. 2)***
4. But notice that after he admonishes them and commends them, he reminds them of a very important Biblical truth.
5. Notice again ***Vrs. 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**."

B. Did you notice that three times in **Vrs. 3** Paul uses the word "head."

1. First of all, he said, "...the **head** of every man is Christ."
2. He then said, "...the **head** of the woman is man."
3. Then finally, he said, "...the **head** of Christ is God."
4. Three times Paul uses the word **"head."**
5. Now what does that word mean?
6. Literally, it would refer to the uppermost portion of the human body, everything from the neck upward.
7. Of course, Paul is not using the word here literally, but rather symbolically.
8. The word "head," as it is used here in this context, means "the **one who has authority**."
9. And so, when Paul said, "...**the head of every man** is Christ," what he meant was, "...**the one who has authority over every man** is Christ."

C. Now let's take these three statements one at a time.

1. First of all, Paul said, "...**the head of every man is Christ**."
2. In other words, "the authority over every man is Christ."
3. This truth is clearly taught elsewhere in God's Word.
4. For example, the Bible tells us in ***Eph. 1:22*** that the Father has "put all things under his (Christ's) feet, and gave him (Christ) **to be the head over all things to the church**."
5. The Bible also says in ***Col. 1:18*** that Christ 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**."
6. And so, the authority over every man is Christ.

7. Why? Because He is the head of the church!
8. (Illus.- I remember counseling with a couple a number of years ago. It was quite evident from our conversation that the wife was having a hard time submitting to the authority of her husband. I will never forget something that she said, as I shared verses of Scripture with her on that subject. She said, "Pastor, it's not fair that I have to answer to my husband when he doesn't have to answer to anyone!" I said, "Wait a minute. He does have to answer to someone. He has to answer to Christ!")
9. And so, "...the head of every man is Christ."

D. Paul went on to say in our text that "...**the head of the woman is the man**."
1. In other words, "the authority over every wife is her husband."
2. This truth is also clearly taught elsewhere in God's Word.
3. For example, do you remember what God told Eve in the garden of Eden, after she had eaten the forbidden fruit?
4. According to ***Gen. 3:16***, He said, " I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and **thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee**."
5. Paul put it like this in ***Eph. 5:22-23***, "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**:"
6. Now let me stop here and say that when the Bible says that "the husband is the head of the wife," it does not mean that the husband better than his wife or that the wife is inferior to her husband.
7. The truth is, some wives are...
   -better managers than their husbands,
   -better educated or more emotionally stable,
   -more spiritual minded and better versed in the Bible.
8. So this does not mean that the husband is better than his wife or that she is somehow inferior to him.
9. What it does mean, however, is that God in His wisdom has placed the wife under the authority of her husband and expects her to submit to his authority.
10. While the wife's role in the marriage is not an inferior role, it is definitely **a different role**.

E. I can prove that the wife's role in the marriage is not an inferior role.
1. Notice the third statement that Paul made in ***Vrs. 3*** of our text, he said, "...and **the head of Christ is God**."
2. Does this mean that Christ's role as the Son of God is inferior to His Father's role as the first Person of the Godhead?
3. Of course not.
4. It simply means that while exercised His ministry on this earth as a human being, He willingly submitted to the authority of His Father in heaven.
5. Do you remember what He said in ***John 8:29***? He said, "And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always **those things that please him**."

F. What then is **the definition of submission**?

1. According to our text, submission can be defined as **recognizing the authority that God, in His wisdom, has placed over us, and then willingly submitting (surrendering) to that authority**.
2. Whether it be the husband submitting to the authority of Christ, or the wife submitting to the authority of her husband, submission can be defined as **surrendering to God's authority** in our lives.
3. Now I want us to consider, for just a moment...

II. The <u>Demonstration</u> Of Submission.

A. Now before I say anything else, let me explain something that I think will help you not to become confused by the verses that I am about to read.

1. While the definition (principle) of submission is the same no matter what culture we may find ourselves in, the demonstration of this principle will vary from culture to culture.
2. For example, in the culture in which these Corinthian believers lived, the principle of submission was demonstrated by **the wearing (or the not wearing) of a head covering**, especially when one was praying or prophesying.
3. In other words, the husband demonstrated his submission to Christ by **keeping his head uncovered** and the wife demonstrated her submission to her husband by **wearing a head covering**.

B. Notice again ***Vrs. 4-7***, "Every man praying or prophesying, **having his head covered, dishonoureth his head**....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....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....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."

1. Not only was this custom in the city of Corinth in Paul's day, but it is **still a custom in many countries today, especially middle eastern countries**.
2. (Illus.- In most middle eastern countries today, not only do wives cover their heads to show their submission to their husbands, but they also **cover their faces**, if not all of their faces, at least the lower half of their faces. You might remember the controversy that arose, I forget what state it was, when women who had moved here from the middle-east refused to remove their facial veils so they could get their pictures taken for their drivers licence.)
3. And so, while the definition (principle) of submission is **the same** no matter what culture we may find ourselves in, the demonstration of this principle will **vary** from culture to culture.

D. But someone says, "Pastor, in our culture today, wives don't wear coverings on their heads as a sign of their submission to their husbands.

1. That's true, if you are talking about hats or veils.

2. While there was a time, not too many years ago, when a married woman wouldn't think about going to church without some kind of a hat or head covering, that is no longer the case today.
3. But did you realize that **God has given to every woman a "natural" head covering**?
4. It's called "**hair**."
5. Notice again ***Vrs. 13-15*** of our text, "Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered?...Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him?...But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for **her hair is given her for a covering**."
6. What is Paul saying here?
7. He is simply saying that even in cultures where married women are not expected to wear a hat or some type of a head covering, she still has a "natural" (God given) covering whereby she can demonstrate her submission to her husband.

E. This is why, even in our culture today, there should be a distinct difference in the way men and women wear their hair.
1. For example, men should wear their hair short.
2. Notice again what Paul said in **Vrs. 14** of our text, "Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, **if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him**?"
3. This is not a cultural thing.
4. Paul said, "Even nature itself teaches us that it is a shame for a man to have long hair."
5. Now this does not mean that all men should wear "crew cuts."
6. However, it does mean that when you look at a man from his backside, you should be able to tell **by the length of his hair** that he is a male.
7. (Illus.- Not too long ago, I walked into a public restroom and immediately turned around and hurried out. Why? Because I saw a man [I didn't know it was a man at the time] standing with his back to me who had long flowing hair [almost to his waist]. When I saw him, I thought I had accidentally walked into the ladies' restroom.)
8. And so, long hair on men is shameful.
9. Why? Because it demonstrates, not submission to God, but rather **rebellion against God**.
10. The same thing is true of women.
11. While it is a shame for a man to have long hair, it is **equally shameful** for a woman (especially a married woman) to have short hair (cut her hair like a man).
12. Why? Because her hair is **her glory**.
13. Her hair is **her "God given" head covering**.
14. Her hair is **how she demonstrates her submission to her husband, as well as to God**.

F. And so, we see the demonstration of submission.

G. Finally, this morning, I want us to consider...

III. The <u>Distortion</u> Of Submission.

A. While the principle of wives submitting their husbands is clearly taught in God's Word, there are those who would distort this principle.
   1. On the one hand, you have those husbands who have **relegated their wives to the role of a servant**.
   2. They have set themselves up like **"kings"** in the home, and expect their wives to **"serve"** them like loyal subjects.
   3. This is clearly a distortion of the principle of submission.
   4. On the other hand, you have those wives who **"refuse to submit"** to their husbands in any way, shape, or form.
   5. They have bought into the "lie" that says any degree of submission on the part of a wife is demeaning, as well as not in her best interest.
   6. This too is a distortion of the principle of submission.

B. How can both husbands and wives avoid these distortions?
   1. By realizing that while they have different roles, neither role is superior or inferior to the other, and **they are mutually dependent on one another**.
   2. Notice again ***Vrs. 11-12*** of our text, "Nevertheless **neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man**, in the Lord....For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God."

C. Why are husbands and wives dependent on one another?
   1. First of all, **husbands are dependent** upon their wives because, **without them, they are not complete**.
   2. Do you remember what God said, soon after He had created Adam?
   3. He said, "It is **not good that the man should be alone**; I will make him an help meet for him." ***(Gen. 2:18)***
   4. In other words, man by himself was not complete.
   5. It was not until God made him a wife, that he was complete.
   6. And so, husbands need their wives because, without them, they are not complete. **Now what about wives**?
   7. Wives need their husbands because, without them, they **lack purpose in life**.
   8. Notice again ***Vrs. 8-9*** of our text, "For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man....Neither was the man created for the woman; but **the woman for the man**."
   9. The "womens libbers" hate hearing this, but the fact is, **women were created for the benefit of men.**
   10. This is why wives, apart from their husbands, lack purpose in life.
   11. There is a tremendous truth here that wives need to grasp, and that is, your primary purpose in life is **to complete your husband (help him to become everything that God intends for him to become)**.
   12. While this may not be your **only** purpose, it is definitely your primary purpose!

D. And so, husbands and wives need to realize that while they have different roles, neither role is superior or inferior to the other, and **they are mutually dependent on one another**.

Conclusion:

A. What have we seen this morning?
   1. The **definition of submission** (recognizing the authority that God has placed over us, and then willingly submitting to that authority)
   2. The **demonstration of submission** (husbands keeping their heads uncovered, and wives keeping their heads covered).
   3. The **distortion of submission** (husbands treating their wives like servants, and wives refusing to submit to their husbands).

B. In closing, let me ask you a few simple questions.
   1. Do you understand the principle of submission?
   2. If so, do you demonstrate that submission in the way that you wear your hair?
   3. Finally, are you guilty of distorting the principle of submission?
   4. Do you treat your wife like a servant?
   5. Do you refuse to submit to the authority of your husband?
   6. If so, don't you think it is time that you stopped distorting the principle of submission, and instead just accepted it?
   7. If you will, life will be so much better, both for you and your mate!

"He That Eateth And Drinketh Unworthily"

Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 11:17-33

Introduction:

A. When our Lord Jesus established His church during His personal ministry, He placed within it **two ordinances**.
   1. The **first** ordinance that He placed within His church was the ordinance of **baptism**.
   2. You may remember that Jesus began His public ministry to submitting to baptism at the hands of John the Baptist.
   3. Listen as I read ***Mat. 3:13-16***, "Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him....But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?....And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him....**And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of**

God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:...And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

4. Not only did Jesus begin His public ministry by submitting to baptism, He ended His ministry by giving His church their marching orders, which included a command to baptize those who received Him as Savior.
5. Listen to ***Mat. 29:19-20***, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, **baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost**:"
6. And so, the first ordinance that Jesus placed within His church was the ordinance of baptism.

B. The second ordinance was the ordinance of **the Lord's supper**.
1. He did this when He **partook of the Passover feast** with His disciples for the **last time**.
2. Listen as I read ***Mark 14:22-24***, "And as they did eat, Jesus **took bread**, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat: **this is my body**....And he **took the cup**, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it....And he said unto them, **This is my blood** of the new testament, which is shed for many."
3. And so, the second ordinance that Jesus placed within His church was the ordinance of the Lord's supper.

C. It is this second ordinance that I want us to think about this morning.
1. Apparently, **there was a problem** with the way that the Corinthian believers were observing the Lord's supper.
2. Now I'm sure that Paul had **taught them** the proper way when he was with them, but something had happened and **they had strayed far from his teaching**.
3. The reason that Paul wrote what he did in the latter half of ***1 Cor. 11*** was to **"straighten them out"** and to bring them back to **a proper understanding** and **a proper observance** of the Lord's Supper.

D. The first thing I want us to see, this morning, is the....

I. <u>Purpose</u> Of The Lord's Supper.

A. One of the things that Paul does in our text is that he reminds the Corinthian believers of **the original purpose** of the Lord's supper.
1. Notice again ***Vrs.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:...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**....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**....For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come."
2. There is a phrase that **Paul used twice** in this passage that is **"the key"** to understanding the purpose of the Lord's supper.

3. Do you know what that phrase is?
4. It is the phrase **"...in remembrance of me."**
5. When Jesus took the **"bread"** from the Passover table, and gave it to His disciples, He said, "Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do **in remembrance of me**." ***(Vrs. 24)***
6. Jesus then took the **"cup"** from the Passover table, and when He had given it to them, He said, "This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, **in remembrance of me**." ***(Vrs. 25)***
7. And so, **twice**, when Jesus instituted the Lord's supper, He said, "this do...**in remembrance of me**."

B. Now **what does this teach us** about the purpose of the Lord's supper.
1. It teaches us that the purpose of the Lord's supper is **to remind us** of something **very important**.
2. "Remind us **of what**?" someone asks.
3. It's purpose is to remind us of **the sacrifice that Jesus made**, when He died on the cross for our sins.
4. Take the bread, for example.
5. The bread symbolizes **the body** of our Lord Jesus, that was nailed to the cross as a payment for our sins.
6. Do you remember what Jesus said in ***John 6:51***? Listen as I read, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and **the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world**."
7. And so, the "bread" symbolizes **the body** of our Lord Jesus that was nailed to the cross as a payment for our sins.
8. Now what about "the cup," what does it symbolize?
9. The "cup" symbolizes **the precious blood** that Jesus shed on the cross, also as a payment for our sins.
10. Listen to what the Bible says in ***Heb. 9:12***, "Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but **by his own blood** he entered in once into the holy place, **having obtained eternal redemption for us**."
11. And so, the purpose of the Lord's supper is to remind us of the sacrifice that Jesus made when He died on the cross for our sins.
12. It is a time when God's people come together and focus all of their attention on "the cross."
13. The Bible says in ***Heb. 12:2***, " **Looking unto Jesus** the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him **endured the cross**, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

C. That's the purpose of the Lord's supper. Now let look at the...

II. <u>Problem</u> With How The Corinthians Were Observing The Supper.

A. As I have already stated, the Corinthians had clearly **strayed** far away from Paul's original teaching on the subject, and the way in which they were observing the Lord's supper was downright **shameful**.

1. Why was it shameful?
2. First of all, it was shameful because of **the divisions that existed in the church**.
3. Notice again ***Vrs. 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....For first of all, when ye come together in the church, **I hear that there be divisions among you**; and I partly believe it....For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you....When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper....For in eating **every one taketh before other his own supper**: and one is hungry, and another is drunken....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."

B. This is not the first time in this letter that Paul has talked about the divisions that existed in the Corinthian church.

1. Look back, if you will, to ***1 Cor. 1:10-11***, "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment....For **it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you**."
2. And so, this church definitely had a problem with divisions (cliques) within the membership.

C. One of the ways that these divisions were being manifest was in **the way that they were observing their "agape" (love) feast**.

1. What is a **"love feast"**?
2. From what I have read, it was **a tradition of the early churches** to observe what they called an "agape (love) feast" prior to their observance of the Lord's supper.
3. The purpose of this "love feast" was to allow God's people to come together and by partaking of a meal together, **enjoy one another's fellowship**.
4. (Illus.- We do something similar today, we just don't call it a "love feast." We call it "**pot luck**" or "**dinner on the grounds**," but it amounts to the same thing.)
5. What was wrong with the way the Corinthian believers were observing the "love feast"?
6. Because of the divisions that existed in the church, rather than coming together as one group and sharing their food with all who came, they were gathering in smaller (separate) groups and keeping their food to themselves.
7. Notice again what Paul said in ***Vrs. 21*** of our text, "For in eating **every one taketh before other his own supper**: and one is hungry, and another is drunken."
8. In other words, "Yall are just concerned about your own little group, and it doesn't matter to you if, while you are stuffing yourself with your bounty of food, some of your brethren have little or nothing to eat."

9. (Illus.- Now yall know how we do things here when we have a church fellowship meal. Everyone brings their food, puts it all on the same table [or row of tables] and everyone partakes. You know, like one big family. That's the way it ought to be! But suppose when we had a fellowship meal, we divided up into little groups, each little group going to a different corner of the fellowship hall and keeping their food to themselves. Can you imagine that??? But that's exactly what was going on in the Corinthian church.)
10. Why? Because they were a divided church.

D. But someone asks, "Why do divisions within the church pose a problem when observing the Lord's supper?"
   1. Let me explain it like this: When we, as a church family come together for the purpose of observing the Lord's supper, **all of our attention is to be focused on Christ**! (Amen?)
   2. All of our attention is to be focused on **His body**, on **His blood**, on **His sacrifice**, as we remember the price that He paid for our salvation.
   3. If we are a divided church, we cannot do that.
   4. Divisions within a church create distractions, distractions that make it impossible to focus on Christ the way that we should.
   5. And so, the way in which the Corinthian believers were observing the Lord's supper was shameful because of the divisions that existed in the church.

E. It was also shameful because apparently they had allowed the "love feast," which they customarily observed before-hand, to **become intermingled** with the Lord's supper itself.
   1. In other words, they became **one and the same**.
   2. To put it very bluntly, they (some of them) had turned the observance of the Lord's supper into nothing more than **a drunken feast**.
   3. Something that was originally intended to be a **holy**, **solemn**, **remembrance** of our Lord's sacrifice on the cross, had become an event where **the comment most often heard** was "**pass the chicken**!"
   4. It's no wonder that Paul said what he did in ***Vrs. 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**."

F. That was the problem with how the Corinthian believers were observing the Lord's supper. Now, finally, let us look at the...

III. <u>Punishment</u> Exacted By God As A Result Of Their Shameful Behavior.

A. While Paul reprimanded them for their shameful behavior in this letter, the fact is **God had already begun to chasten them**.
   1. **How**?
   2. Notice again ***Vrs. 30*** of our text, "**For this cause** many are **weak and sickly** among you, and many **sleep**."

3. In other words, because of the shameful way in which they were observing the Lord's supper, **many of them had become sick** and **many others had died**!

B. But someone says, "Pastor, I find it hard to believe that God would have killed some of them, just because they had made a mockery of the Lord's supper. Doesn't God love His children?"
   1. Let me respond, first of all, by saying that **God had undoubtedly given them sufficient opportunity to repent**.
   2. Notice again what Paul wrote in ***Vrs. 31***, "For if we would **judge ourselves**, we should **not be judged**."
   3. In other words, if we would chasten (correct) ourselves, God wouldn't have to do it for us.
   4. There's no doubt in my mind that **God had given this church sufficient time to judge themselves**, but because **they had failed to do so**, He decided to do it for them.
   5. There is **a lesson** here for us as well.
   6. When we go astray, spiritually, God doesn't immediately chasten us.
   7. Instead, He **convicts us** through His indwelling Spirit, and **urges us** to make whatever corrections need to be made ourselves.
   8. However, **if we ignore** His conviction, **if we ignore** His urging, we leave Him no choice but to chasten us.
   9. Secondly, let me respond by saying that **it is precisely because God loves us, that He chastens us**!
   10. The Bible says in ***Heb. 12:6***, "For **whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth**, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."

C. Now this raises a question.
   1. **How can we avoid making a mockery** of the Lord's supper? (I don't know about you, but I sure don't want the Lord dealing with me the way that He dealt with the Corinthian believers!)
   2. The answer is found in ***Vrs. 28*** of our text, Paul said, "But **let a man examine himself**, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup."
   3. Before we partake of the Lord's supper, we need to **"examine"** ourselves.
   4. Now **what exactly are we looking for**, when we examine ourselves?
   5. Someone says, "Well, **we want to make sure that we are worthy** to partake of the Lord's supper!"
   6. No, that's NOT what we are looking for, because the fact is, none of us are worthy!
   7. The thing that we want to make sure of, when partaking of the Lord's supper, is that **both our motive and manner are right**.
   8. What is the right motive?
   9. **To remember the sacrifice** that Jesus made for us on the cross, and to honor that sacrifice.
   10. What is the right manner?
   11. By coming together as **a united church family**, and as **one body** partaking of the unleavened bread and the unleavened fruit of the vine.
   12. To partake with the wrong motive or in the wrong manner is to be guilty of eating and drinking "**unworthily**."

13. Let us not forget what Paul wrote in ***Vrs. 29*** of our text, "For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, **eateth and drinketh damnation (God's judgement) to himself**, not discerning the Lord's body."

Conclusion:

A. What have we learned about the Lord's supper, this morning?
   1. First of all, we've learned **the purpose** of the Lord's supper (it is a memorial ordinance, designed to remind us of the sacrifice that Jesus made for us on the cross).
   2. Secondly, we've learned **the problem** with how the Corinthians were observing the supper (they were a divided church and had turned the Lord's supper into a drunken feast).
   3. Finally, we've learned **the punishment** that God exacted as a result of their shameful behavior (God chastened them severely, many were sick and many died).

B. Let me ask you a personal question.
   1. **When was the last time** that you came together with this church body and partook of the Lord's supper?
   2. By the way, partaking of the Lord's supper is **a command**, not an option.
   3. In my opinion, to deliberately choose not to partake of the Lord's supper **simply because of the inconvenience of coming out on a Sunday evening** is just as shameful as what the Corinthians were doing.

C. Let me ask you another question.
   1. The last time you partook of the Lord's supper, **why did you do it** (what was your motive)?
   2. Did you do it **to remember the sacrifice** that Jesus made for us on the cross, and to **honor that sacrifice**?
   3. If you had any other motive, you partook unworthily.
   4. I would urge you, the next time we partake of the Lord's supper, that you examine your heart first and make sure that your motive is right.

D. Do you know Christ as your Savior? It is His sacrifice on the cross that we honor when we partake of the Lord's supper. **Have you trusted that sacrifice (and nothing else) to save you from your sins**?

"I Would Not Have You Ignorant"

Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 12:1-3

Introduction:

A. (Illus.- Several years ago I read a book by John MacArthur entitled, "Charismatic Chaos." The book dealt primarily with the subject of "spiritual gifts." Why was it entitled, "Charismatic Chaos?" I would imagine that it was given that title because of the chaos (chaotic teaching) that has come about as a result of people's ignorance on this subject.)

B. This morning, as we continue our study of Paul's first letter to the Corinthian believers, I will begin a series of messages on the subject of **"Spiritual Gifts."**
   1. Notice again how Paul begins his discussion of this subject in ***Vrs. 1*** of our text, "Now concerning **spiritual gifts,** brethren, **I would not have you ignorant**."
   2. In other words, Paul said, "When it comes to the subject of spiritual gifts, I don't want you to be ignorant or misinformed."
   3. In other words, "I **want you to know the** truth about spiritual gifts."
   4. Paul then continues by devoting the next three chapters of this letter ***(12-14)*** to **teaching them the truth** about spiritual gifts.

C. You know, even though we have **three whole chapters** in the Word of God that teach us the truth about spiritual gifts, most people today are **still ignorant** on this subject.
   1. There are **still many misconceptions**.
   2. What I would like to do this morning is to address three of the most common misconceptions.

D. First of all, there is the **misconception** that...

I. All "So-Called" Gifts Are Of God.

A. (Illus.- Not long ago I read an article about a church in Pensacola, Florida, that supposedly was the recipient of a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit, an outpouring that took place on Father's Day in 1995. This later came to be known as the **"Brownsville Revival."** One of the "so-called" manifestations of this outpouring was that the members of the church **became like drunk people and literally fell to the floor**. Listen to the pastor's own words, he said, "I saw bodies going every which way...just flying, going down like a hurricane coming through....They were just going down, flopping on benches, falling across the aisles, nobody even touched them." The pastor went on to say, "I felt like I weighed 10,000 pounds, but it wasn't a bad heavy. It felt wonderful!")

B. (Illus.- I read about another church in Toronto, Canada, that experienced what came to be called **"The Toronto Blessing."** This "so-called" outpouring of the Spirit manifest itself by the church members **laughing uncontrollably**. This has also been called "The Laughing Revival." One lady who attended one of these services said this, "My sister wanted me to go to experience what she called a 'new move of the spirit,' so I eagerly attended the meeting. People were falling over laughing, laughing so hard they couldn't stand up, or do anything but double over in hysterics.")

C. (Illus.- I read about yet another church where instead of laughing, the members actually **barked like dogs**. I guess they called this **"The Barking Revival."**)

D. Now this raises a question.

1. Is every "so-called" outpouring of the Holy Spirit that we hear about today **really from God**?
2. The answer, of course, is **"No!"**
3. What we must understand is that there are **many "spirits"** at work in the world today.
4. In addition to the Holy Spirit, there are also **a multitude of demon spirits** that are busy doing Satan's bidding.
5. Notice again what Paul wrote in ***Vrs. 2*** of our text, "Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, **even as ye were led**."
6. Did you notice the last phrase in that verse, "...even as ye **were led**."?
7. You see, before the Corinthians were saved, they were **idol worshipers**, and as idol worshipers, were being "**led**" (influenced), not by the Holy Spirit, but by **demon spirits**.
8. Do you remember what Paul wrote in ***1 Cor. 10:20***? He wrote, "But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, **they sacrifice to devils**, and **not to God**: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils."
9. And so, we must understand that there are many "spirits" at work in the world today.

E. Now this raises yet another question.
1. **How can we determine** whether or not a "so-called" spiritual gift (outpouring) is really from God?
2. The Bible admonishes us in ***1 John 4:1*** to "...**believe not every spirit**, but **try the spirits** whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world," but how do we do this?
3. How do we try the spirits?
4. One way we can try the spirits is to give them what I call the **"Jesus Test."**
5. Notice again ***Vrs. 3*** of our text, Paul said, "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."
6. In other words, if something is truly of God, it will **exalt the deity and Lordship of Jesus Christ**.
7. Why? Because **that's what the Holy Spirit does**.
8. Listen to what Jesus said in ***John 15:26***, "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even **the Spirit of truth**, which proceedeth from the Father, **he shall testify of me**:"
9. That's what I call the "Jesus Test."
10. **Another test** we can (and should) use to determine whether or not a "so-called" spiritual gift is really from God is what I call the **"Bible Test."**
11. In other words, if something is really from God, **it will conform perfectly to God's written Word**! (Amen?)
12. There will be **no contradictions**.
13. Let me illustrate.
14. The Bible says in ***Gal. 5:22-23***, "But **the fruit of the Spirit** is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,...Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law."
15. The phrase **"fruit of the Spirit"** can be translated **"the manifestation of the Spirit."**
16. It's funny, but nowhere in this list does it say anything about **barking**, or **laughing**, or **falling over pews like a drunk man**.

F. And so, I say again, not all "so-called" spiritual gifts (outpourings) are of God.
1. How can we know that?
2. Because **they don't pass the tests**.
3. They don't pass the "Jesus test," and they don't pass the "Bible test."
4. In my Bible study last Wednesday night we were studying about the second beast, or as he is also called, **"the false prophet."**
5. One of the things that we learned about him is that when he comes on the scene, **he will perform miracles**.
6. What kind of miracles?
7. The Bible says that he will **heal deadly wounds**, he will **call fire down from heaven**, and he will **cause a lifeless image to speak**.
8. Now this raises a question.
9. Where will he get the power to perform these miracles?
10. The Bible says that he will get his power from **"the dragon,"** and if you don't know who "the dragon" is, the dragon is none other than **Satan himself**.

11. And so, not all "so-called" spiritual gifts (outpourings) are of God.
12. Some are actually **of Satanic origin**!

G. A second very common **misconception** about spiritual gifts is that...

II. All Spiritual Gifts Are For Today.

A. The first thing that you have to realize is that when God first gave spiritual gifts to His church, He gave **two different types** of gifts.
   1. First of all, He gave what can be called **"sign gifts."**
   2. Do you remember what Paul wrote in ***1 Cor. 1:22***?
   3. It says, "For **the Jews require a sign**."
   4. God knew that the Jews would not believe the gospel message **without a sign**, so He gave several sign gifts to the early church.
   5. What were these sign gifts?
   6. One of them was **the gift of tongues**, which, I'm sure you remember, was first utilized in the city of Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost ***(Acts 2)***.
   7. Now I want you to look ahead with me to ***1 Cor. 14:22***, it says, "Wherefore **tongues are for a sign**, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not:"
   8. Now the gift of tongues was not the only "sign gift."
   9. There was also the gift of **healing**, the gift of **miracles**, as well as the gift of **interpretation of tongues**.

B. Now **what was God's purpose** in giving the early church these "sign gifts."
   1. Well, as we have already seen, they were given **as a sign**, **primarily to unbelieving Jews**, for the purpose of **authenticating the message** of the gospel that was being preached.
   2. This is one reason why I am convinced that God no longer gives sign gifts to believers.
   3. The Jews, as a whole, **rejected the signs** that God gave them, and in doing so, **rejected the gospel message**.
   4. Do you remember what the Bible says in ***John 1:11***?
   5. It says, "He (Jesus) came unto his own (the Jews), and **his own received him not**."
   6. Paul put it like this in ***Rom. 11:20***, when he described Israel as "branches," he said, "...because of unbelief **they were broken off.**"
   7. And so, after Israel had rejected Jesus as their Messiah, and in so doing rejected the gospel message, God "cut them off," and there was **no longer a need for the "sign gifts."**

C. There is another reason why the "sign gifts" are no longer needed today, and that is **God has given us something better** to authenticate our message.
   1. What could be better than tongues, and healing, and miracles?
   2. How about **His written Word**???
   3. I want you to notice how ***1 Cor. 12*** ends ***(Vrs. 31)***, "But covet earnestly the best gifts: and **yet** shew I unto you **a more excellent way**."

4. Peter put it like this in ***2 Pet. 1:19***, "We have also **a more sure word of prophecy**; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts:"
5. But someone says, "I agree with all that you saying, but how can you be so sure that God no longer gives the sign gifts to believers?"
6. I can be sure because of what we read in ***1 Cor. 13:8-10***, "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....For we know in part, and we prophesy in part....But **when that which is perfect is come** (God's written Word), then that which is in part (sign gifts) **shall be done away**."

D. Now, there are gifts that God still gives to believers today.
1. However, their purpose is totally different.
2. They are what I call **"ministering gifts,"** and their purpose is **to minister to (build up) the body of Christ**.
3. Sign gifts were given to benefit unbelievers, primarily unbelieving Jews.
4. Ministering gifts, however, were given to benefit believers.
5. (Illus.- Let me illustrate. Whether you realized it or not, I am exercising one of the "ministering gifts" of the Spirit at this very moment. To what gift am I referring? I am referring to the gift of "pastor and teacher.")
6. Listen as I read ***Eph. 4:11***, "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; **and some, pastors and teachers**;"
7. And so, the "ministering gifts" of the Spirit are those gifts that God gives to believers for the purpose of ministering to (building up) the body of Christ.
8. There is no doubt that God still gives these gifts.
9. Personally, I am glad that He does, because if He didn't, I wouldn't be standing behind this pulpit this morning.

E. And so, it is a very common misconception that all spiritual gifts are for today.
1. Those who believe this often use ***Heb. 13:8*** to defend their belief, which says, "Jesus Christ **the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever**."
    2. However, this verse merely says that Jesus Himself never changes, as far as His nature and character (Who He is).

F. There is a third common misconception that I only have time to mention, this morning, and that is...

III. Only A Select Few Believers Are Given Gifts.

A. Some believers are of the opinion that all believers can be divided into two groups, your "haves" and your "have nots," or as some put it, the "zapped" and the "unzapped."
1. In other words, those who have the gifts and those who do not.
2. There's only one problem with this way of thinking.
3. It is not Biblical.
4. Why is it not Biblical?

5. Because the Bible teaches us that **every believer is given at least one spiritual gift** that God intends for him (or her) to use to minister to their fellow believers.

B. Look ahead, if you will, to ***1 Cor. 12:4-7***, "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."

1. Notice again the last phrase in ***Vrs. 6***, "... it is the same God which worketh all **in all**."
2. And then ***Vrs. 7***, "But the manifestation of the Spirit is given **to every man**."
3. While God no longer gives the "sign gifts" today, He does give to **every single believer** at least one "ministering gift" of the Spirit.
4. And so, if you are saved, the question is not, "Do you have a gift?" but rather, "**Have you realized your gift** and **are you using your gift** to minister to the body of Christ?"

Conclusion:

A. What have we learned this morning?

1. We have learned three very common misconceptions that many people have about spiritual gifts.
2. Misconception # 1 - All so-called gifts are of God.
3. Misconception # 2 - All spiritual gifts are for today.
4. Misconception # 3 - Only a select few are given gifts.
5. These are very common misconceptions that a proven untrue by the written Word of God.

B. Let me ask you, in closing, "As a believer in Christ, have you realized your spiritual gift, and, if so, are you exercising your gift today for the glory of God?" (If not, why not???)

C. Let me ask you another question, "Are you saved? Do you know for sure that if you were to die this very moment, that you would go to heaven? (If not, why not???)

"Given By The Spirit"

Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 12:4-11

Introduction:

A. Two weeks ago, I began a series of messages on the subject of **"Spiritual Gifts,"** and I began the series by pointing out **three very common misconceptions** that many people today have about the "gifts."

1. The **first** misconception is that **all "so-called" gifts are of God**.
2. Many people today, when they hear about a "so-called" outpouring of the Spirit, they automatically assume that it is of God (the work of the Holy Spirit).
3. However, as we saw two weeks ago, there are also **"unholy spirits"** (**demon spirits**) at work in the world today, and many of the "so-called" outpourings of the Holy Spirit that we hear about are actually **demonic in origin**.
4. This is why the Bible admonishes us in ***1 John 4:1*** to "... **try the spirits whether they are of God**: because many false prophets are gone out into the world."
5. The **second** misconception is that **all spiritual gifts are for today**.
6. While there was a time, during the early years of the church, when God did give the "sign gifts," gifts such as tongues and healing and miracles, **He clearly no longer gives these gifts today**.
7. Why not?
8. Two reasons. First of all, because they are no longer needed. Secondly, because we have something far better. **We have God's completed Word**!
9. The **third** misconception is that **only a select few are given gifts**.
10. To hear some charismatics speak, there are two kinds of believers, your "haves" and your "have nots."
11. However, as we saw two weeks ago, **every believer** is given at least one ministering gift of the Spirit.
12. And so, that too is a misconception.

B. Now this morning, having already dealt with these common misconceptions, I want us to consider three things about spiritual gifts. First of all, I want us to consider...

I. The <u>Origin</u> Of Spiritual Gifts.

A. Of course, I'm talking about **true spiritual gifts**, not the **counterfeits** that are so prevalent today.
   1. We know the origin of the counterfeits.
   2. They originate **with Satan** and are the result of his **demon spirits** working in the world today.
   3. But what about true spiritual gifts?
   4. What is their origin?

B. The origin of true spiritual gifts is none other than **the Holy Spirit** Himself.
   1. Notice again the first part of ***Vrs. 7*** of our text, "But **the manifestation of the Spirit** is given to every man."
   2. The word "manifestation" is translated from a Greek word that literally means "**exhibition or bestowment**."
   3. Remembering now that Paul is talking about spiritual gifts, what he is saying here is that **it is the Holy Spirit Who exhibits or bestows spiritual gifts** upon believers.
   4. Now notice how ***Vrs. 8*** of our text begins, "For to one is given **by the Spirit**."
   5. And then in ***Vrs. 11*** of our text, we read, "But all these worketh **that one and the selfsame Spirit**, dividing to every man severally as he will."
   6. And so, the origin of spiritual gifts is clearly the Holy Spirit of God.
   7. It is the Holy Spirit Who...
      -**exhibits** the gifts.
      -**bestows upon us** the gifts.
      -**gives to every believer** at least one spiritual gift.

C. When does this happen?
   1. I am convinced that it happens **at the moment of salvation**.
   2. Why then and not later?
   3. Because if I understand the Bible correctly, it is at the moment of salvation that **the Holy Spirit indwells the believer**.
   4. Listen to what the Bible says in ***Gal. 4:4-6***, "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,...To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons....And because ye are sons, **God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts**, crying, Abba, Father."
   5. Paul put it like this in ***Rom. 5:5***, "And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by **the Holy Ghost which is given unto us**."
   6. If God desires for His children to begin serving Him **immediately** after trusting Christ as Savior, and I believe He does, then **it would make sense that the Holy Spirit would bestow the gifts at the moment of salvation**.
   7. And so, once again, the origin of spiritual gifts is clearly the Holy Spirit of God (He is the gift giver).

D. Do you realize what this means?
   1. It means that **we cannot take any credit** whatsoever for the gift (or gifts) that we possess? (Amen?)

2. Why not? Because **they didn't originate with us**, but rather we received them from the Holy Spirit of God.
3. Do you remember what Paul told these Corinthian believers back in ***1 Cor. 4:7***?
4. Turn there with me because I want you to follow me as I read this verse, "For who maketh thee to differ from another? and **what hast thou that thou didst not receive**? now if thou didst receive it, **why dost thou glory**, as if thou hadst not received it?"
5. In other words, Paul said, "What do you have that is of any real value that God did not give you? And **if God gave it to you, why do you take the credit** for it?"
6. While this is not limited to spiritual gifts, **it most certainly is true of spiritual gifts**. (Amen?)
7. Because God gave them to us, we cannot take any credit for ourselves. (God deserves all the glory!)
8. (Illus.- Let me illustrate. If you had known me before I was saved, you would have said, "There's no way that Mike Withem will ever be able to get up in front of people and teach a Bible lesson or preach a sermon." And you would have been right. There was no way that I could have done it. How then do I account for the fact that I'm doing it this morning? There's only one way that I can account for this, and that is God gave the ability to do so. I certainly did not, nor could I have ever possessed the ability on my own. So I give all the glory to God!)

E. And so, the origin of spiritual gifts is the Holy Spirit of God. Secondly, this morning, I want us to consider...

II. The <u>Variety</u> Of Spiritual Gifts.

A. Paul said it very plainly in ***Vrs. 4*** of our text, "Now **there are diversities of gifts**, but the same Spirit."
1. The word "diversities" means "different" or "a variety."
2. In other words, when God decided to give His church spiritual gifts, instead of giving them all the same gift, He decided to give them a variety of gifts.
3. Some of these gifts are mentioned in our text.
4. In addition to the sign gifts, Paul mentions several ministering gifts in our text, such as the gifts of **wisdom**, and **knowledge**, and **faith**.
5. In other New Testament passages we read about the gifts of **ministering**, and **teaching**, and **exhorting**, and **giving**, and **ruling**, and **showing mercy**, and **helping**, and **pastoring**, and **evangelizing**.
6. Are these all of the ministering gifts of the Spirit.
7. **Probably not**, these are just the ones that God saw fit to mention in His Word.
8. The point is, **God gives a variety of gifts**.

B. Now **why do you think God gives a variety of gifts**?
1. He does so, so that local churches **will be diverse**, and by being diverse, **be able to meet the many different needs** that typically exist within **every church family**.
2. Can you imagine **how dysfunctional** a church would be if everyone within the church had **exactly the same gift**?

3. (Illus.- Let me illustrate. Imagine you were going to build a house, and so **you put out a call for craftsmen to come and help you build your house**. Now imagine that everyone who answered the call were **plumbers**. Wouldn't that be great? Or suppose all those who answered the call were **electricians**. Same problem. If you are going to build a house, you need a variety of craftsmen. Yes, you need plumbers, and yes, you need electricians, but you also need carpenters, and bricklayers, and sheet rock finishers, and painters, and HAC technicians, etc. You need a good variety.)
4. (Illus. Let me give you another illustration. Suppose you wanted to open up a new hospital. Of course, you are going to need some doctors. Right? But suppose you put the call out for doctors, and every doctor who answered the call was a **pediatrist**. Wouldn't that be great? Or suppose every doctor who answered the call was a **gynecologist**? Can you imagine being taken to the hospital with a heart attack, and the only doctor on call is a pediatrist or a gynecologist? That wouldn't be good.)
5. The same thing is true in a local church.
6. You need people with **a variety** of spiritual gifts, so that they can **meet the many different needs** that typically exist within every church family.

C. Let me stop here and point out something that you may have never thought about, and that is the fact that the typical local church has members who possess a wide variety of gifts indicates that **God is the One Who decides** who gets what gifts. (Amen?)
1. He doesn't come to us after we are saved and say, "Okay, what spiritual gift would you like?"
2. Can you imagine what would happen if God allowed us to choose our own gift (or gifts)?
3. Later in this chapter Paul likens a local church to **a human body**.
4. We all know that the human body is made up of many parts, such as the head, the neck, the arms, the hands, the legs, the feet, and even the toes.
5. Now let me ask you a question, who in their right mind is going to say, **"I want to be a toe,"** when they know that they could be a head?
6. Nobody wants to be a toe, but **every body needs toes**!
7. This is exactly why God doesn't allow us to choose our own spiritual gift (or gifts).
8. He, in His wisdom, knows what every local church needs, on the basis of this knowledge, **He gives the needed gifts to whomever He wills**.
9. The giving of spiritual gifts is **a sovereign act of God**.
10. Notice again ***Vrs. 11*** of our text, "But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally **as he will**."

D. I don't know about you, but I extremely thankful that God gives a variety of gifts to His children.
1. Not just because the church needs these gifts, but also because variety is "the spice of life."
2. (Illus.- Can you imagine how boring coming to church would be if we were all clones of one another? If we all had the same personalities, the same interests, the

same likes and dislikes, the same political views? Why, you wouldn't be able to get a good political argument started, if we were all the same!)

E. And so, we see that God gives a variety of spiritual gifts. Finally, this morning, I want us to consider...

III. The <u>Purpose</u> Of Spiritual Gifts.

A. We've already touched on this to some extent.
1. However the purpose of spiritual gifts is summarized very well in the latter part of ***Vrs. 7*** of our text, "But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man **to profit withal**."
2. Notice again the last three words in that verse, "to profit withal," in other words, **"for the benefit of all."**
3. We can say it like this, the purpose of spiritual gifts is to benefit the entire church body.

B. Do you realize what this means?
1. First of all, it means that **God does not give us spiritual gifts for our own benefit**.
2. Now it is true that we will benefit from the exercise of our spiritual gift (or gifts), however, the gifts are not given to us for that purpose.
3. Turn with me to ***1 Pet. 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."
4. Rather than using our gift (or gifts) to benefit ourselves, we should use them to benefit others within the body of Christ.
5. This is simply being "good stewards" (faithful managers) of the gift (or gifts) that God has given to us.
6. And so, first of all, it means that God does not give us spiritual gifts for our own benefit.

C. It also means that **God does not give us spiritual gifts for the benefit of a select few**.
1. In other words, we should **not pick (or choose)** those to whom we are going to minister, and then ignore the rest.
2. It's true that some believers are easier to love than others, but **we are commanded to love all believers**, as well as use our spiritual gift (or gifts) to minister to their needs.
3. To do less is to be what the Bible calls **"a respecter of persons."**
4. Listen to the warning found in **Jam. 2:8-9**, "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God....But **if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin**, and are convinced of the law as transgressors."

D. And so, the purpose of spiritual gifts is to "profit" or to benefit the entire body of Christ.

Conclusion:

A. What have we learned about spiritual gifts, this morning?
   1. We've learned that they **originate with the Holy Spirit**, and not with ourselves. (They are a gift from God.)
   2. We've learned that **God gives a diversity of gifts**, so that every need within the body of Christ can be met. (The giving of gifts is a sovereign act of God.)
   3. We've learned that **the purpose of spiritual gifts is to profit or benefit the entire body of Christ**. (It is wrong to use them just to benefit us, or a select few.)

B. I want to ask you again this morning the same questions that I asked you last Sunday as I concluded my message.
   1. Have you identified your particular spiritual gift (or gifts).
   2. If so, are you currently using those gifts to minister to your brothers and sisters within this church family?
   3. If not, why not?
   4. There is no excuse for not using your spiritual gift (or gifts).
   5. Paul admonished Timothy in ***1 Tim. 4:14***, **"Neglect not the gift** that is in thee,"
   6. Are you neglecting your spiritual gift (or gifts)???

C. Let me ask you another question.
   1. **Are you saved**?
   2. Do you know for sure that if you were to die this very moment, that you would go to heaven?
   3. If not, I have good news for you.
   4. **God loves you**.
   5. **Christ died for you**.
   6. **God has a gift that he wants to give you, the gift of eternal life**.
   7. If you will **trust Him** as your Savior this morning, and **call upon Him** to give you that gift, He will!!!
   8. The Bible says in ***Rom. 10:13***, " For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."
   9. Almost 37 years ago, I claimed that precious promise.
   10. **How about you??? Will you claim it right now???**

"Now Ye Are The Body Of Christ"

Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 12:12-31

Introduction:

A. When you hear the word **"church,"** what is the first thing that comes to your mind?
   1. If you are like most people, the first thing that comes to your mind is a **"building."**
   2. (Illus.- When I meet someone out and about somewhere, perhaps out knocking doors, they will often ask me the question, "Where is your church located?" Of course, when they ask that question, I realize that what they want to know is, **"Where is our building located?"** In other words, they equate the church with a building.)
   3. (Illus.- Just the other day I was talking with someone and they asked me, "Have you seen the church that they are building out on Route 9? Have you seen how large it is?" Again, I realized that they were talking about a building, and so I said, "Yes, I've seen it.")
   4. The point is, when most people hear the word "church," the first thing that comes to their mind is a "building."

B. There are others, however, when they hear the word "church," they think of an **"organization"** (denomination).
   1. (Illus.- Let me illustrate. Many years ago, before I had the beliefs that I now have about borrowing money, I went had a meeting with the president of the Bank of Charles Town. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss borrowing $ 100,000 to finance the construction of our first building. I will never forget how that conversation went. I sat down in his office, and the very first question that he asked me was, "Reverend, where is your diocese located?" At that time, I didn't have a clue what he was talking about. He noticed the puzzled look on my face, and so he rephrased his question, he said, "Where does your bishop reside?" Again, I didn't understand what he was getting at. He tried one more time, he said, "Where is your church headquartered?" Finally, I understood what he asking. I said, "Mr. Smith, our church is headquartered in heaven." I then explained to him that we were an "independent" Baptist church, and as such, were not a part of any church hierarchy or denomination. After explaining that to him, I asked him, "Do we get the loan?" He said, "No.")
   2. And so, some people, when the hear the word "church," think of an "organization" (denomination).

C. Now this raises a question.
   1. "Who is right? Is a church a **building**, or is it an **organization**?"
   2. The answer is, **"It is neither!"**
   3. It's **not** a building and it is **not** an organization.
   4. Now please don't misunderstand what I am saying.
   5. Even though a church is not a building, most churches do have buildings in which they meet.
   6. I say "most churches," because some churches do not have buildings.
   7. (Illus.- Several years ago I heard about a church in California that had hundreds of members, but didn't have a building. Where did they meet? They met under a tent.)
   8. But most churches today **do have buildings** in which they meet.

9. (Illus. For example, God has given us this beautiful sanctuary in which we have met for the past 27 years, and as you probably know, we are currently in the process of building a new sanctuary.)
10. And so, even though the church is not a building, most churches do have buildings in which they meet.
11. May I also point out that even though a church is not an organization, God has placed within His church a certain organizational structure.
12. For example, He has given His church **pastors** and **deacons**.
13. He has also given His church **guidelines for worship, for ministry, and for discipline** (these guidelines are found in His Word).
14. The reason that God has done this is because, as His Word tells us, He is **not a God "of confusion**," but rather a God who desires that everything within His church be "done **decently and in order**." ***(1 Cor. 14:33,40)***
15. And so, even though the church is not an organization, God has placed within His church a certain organizational structure.

D. Now this raises yet another question.
1. If a church is not a building and if a church is not an organization, **what is it?**
2. Let me answer that question like this.
3. A church is not a building, but rather it is a **"body."**
4. A church is not an organization, but rather it is an **"organism."**
5. It is **a living, breathing, moving body (organism) that is made up of believers in the Lord Jesus Christ**.

E. Now with this in mind, there are three things that I want us to learn this morning about the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. First of all, I want us to learn...

I. The Nature Of The Church.

A. According to our text, the nature of the church is **two-fold**.
1. First of all, notice **the unity (oneness) of the church**.
2. Look again at ***Vrs. 12-13***, "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....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."
3. Now I don't know whether you noticed this or not, but in these two verses, the church is referred to as **"one body" four different times**.
4. Let's read them again, looking for these references, it says, "For as **the body is one**(#1), and hath many members, and all the members of **that one body**(#2), being many, are **one body**(#3): so also is Christ....For by one Spirit are we all baptized into **one body**(#4),"
5. And so, four times in these two verses the church is referred to as "**one body**."

B. Now what does this mean?
1. Let me tell you, first of all, what it does not mean.

2. It does not mean that there is only one church, because in reality, **there exist a multitude of churches today**.
3. Even when Paul wrote this letter to the church at Corinth, there were many churches in existence.
4. Now **there was a time when there was only one church**, the one that Jesus Himself established and that became located in the city of Jerusalem.
5. Let me show you what I mean.
6. Turn with me to ***Acts 2:47***, "Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to **the church** (the one church in Jerusalem) daily such as should be saved."
7. Now turn to ***Acts 5:11***, "And great fear came upon all **the church** (Jerusalem church), and upon as many as heard these things (death of Ananias & Sapphira)."
8. Now turn to ***Acts 8:1***, "And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against **the church which was at Jerusalem**;"
9. Now notice ***Acts 8:3***, "As for Saul, he made havock of **the church** (Jerusalem), entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison."
10. Now what effect did this persecution have on the church at Jerusalem?
11. ***Acts 8:4*** answers this question, it says, "Therefore they that were **scattered abroad went every where preaching the word**."
12. This, of course, resulted in more churches being established.
13. How do I know this?
14. Look at ***Acts 9:31***, (remember now, that up to this point there has only been one church, the church at Jerusalem), it says, "Then had **the churches** (plural) rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified;"
15. Why did these churches have "rest"?
16. Because Saul, their number one persecutor, had been saved.
17. But the point is, **now there are many churches**.
18. And so, when Paul referred to the church as being "one body," he did not mean that there is only one church.

C. What then did Paul mean?
1. He simply meant that every true church is **an entire body**, **an entity all it's own, independent, separate, and capable of fulfilling it's God-given purpose apart from any other church**.
2. Now this is not to say that churches working together cannot compliment one another.
3. I believe very strongly that churches of like faith and practice should work together (co-operate), especially when it comes to taking the gospel to the world (missions).
4. However, having said that, I also believe that this church, First Baptist Church of Ranson, is a church all it's own, independent, separate, and capable of fulfilling our God- given purpose apart from any other church. (Amen?)
5. This is the unity of the church.

D. Now notice the diversity of the church.
1. Not only is the church one body, but this one body is made up of many members.

2. Notice again ***Vrs. 14*** of our text, "For the body is **not one member, but many**."
3. What Paul is doing here is comparing the church to a human body.
4. While every human body is an entity all it's own, independent, separate, and capable of fulfilling it's God-given purpose apart from any other human body, it is also made up of many members.
5. For example, it has a head.
6. It also has a neck, and arms, and hands, and fingers, and legs, and feet and toes, just to name a few of it's members.
7. The same thing is true of the church.
8. Every church, even though it is one body, is also made up of many members.

E. Not only is the church made up of many members, but just like the members of a human body, each member of the church is diverse (different) in some way.
1. Of course, there are **natural differences**.
2. For example, we all look different, we have different personalities, we have different likes and dislikes, we have different abilities.
3. But in addition to our natural differences, there are also **spiritual differences**.
4. This is really what this chapter is all about, the fact that God gives to those who make up His church differing spiritual gifts. (We are not talking about natural abilities now, but rather supernatural abilities, given to every believer by the Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation.)

F. And so, the nature of the church is two-fold.
1. First of all, it is **one body** (the unity of the church).
2. But it is also **a body that is made up of many mem-bers**, members to whom have been given differing spiritual gifts (the diversity of the church).

G. The second thing that I want us to learn about the church this is morning is that because of the nature of the church (one body with many members),...

II. Every Member Is Important.

A. This is really the central theme of the latter part of ***1 Corinthians 12***, the fact that **every member of the church has a place and is important to the function of the church as a whole**.

B. Let's read again ***Vrs. 15-24***, "If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?..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?..If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?..But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him...And if they were all one member, where were the body?..But now are they many members, yet but one body...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...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...For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked:"

C. Again, Paul uses the human body to illustrate a very important principle.
1. Every member of the human body has a purpose and is important to the function of the body as a whole.
2. For example, we need our **heads** to think.
3. We need our **eyes** to see.
4. We need our **ears** to hear.
5. We need our **hands** to pick up things.
6. We need our **feet** to take us where we want to go.
7. Every member of the human body has a distinct purpose and is important to the function of the body as a whole.
8. The **same thing is true of the church**.
9. Every member of the church, let's make it personal, every member of this church (FBC of Ranson) has a definite purpose [gift] and is important to the function of this church as a whole!

D. (Illus.- Every now and then someone will come to me and say, "Pastor, I just don't feel important. I don't feel like the church needs me. I feel like the church could get along very well without me." Sometimes it is a young person who feels unimportant because of his youth. Sometimes it is a senior saint who feels unimportant because of his age. Sometimes it is a handicapped person who feels unimportant because of his disability. But whoever it is, my answer is always the same. **You are important**. **You are needed**. **This church cannot function as well without you**.)
1. You ask, "Pastor, do you really believe that?" **Yes!!!!**
2. Look again at ***Vrs. 22*** of our text, "Nay, much more **those members** of the body, **which seem to be more feeble, are necessary**:"

E. (Illus.- As I was pondering this point last week, Jason came to mind. As you know, Jason has a disability. However, Jason is a very important part of this church family. He may not be able to contribute in the same way that you can, but he does make a very valuable contribution to this family. If, for some reason, the Billmyers were to move away, Jason would be sorely missed.)

F. The third thing that I want us to learn about the church is that because every member of the church is important,...

III. There Should Be No Divisions.

A. Notice again ***Vrs. 25-26*** of our text, "That **there should be no schism in the body**; but that the members should have the same care one for another....And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it."
1. In other words, if a church functions the way that it should, each member fulfilling his or her purpose for the good of the whole body, there will be no divisions.
2. The church will be united.

3. So united, that when one member suffers, **every member will suffer with it**, and when one member rejoices, **every member will rejoice with it.**
4. (Illus.- I thank God that I have seen evidence of this kind of unity here at FBC. The way that this church rallies around those in need astounds me. Of course, we can do better, and should do better. However, there is a family atmosphere [sense of family] that exists within our church that you don't find in too many churches today!)

B. Do you know what causes divisions within a church?
1. It's when one or more members lose their proper focus.
2. It's when one or more members become **focused on themselves, on their wants and their needs**, and **lose sight of what is best for the family** as a whole.
3. We need to remind ourselves every day that God didn't bless us with our spiritual gift so that we might use it **benefit ourselves**, but rather to **benefit the whole church**.
4. When we lose sight of that, we create schisms (divisions) within the church family.

C. Look again at ***Vrs. 27*** of our text, "Now **ye are the body of Christ**, and **members in particular**."
1. We must remember that while we are individual members, we are also a part of a body.
2. First and foremost, we are a part of **a spiritual body** (God's family) of which every true believer in Christ is a part.
3. But we are also a part of **a local body** (a church), and as such are **obligated to use our various gifts for the benefit of the church as a whole**.
4. When we fail to do this, we not only create divisions within the church, but we also **"cripple" the church** and **make it very difficult** (if not impossible) for the church to fulfill it's God-given purpose in this world (to take the gospel of Jesus Christ to those who are lost).

Conclusion:

A. What have we learned about the church?
1. First of all, we've learned **something about the nature of the church (one body made up of many members).**
2. We've also learned that because of the nature of the church, **every member is important**.
3. We've also learned that because every member is important, **there should be no divisions**.

B. Let me ask you a personal question.
1. As a member of this local church, are you helping this church to fulfill it's God-given purpose in this world, or are you hindering the church?

2. If you are not using your gift for the good of the church as a whole, then you are hindering instead of helping.

C. Do you know Christ as your Savior?

"The Greatest Of These"

Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

Introduction:

A. If we have learned anything about the church at Corinth since embarking on the subject of "**spiritual gifts**," we have learned that this was a very gifted church.
   1. Among those gifts that are mentioned in ***I Cor. 12***, are the gifts of **wisdom**, **knowledge**, **faith**, **healing**, **miracles**, **prophecy**, **discerning of spirits**, **tongues**, **interpretation of tongues**, **teaching**, **helps**, and **governments**.
   2. And these are only the gifts that are mentioned.
   3. There is a very good possibility that this church possessed other gifts as well.
   4. And so, the church at Corinth was a very gifted church.

B. However, even though they were a very gifted church, there was something they lacked, something that is absolutely essential if we are going to be effective in the exercise of our spiritual gifts.
   1. What did they lack?
   2. According to ***1 Cor. 13***, they lacked **"charity"** (love.)
   3. They were saved, but they lacked love.
   4. They had the Holy Spirit living within them, but they lacked love.
   5. The Holy Spirit had bestowed upon them many spiritual gifts, but they lacked love.
   6. It's not that they lacked the capacity for love, because as I just said, **they were saved** and **they did have the Holy Spirit living within them**.
   7. It's just that they were failing to demonstrate the love for one another that God had so graciously demonstrated to them.
   8. Let me just stop here and say this - if anyone ought to show love toward others, it should be those who have been on the receiving end of God's love. (Amen?)
   9. In fact, Jesus said in ***John 15:12***, "This is my commandment, That ye **love one another, as I have loved you**."
   10. But the fact is, the Corinthian church, while they were an extremely gifted church, they were not a very loving church.
   11. They were definitely lacking in the "love" department.

C. How do I know this?
   1. I know because Paul devoted a whole chapter in his letter to the subject of love.
   2. Now this raises a question.
   3. Why did Paul place this chapter right in the middle of his discussion of spiritual gifts?
   4. Did you notice that?
   5. The subject of ***chapter 12*** is "**spiritual gifts**."
   6. The subject of ***chapter 14*** is "**spiritual gifts**."
   7. And right in the middle of this discussion is ***chapter 13***, the "**love**" chapter.
   8. Now why did Paul place this chapter right in the middle of his discussion of spiritual gifts?
   9. I believe the reason he did so is because he knew that love is essential if we are going to be effective in the exercise of our spiritual gifts.
   10. No matter how gifted we are, unless we demonstrate love for one another, our spiritual gifts will be totally ineffective.

D. Now with this in mind, I want us to notice three things about love, this morning. First of all, I want us to notice...

I. The <u>Dominance</u> Of Love.

A. Let me ask you a question.
   1. "How important is love?"
   2. Paul answered this question in ***Vrs. 1-3*** of our text, "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....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....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."

B. Notice, first of all, that Paul said, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels." ***(Vrs. 1)***

1. In other words, "If I possessed the ability to speak in every human language, and not only that, if I could even speak the language of angels."
2. Now let me point out here that Paul could not speak the language of angels, nor could he speak every human language.
3. As far as I know, there is no evidence that Paul possessed the gift of tongues (prophecy, yes, healing, yes, miracles, yes, tongues, no).
4. But what he was saying was, "Even if I could speak every human language, and even if I could speak the language of angels, **if I did not have love**, my speech would be like '**sounding brass, or tinkling cymbal**.'" (In other words, just a **loud meaningless noise**.)

C. Paul went on to say in the next verse, "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," ***(Vrs. 2)***

1. Now it is true that Paul had the gift of prophecy.
2. However, he certainly didn't understand all mysteries, or have all knowledge or all faith."
3. What he was saying was, "Even if I did understand all mysteries, and even if did have all knowledge and all faith, **if I didn't have love**, I would still be '**nothing**.'" (In other words, I would still be **a worthless nobody**.)

D. Paul went on to say in the next verse, "And though I **bestow all my goods to feed the poor**, and though I **give my body to be burned**," ***(Vrs. 3)***

1. Paul clearly had not yet given his body to be burned, but what he was saying was, "Even if I sacrificed every thing that I have, even my life, **if I didn't have love**, it would profit '**me nothing**.'" (In other words, it would be **a total waste of my resources and my life**.)
2. Are you beginning to get the point, here?
3. Paul is saying, "Without love,...
   -our gifts are **meaningless**,
   -we are all **worthless nobodies**,
   -we are **totally wasting** both our resources and our lives.
4. That's how important love is!
5. That's the **dominance** of love!!!

E. Now I want us to notice...

II. The <u>Definition</u> Of Love.

A. After having pointed out the dominance (importance) of love, Paul then proceeds to define the kind of love that he is talking about.
   1. Notice, first of all, that he says, "Charity **suffereth long**, and is kind;" ***(Vrs. 4)***
   2. In other words, "Love is patient. It is kind, even when it is tried, wronged, or misunderstood."
   3. Someone put it like this, "Love has a long fuse."
   4. Of course, the greatest example of patience is none other than God Himself.
   5. The Bible says in ***2 Pet. 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."
   6. Aren't you glad that God is longsuffering?
   7. (Illus.- I was reading recently about how the infidel, Robert Ingersoll, would travel around the country making speeches that denied the existence of God. One day, in an attempt to prove that God did not exist, he issued a challenge to God. He said, "God, if you exist, I will give you five minutes to strike me dead." God, of course, did not strike him dead. Someone who heard this speech related what Ingersoll had said to a preacher by the name of Theodore Parker. Listen to what this preacher said about Ingersoll's challenge. He said, "Did the gentleman think that he could exhaust the patience of an eternal God in just five minutes?")
   8. And so, love "suffereth long, and is kind."

B. Notice also that love "**envieth not**." ***(Vrs. 4)***
   1. In other words, love is **not jealous**.
   2. If we truly love someone, we will not be envious when they are **honored** or they are **blessed** in some way.
   3. Instead of being envious, we will be **happy for them**.
   4. Isn't that what Paul wrote earlier in ***1 Cor. 12:26***, "And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or **one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.**"?
   5. And so, love "envieth not."

C. Notice also that love "**vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up**." ***(Vrs. 4)***
   1. In other words, love does not brag.
   2. Love does not exalt itself or its abilities.
   3. Love does not try to draw attention to itself.
   4. Love, on the other hand, is both lowly and self-debasing.
   5. And so, love "vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up."

D. Notice also that love does "**not behave itself unseemly**." ***(Vrs. 5)***
   1. In other words, love is **not ill-mannered**.
   2. Love does not manifest itself in **crude** & **rude** behavior.
   3. Love, on the other hand, is **polite**, and **courteous**, and **respectful** of others.
   4. (Illus.- I am always amazed, when I go out in public, by how ill-mannered some people are, not only in the way they act, but also in the language they use. They are so **boorish**."
   5. But love does "not behave itself unseemly."

E. Notice also that love "**seeketh not her own**." ***(Vrs. 5)***
1. In other words, love is **not selfish**.
2. Love is **not self-centered** or **self-indulgent**.
3. Love, on the other hand, puts the needs of others **before** its own needs.
4. In ***Phil. 2:20-21***, Paul made a statement that is **so sad**, he said, "For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state....For **all seek their own**,"
5. But love is not like that, love "seeketh not her own."

F. Notice also that love "is **not easily provoked**." ***(Vrs. 5)***
1. In other words, love does not get angry easily.
2. Love does not have a **short temper** or a **short fuse**.
3. Love, on the other hand, is very difficult to get angry.
4. One of the qualifications for a pastor is that he not be "**soon angry**." ***(Tit. 1:7)***
5. And so, love "is not easily provoked."

G. Notice also that love "**thinketh no evil**;" ***(Vrs. 5)***
1. In other words, love does not keep records of wrongs done to it.
2. The Greek word translated "**thinketh**" here actually means "**to take inventory**."
3. And so what Paul is saying here is that, love **does not know how to count** (love **holds no grudges**).
4. Love, on the other hand, is both **merciful** and **forgiving**.
5. Do you remember how Jesus answered Peter when he asked Him, "Lord, **how oft shall my brother sin against me**, and I forgive him? **till seven times**?"
6. Jesus answered him like this, He said, "I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until **seventy times seven**."
7. In other words, "Peter, **don't even keep count**, you just **keep forgiving your brother**!"
8. And so, love "thinketh no evil."

H. Notice also that love "**Rejoiceth not in iniquity**, but **rejoiceth in the truth**;" ***(Vrs. 6)***
1. In other words, love takes no pleasure in other people's sins.
2. Let me ask you a question, "Would you rather hear a **juicy piece of gossip on someone that is bad**, or would you rather hear **something good** about someone?"
3. If you are like most people, you would much rather hear the gossip.
4. But **love is not like that**.
5. Love rejoices "not in iniquity," but rejoices "in the truth."

I. Notice also that love "Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." ***(Vrs. 7)***
1. In other words, love...
   -**overlooks the imperfections** of others,
   -always tries to **believe the best** about others,
   -looks at the future with both **hope and optimism**,
   -**never gives up**, no matter how hopeless the situation may seem.
2. Love focuses on the positive rather than the negative!

J. This is the definition of love, not the love of this world, but rather God's (agape) love.
1. Let me ask you a question, "**Is this kind of love being demonstrated in the life that you are now living**?"
2. Are you patient and kind toward others?
3. Are you happy when others are honored in some way?
4. Are you both lowly and self-debasing in your attitudes?
5. Are you polite, courteous, and respectful of others?
6. Do you put the needs of others before your own needs?
7. Are you slow to anger (difficult to get angry)?
8. Are you both merciful and forgiving toward others?
9. Would you rather hear something good about someone than something bad?
10. Do you overlook the imperfections of others?
11. Do you always try to believe the best about others?
12. Do you look at the future with both hope and optimism?
13. Do you never give up on people, no matter how hopeless their situation may seem?
14. If you cannot answer **"yes"** to these questions, then you are **NOT** demonstrating the love of God in your life!

K. Thus far we have noticed the **dominance** of love and the **definition** of love. Finally, this morning, I want us to notice...

III. The <u>Duration</u> Of Love.

A. Notice how ***Vrs. 8*** begins, "Charity **never faileth**:"
1. The Greek word translated "faileth" means "to drop away" or "to fall away."
2. What Paul is saying here is that love...
-is eternal,
-has no end,
-will abide forever.

B. Paul then continues in ***Vrs. 8*** by pointing out that **this cannot be said about spiritual gifts**.
1. Notice what he said, "but whether there be prophecies, **they shall fail**; whether there be tongues, **they shall cease**; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away."
2. Now this raises a question, "When will spiritual gifts fail? When will spiritual gifts cease? When will spiritual gifts vanish away?"
3. According to ***Vrs. 9-11***, some have already ceased.
4. Let's read these verses again, "For we know in part, and we prophesy in part....But **when that which is perfect is come**, then **that which is in part shall be done away**....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**."
5. You have to understand that when Paul penned these words, God was in the process of giving us His written Word, and He was **using the gift of prophecy** to accomplish this.

6. This is what he meant when he said, "For **we know** in part, and **we prophecy** in part."
7. In other words, "We have **part of God's Word** (Old Testament), and **the rest** (the New Testament) is in the process of being given through prophecy."
8. This is why God gave the early church the sign gifts (like tongues, and miracles, and healing).
9. Because the early church didn't have the complete Word of God to **authenticate their message** (gospel), God gave them the sign gifts for this purpose.
10. However, when **God's Word was complete, the sign gifts ceased**. Why? Because they were no longer needed!
11. This is what Paul meant when he said, "...when that which is perfect is come (God's Word), then that which is in part (sign gifts) **shall be done away**."
12. And so, the sign gifts have already ceased.

C. Not only that, but I believe the time will come when God will **no longer give the ministering gifts** of the Spirit.
   1. Why?
   2. Because one day...
      -we won't need them.
      -we will be like Jesus.
      -we will be perfect in every way.
      3. Notice again ***Vrs. 12*** of our text, "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."

D. And so, the gifts are not permanent.
   1. Some have already ceased, and one day the others will cease as well.
   2. But "charity" love is different.
   3. Love **is eternal**.
   4. Love **has no end.**
   5. Love **will abide forever**.
   6. Notice again how this chapter ends, ***Vrs. 13***, "And now **abideth** faith, hope, **charity**, these three; but **the greatest of these is charity**."

E. Now what should we learn from this?
   1. We should learn that love is the most important thing.
   2. We should learn that even though God has given us ministering gifts of the Spirit, if we don't love one another, these gifts will be ineffective.
   3. We should learn that our focus should not be on ourselves, or upon the gifts that God has given to us, but rather on **loving those to whom God intends for us to minister**.

Conclusion:

A. (Illus.- Someone asked me once, "Pastor, why do so many Christians neglect their spiritual gift(s) [fail to use them as God intends]?" After studying this chapter, I

believe I know the answer. If we are neglecting our spiritual gift(s), it is because we don't love one another as we should. If you loved me the way you ought to, with the kind of love that Paul defined here in ***1 Cor. 13***, then you will use your spiritual gift(s) to minister to my needs. It is as simple as that.)

B. As I get ready to close, this morning, let me ask you a question.
   1. Do you love me?
   2. Do you love that brother or sister sitting next to you in the pew?
   3. Do you love your church family with the kind of love that Paul defined here in ***1 Cor. 13***?
   4. If so, you will use your spiritual gift(s), whatever they are, to minister to and be a blessing to them.
   5. If you are not doing that, then that's a pretty good sign that **you are lacking in the "love" department**.

C. Do you know Christ as your Savior?
   1. If not, I have good news for you.
   2. God loves you, Jesus died for you, God has a gift for you, the gift of eternal life.
   3. If you will put your faith in what Christ did on the cross for you, and then call upon God to save you, you can leave here this morning, not only forgiven, but also possessing eternal life.
   4. How about it???

"Greater Is He That Prophesieth"

Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 14:1-5

Introduction:

A. (Illus.- I will never forget the first time that I heard someone speak in, what many today call, tongues. Thankfully, I did not hear it in person. Actually, I was watching and listening to a preacher on television one day, when all of the sudden his words because unintelligible. One moment he was preaching, and the next moment he was **babbling**. One moment he was speaking words that I understood, and the next moment he was **uttering meaningless and unin-telligible sounds**. I remember thinking to myself, "What's going on here? Has this preacher lost his mind or something?" After a few moments I realized that what he was doing was what many today call "speaking in tongues.")

B. (Illus.- While I have never actually attended a church service where this practice was going on, I have talked to many people who have, and almost without fail, they described the scene as **"chaotic."** What do I mean by "chaotic"? I simply mean **"mass confusion."** Some have even described these services as **"frightening"** or even **"crazed."**)

C. Now this raises a question, "Is the modern day phenomenon that is referred to today as "speaking in tongues" a "God thing"? Is it of the Holy Spirit? Is it a Biblical practice?"
   1. Well, I'm convinced that the answer to this question is an emphatic, "No!"
   2. It is **not a God thing**!
   3. It is **not of the Holy Spirit**!
   4. It is **not Biblical, in any sense of the word**!

5. "Well," someone asks, "What is it then?"
6. It is nothing more than **a demonic counterfeit** of Bible gift of tongues.
7. By the way, did you know that the devil is a counterfeiter?
8. He is! That's why we have counterfeit gifts, and counterfeit religions, and counterfeit apostles, and counterfeit preachers!
9. The devil is a counterfeiter, and we need to be very careful that we are not fooled by his counterfeits.

D. Now having said that, what I want us to do this morning is take a very careful look at the Bible gift of tongues.
1. Since most of ***1 Corinthians 14*** deals with tongues, I thought it would be a good idea to lay some groundwork before we get too far into this chapter.
2. This morning, I want us to learn three things about the Bible gift of tongues.
3. First of all, I want us to learn the...

I. <u>Nature</u> Of Tongues.

A. Exactly what was the Bible gift of tongues?
1. To answer this question, I want us to look at **the very first example** of tongues being spoken in the Scriptures, which is found in ***Acts 2:1-12*** (turn there with me).
2. You probably remember that this took place on the day of Pentecost, when God sent the Holy Spirit to empower the church at Jerusalem.
3. Because it was the day of Pentecost, there were Jews in Jerusalem **from all over the known world**, Jews who had come to participate in the celebration of the Jewish holy day.
4. Let's begin by reading ***Vrs. 1-4***, "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place....And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting....And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them....And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and **began to speak with other tongues**, as the Spirit gave them utterance."
5. Now let me stop here and point out something about the word "tongues" here in ***Vrs. 4***.
6. It says, "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other **tongues**,"
7. The Greek word for "tongues" here is the word "glossa," which means "languages."
8. What happened here was that certain members of the Jerusalem church began to speak in other languages.
9. They didn't begin **to babble**!
10. They didn't begin **to utter unintelligible sounds**!
11. They didn't begin **to utter sounds in an incoherently or meaninglessly repetitious manner**!
12. Instead, they began to **speak in other languages**!
13. How do we know this?
14. Well, let's read ***Vrs. 5-12***, "And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven....Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude

came together, and were confounded, because that **every man heard them speak in his own language**....And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans?...And how **hear we every man in our own tongue**, wherein we were born?...Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia,...Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes,...Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak **in our tongues** the wonderful works of God....And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this?"

15. We know that these were known languages, because every man "**heard them speak in his own language**."

B. Now this raises a question.
   1. How were these believers who were all "Galilaeans," how were they able to preach the gospel in all of these different languages?
   2. They were able because God had given them **the gift of tongues**, which was merely **the supernatural ability to speak in languages that one had never studied nor learned**.
   3. That's what the gift of tongues was!

C. But someone says, "Wait a minute. I realize that the tongues that were spoken on the Day of Pentecost were known languages, but they are not always known languages."
   1. Have you ever heard about the **"law of first mention"**?
   2. It is a **very important law (principle)** that should always be applied when interpreting the Scriptures.
   3. What is the "law of first mention"?
   4. It is the law that states **whenever a subject or doctrine is mentioned in the Scriptures for the very first time, it almost always establishes an unchangeable pattern, with that subject or doctrine remaining unchanged in the mind of God throughout the remainder of Scripture.**
   5. This **certainly holds true** when you are talking about the Bible gift of tongues.
   6. The nature of tongues was established on the day of Pentecost when they were first spoken, and that nature never changed.
   7. Which means that the tongues that were causing all the problems in the church at Corinth were **the exact same gift** that we see being exercised here in ***Acts 2***.
   8. There is no reason whatsoever to believe that they ever changed!

D. And so, that is the nature of the Bible gift of tongues.
   1. It was the supernatural ability to speak in languages that one had never studied nor learned.
      2. Now, let us learn the...

II. <u>Purpose</u> Of Tongues.

A. Now some would say that the purpose of the gift of tongues was to overcome the language barrier and enable believers to communicate the gospel with people of other cultures and nationalities.

1. This, however, is not altogether accurate.
2. Now it is true, as we saw in what happened on the Day of Pentecost, that tongues did accomplish this (tongues did overcome the natural language barrier and enable the early church to communicate the gospel in many different languages).
3. However, this was not the primary purpose of tongues.

B. The primary purpose of tongues was stated by Paul right here in ***1 Cor. 14:22***.
1. Let's look at the first part of that verse together, Paul said, "Wherefore **tongues are for a sign**, not to them that believe, but **to them that believe not**:"
2. Notice that Paul said very emphatically that tongues were given to be "**a sign**," not to believers, but to **unbelievers**.
3. Jesus told His church the very same thing immediately after He had given them the great commission and just prior to His ascending to His Father in heaven, and this was **before Pentecost** and **before the gift of tongues had actually been given**.
4. Turn with me to ***Mark 16:17***, Jesus said, "And **these signs** shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; **they shall speak with new tongues**;"
5. Notice again the word "**signs**."
6. First of all, He told them, "I want you to "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" ***(Mark 16:15)***, then He said, "I will give you the gift of tongues **for a sign**."

C. Now what exactly does the Bible mean when it says that tongues were given to be **a sign to unbelievers**?
1. It simply means that tongues were intended to **authenticate the saving message of the gospel of Jesus Christ** that His church was commanded to preach to unbelievers.
2. In other words, tongues were given for the purpose of **convincing unbelievers that the message of gospel** (that Christ died for our sins, was buried, and then rose again on the third day) **was, in fact, true**.
3. Do you remember how the unbelieving Jews reacted to Jesus' actions and preaching in the temple, when He overturned the tables of the money changers?
4. According to ***John 2:18***, they said to Jesus, "**What sign shewest thou unto us**, seeing that thou doest these things?"
5. In other words, they said, "**Show us a sign** to convince us that you have the authority to do what you have done, and that we should listen to you."
6. While Jesus did not give them a sign then, **He did promise them a sign** later. (Amen?)
7. Listen to what He said, "Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and **in three days I will raise it up.**" ***(John 2:19)***
8. But the point is, the Jews were skeptics.
9. Paul himself stated earlier in his letter to the Corinthian believers, "For **the Jews require a sign**," ***(1 Cor. 1:22)***
10. And so, God gave the early church "sign" gifts to help them convince skeptical Jews of the truthfulness of the gospel message.

D. This is why we no longer need the gift of tongues, nor any other sign gifts.
1. But someone asks, "Aren't people still skeptical today?"
2. They most certainly are, probably **even more skeptical**.
3. However, **we have something today that the early church did not have**, we have the **completed** written revelation of God (the Bible).
4. Remember what Paul wrote in ***1 Cor. 13:9-10***? He wrote, "For we know in part, and we prophesy in part...But **when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away**."
5. Because we now have **the perfect (complete) written revelation of God** to authenticate the gospel that we preach, we **no longer need the sign gifts**.
6. This is why they ceased hundreds of years ago.

E. But that was the purpose of tongues.
1. They were intended to be "**a sign**" to unbelievers.
2. They were given for the purpose of **convincing unbelievers that the message of gospel was, in fact, true**.
3. Now, finally, I want to learn the...

III. <u>Inferiority</u> Of Tongues.

A. Did you realize that even though every gift that God gave to the early church were important and served a specific purpose, some gifts were "better" than others?
1. How do I know that?
2. Let's go back to ***1 Cor. 12*** for just a moment and notice again the very last four verses in that chapter, beginning with ***Vrs. 28***, Paul said, "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**....Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles?...Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?...But **covet earnestly the best gifts**: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way."
3. Paul said, "...covet earnestly the **best** gifts."
4. In other words, "While God has given many differing gifts, we should place the emphasis on the **best gifts**."

B. Now **why were some gifts better than others**?
1. They are only better in the sense that some gifts are more useful (beneficial) than other gifts within certain settings.
2. For example, within the local church setting, which is the setting that Paul addresses here in ***1 Cor. 14***, the gift of tongues **clearly was not very useful**.
3. Why not?
4. Because everyone within a local church typically speaks the **same language**.
5. (Illus.- For example, all of us here this morning speak and understand English [now some of us don't speak it very well, but we do all understand English]. Now let's say that Bro. So & So had the gift of tongues and wanted to exercise that gift this morning. It would **not be a very useful gift**. Why not? Because, first of all, **most**

of us are believers [tongues were a sign to unbelievers]. Secondly, there are **no language barriers to overcome**. We all speak and understand the same language. If Bro. So & So exercised his gift and taught us a Bible lesson in Russian, it would not benefit us in the least. Amen?)

6. And so, within the setting of a local church gathering, tongues was clearly **an inferior gift**.

C. This is why Paul encourages the Corinthian believers to place the emphasis on the gift of prophecy, rather than tongues.
   1. Why?
   2. Because the gift of prophecy was a better gift.
   3. The gift of prophecy was a gift from which everyone in the church could benefit, because when someone prophesied, **everyone understood**.
   4. Notice again ***Vrs. 1-5*** of our text, "Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but **rather that ye may prophesy**....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....But **he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort**....He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church....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**,"

D. There's something that has puzzled me for a long time.
   1. Many, if not most, of our charismatic friends seem to elevate the gift of tongues above every other gift.
   2. They've elevated it to the place where, if you don't "speak in tongues, " then you are nothing.
   3. However, here's what puzzles me.
   4. Even if I believed that God still gave the gift of tongues today (and I don't), but even if I did, tongues would still be an inferior gift. (Right?)
   5. And if tongues is an inferior gift, why is it receiving so much attention? Why is it elevated over every other spiritual gift?
   6. There is something terribly wrong with that!

E. But the fact is, even when God gave the gift of tongues to believers, it was clearly an inferior gift.

Conclusion:

A. Now, what have we learned about tongues?
   1. The nature of tongues (known languages).
   2. The purpose of tongues (a sign to unbelievers).
   3. The inferiority of tongues (prophecy was a better gift).

B. What can we learn from this that will help us today?
   1. We can learn the importance of distinguishing between good, better and best.

2. Within the Christian life, there is good, better and best.
3. Because we only have one life to live, and because life is so short, we should determine what is best, and build our lives on those things.

"In The Church I Had Rather"

Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 14:6-40

Introduction:

A. Last Sunday morning, in honor of our Lord's resurrection, we took a little break from our discussion of spiritual gifts and focused, instead, on the gospel.
1. This morning, I want us to return to our discussion of spiritual gifts, and in particular, the gift of tongues.
2. Let us begin by reviewing what we learned two weeks ago.
3. The first thing that we learned was the **nature of tongues**. We learned that the Bible gift of tongues was nothing at all like the tongues of today, but rather were known languages. In Bible days, if a believer possessed the gift of tongues, it simply meant that he or she possessed the supernatural ability to speak in languages which they had never studied or learned.
4. The second thing we learned was the **purpose of tongues**. We learned that tongues were given for the benefit of unbelievers, not believers. We learned that tongues were intended to be a sign (outward evidence) to convince unbelievers of the authenticity of the gospel message.
5. The third thing we learned was the **inferiority of tongues**. We learned that even though God did give the gift of tongues, within the context of the local church, they were clearly an inferior gift.

B. Now with these truths still fresh in our minds, there are **three things that I want to call your attention to** this morning. First of all, I want to call you attention to the...

I. Problem.

A. There was definitely a problem in the Corinthian church that was caused, primarily, by the misuse of the gift of tongues.
1. What exactly was the problem?
2. Here's what I believe was happening.
3. I believe that there were certain members within this church who possessed the gift of tongues, and who were so anxious to exercise their gift, that they were actually standing up in the church service and speaking in tongues.
4. Someone asks, "Why did that create a problem?"
5. It created a problem because they were speaking in languages that no one else understood.
6. You have to remember that in all probability, most of the members of this congregation spoke and understood only one language, and that was Greek.

7. If different members of the church were standing up during the course of the church service and speaking in some foreign language, it would naturally create a lot of confusion.

B. (Illus.- Let me illustrate. Suppose that next Sunday morning, Bro. Flanagan got up to lead the singing, and rather than lead the singing in English, suppose he led the singing in Portugese. And suppose that when the choir stood to bring their choir special, rather than singing in English, suppose they sang their special in Hungarian. And suppose that when Bro. Earl got up to read the scripture, rather than reading from the King James Version, suppose he read from a Cambodian Bible. And suppose that Bro. Dennison got up to sing, and rather than singing in English, suppose he sang a song in French. And suppose that when I got up to preach, rather than preaching in English, suppose that I preached my entire message in Telegu. Now this is not going to happen next Sunday morning, but suppose that it did, Don't you think that it would create a lot of confusion? You guys would go home after the service scratching your heads, asking yourself, "What was that all about?")

C. How do we know this was going on in the Corinthian church?
1. We know for, at least, two reasons.
2. First of all, we know because Paul reminded the Corinthians that **"God is not a God of confusion**."
3. Notice again ***Vrs. 33*** of our text, "For **God is not the author of confusion**, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints."
4. The word "confusion" here is translated from a Greek word that literally means, "**instability**, **disorder**, **commotion**, or **confusion**."
5. And so, what Paul is saying here is that "God is not the author of instability, or disorder, or commotion, or confusion."
6. The fact that Paul felt the need to remind the Corinthian believers of this fact tells us that this was a problem with confusion within the church
7. We also know there was confusion within this church because Paul admonishes them to let "all things be done **decently and in order**."
8. Notice again ***Vrs. 40*** of our text. The very last words that Paul wrote on the subject of spiritual gifts were these, "Let all things be done **decently and in order**."
9. This is other side of the coin that Paul revealed in ***Vrs. 33***.
10. If God is not a God of confusion, then what kind of a God is He?
11. According to ***Vrs. 40***, He is a God of decency.
12. The word "decently" in ***Vrs. 40*** means "**decorously"** or **"correctly**."
13. Not only is God a God of **decency**, He is also a God of **order**.
14. The word "**order**" in ***Vrs. 40*** means **"a regular and methodical arrangement.**"
15. And so, rather than being a God of confusion, God is a God of decency and order (a God who desires that things be done **correctly and in a methodical arrangement**).
16. This certainly was **not the case** in the Corinthian church.
17. Because of the improper use of tongues, there was...
    -confusion,
    -incorrectness,
    -utter chaos in the church!
18. That was the problem Paul was dealing with in this church.

D. But not only do we see the problem here, we also see that Paul had a....

II. Preference.

A. I have read and studied ***1 Cor. 14*** many times, and every time I read it, I get the distinct impression that Paul would have preferred that these Corinthian believers **not exercise their gift of tongues** when they came together as a church family for the purpose of fellowship, teaching and worship.

B. Why was this Paul's preference?

1. First of all, because **tongues were not profitable for the church as a whole**.
2. Notice again ***Vrs. 6-12*** of our text, "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?...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?...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....There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification....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....Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, **seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church**."
3. Let me summarize what Paul is saying here, He is saying, "In order for believers to benefit from what is being said in the church, **there must be some degree of under-standing**. However, because tongues are not understood by the vast majority of believers within the church, they are of **absolutely no benefit** to the church as a whole."
4. In fact, as we have seen, by creating confusion and disorder, they **tend to do far more harm that good**.
5. Let's continue reading with ***Vrs. 13*** and read down through ***Vrs. 17***, "Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret....For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but **my understanding is unfruitful**....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....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 not** what thou sayest?...For thou verily givest thanks well, but the other is **not edified**."
6. In other words, "If you are going to pray in the church, pray in a language that **everyone can understand**."
7. "If you are going to sing in the church, sing in a language **everyone can understand**."
8. "If you are going to teach in the church, teach in a language that **everyone can understand**."

9. "Whatever you do in the church, do it in a language that **everyone can understand**."
10. Why? Because **no one can profit (benefit spiritually) from something that they do not understand**!
11. Noticed how Paul summarized his preference in ***Vrs. 18-19***, "I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all:...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."

C. There was another reason why Paul preferred that they not exercise the gift of tongues when they came together as a church.
   1. Not only was it unprofitable for the church as a whole, but **it was also a "turn-off" to any unbelievers** who might venture into the service.
   2. Notice again ***Vrs. 23*** of our text, "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**?"
   3. Even though, as we have already learned, tongues were intended to benefit unbelievers, if they cannot understand what is being preached, they are going to leave the service thinking that the church is full of crazy people.
   4. And so, it is quite clear that if Paul had his way, tongues would **not be exercised** in the church at all.

D. Now this raises a question.
   1. If that was Paul's preference, and it clearly was, why didn't Paul just forbid them to do it.
   2. After all, he was an apostle, he had the authority as an apostle to forbid them to do it, but why didn't he?
   3. I believe the reason he didn't was because these were young believers who, although they were misguided, were genuinely excited about using their gifts for the Lord, and Paul did not want to squelch their zeal.
   4. So instead of forbidding them to speak in tongues, he did something else, which brings us to my final point.

E. Not only have we seen the problem, and not only have seen Paul's preference, last of all this morning, I want us to see Paul's....

III. Prescription.

A. You see, Paul gave them a prescription that, if followed, would solve the problem without squelching their zeal.
   1. What was Paul's prescription?
   2. It was a four part prescription.
   3. The first part of Paul's prescription stated that **only two, at the most three, believers were to speak in tongues in any given service**.
   4. Notice again the first part ***Vrs. 27*** of our text, "If any man speak in an unknown tongue, **let it be by two, or at the most by three**,"
   5. In other words, no more than three were to speak in tongues in any given service.

6. Why the limit?
7. Because, as we have already seen, **tongues were an inferior gift**, at least within the context of a local church gathering.
8. While Paul did not want to forbid tongue speaking altogether, he did want to limit it, so the emphasis could be placed on those more important gifts.

B. The second part of Paul's prescription stated that **tongues could not be spoken simultaneously**.
1. Notice again ***Vrs. 27***, "f any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, **and that by course**;"
2. In other words, one at a time.
3. Why only one at a time?
4. Simply because when two people speak at the same time, it creates confusion.
5. (Illus.- Have you ever had two people try to speak to you at the same time? Don't you just hate it when you are talking on the phone with someone, and some other person in your presence tries to speak to you at the same time? It just creates confusion. Remember what Paul said, he said, "God is **not the author of confusion**.)
6. (Illus.- I remember attending a Baptist church revival meeting in Maryland. I enjoyed most of the service, but they had a practice that just drove me mad. When they prayed, everyone prayed at the same time [out loud], and it was almost like one brother was trying to out pray [pray louder] than another brother. Maybe they were used to it, but **I found it quite bewildering**, to say the least.)

C. The third part of Paul's prescription stated that **no one was to speak in tongues, unless someone could interpret** for the benefit of all.
1. Notice again the latter part of ***Vrs. 28*** and ***Vrs. 28***, "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**....But **if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church**;"
2. (Illus.- I have had several occasions to visit foreign countries where English is not the spoken language and while in those countries, preach God's Word, countries like India, Romania, Russia and Lithuania. How was I able to preach to people who do not understand English? I did so with the help of an interpreter. I would speak a sentence or two, and then my interpreter would interpret for the benefit of our listeners. Of course, it would have been senseless for me to preach without an interpreter.)

D. There was a fourth part to Paul's prescription that stated **women were not to speak in tongues** in the church under any circumstance.
1. Look again at ***Vrs. 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....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**."
2. Now let me say, before I say anything else, that we have to keep these verses in their context, if we are going to understand their meaning.

3. Paul is talking about using spiritual gifts to minister to the church as a whole, which of course, is made up of men and women.
4. Paul is not forbidding women from simply speaking in the church.
5. He is forbidding, however, women from using their spiritual gifts to **minister to the church as a whole**.
6. Why? Because then you would have **women ministering to men**, and this is strictly forbidden in the Scriptures.
7. Turn with me to ***2 Tim. 2:11-14***, "Let the woman learn **in silence with all subjection**....But **I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man**, but to be in silence....For Adam was first formed, then Eve....And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression."

E. And so, we see Paul's prescription for solving the problem in the Corinthian church caused by the improper use of tongues.
1. First of all, only two or three were to speak in tongues in any given service.
2. Secondly, they were to speak one at a time.
3. Thirdly, if no one could interpret, they were not to speak.
4. Finally, women were not to speak under any circum-stance..
5. By the way, even if I believed modern day tongues were the real thing, I still would not attend a charismatic church.
6. Why not?
7. Because in the typical charismatic church today, all four of these Biblical guidelines for the proper exercise of tongues in the church are violated.

Conclusion:

A. What have we noticed this morning?
1. First of all, we noticed the **problem** (confusion resulting from the improper use of tongues).
2. Secondly, we noticed Paul's **preference** (that tongues not be spoken in the church).
3. Finally, we noticed Paul's **prescription** (four guidelines).

B. By the way, we should not limit the application of these principles only to the gift of tongues.
1. Anything that causes confusion and disorder in a local church gathering, whatever it might be, clearly is not of God, and should be dealt with immediately.
2. Why?
3. Because the reason that a local church comes together is so that the individual members can fellowship, and worship, and be edified, and confusion and disorder will hinder all three of these things.

"The Gospel"

Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 15:1-19

Introduction:

A. (Illus.- I've been a Christian now for 37 years. In fact, I just celebrated my 37th spiritual birthday last Friday. [By the way, I did not receive any birthday presents!] But I've been a believer now for 37 years, and I don't remember ever seeing such a concentrated attack on the gospel of Jesus Christ, as that we see going on today. For

example, we have all heard about the new movie that is soon to be released entitled, **"The Da Vinci Code."** The movie is based on a book by that same title that was released about three years ago. The author of the book, Dan Brown, puts forth the theory that Jesus was not really God, but rather a mere man. He also puts forth the theory that Jesus had a sexual relationship with Mary Magdalene and fathered children by her. Of course, if Brown's theory is true, Jesus could not possibly have risen from the dead, and so **Brown also denies the reality of Christ's resurrection**.)

B. (Illus.- The "Da Vinci Code" is not the only attack on the gospel that we have seen in recent days. I'm sure that you have heard about the recent discovery of a document that some are calling **"The Gospel of Judas."** [By the way, this document was discovered in a safe deposit box in a Citibank vault on Long Island, NY.] The document, which is believed to have been written somewhere between 200 and 300 AD, and was written in the Coptic language, advocates the theory that **Judas really didn't betray Jesus**. Instead, we are told, Judas merely did what Jesus told Him to do. In other words, Judas was merely being an obedient disciple.)

C. (Illus.- But that's not all. Just the other day I opened up AOL to read my email, and the news headline on the Welcome Page was as follows: "Missing Link Discovered: Creationism Undercut." Beside the headline, was a picture of a fish. Now you would think they had found a fish with legs. However, that was not the case. What they found was a fossilized fish with fins that they claimed showed **signs of becoming legs**. Sounds to me like they are still looking for the missing link.)

D. But the point is, I have never seen such an attack on the gospel of Jesus Christ as that which is going on today.
1. Now please don't misunderstand what I am saying.
2. I'm not worried about the Gospel itself (not at all).
3. Paul wrote in ***Rom. 1:16***, "For I am not ashamed of **the gospel of Christ:** for **it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth**; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."
4. The Gospel has withstood these attacks from the very beginning, and, I'm convinced, will continue to do so.
5. And so, I'm not worried about the Gospel itself.
6. What I am worried about, however, is that these attacks might cast enough doubt in the minds of some people, that they will reject the Gospel.

E. Now having said that, there are three things that I want us to learn, this morning, about the Gospel. Let us learn, first of all, the...

I. <u>Essence</u> Of The Gospel.

A. When we talk about **the Gospel** of Jesus Christ, **what exactly are we talking about**?
1. We find the answer to this question in ***Vrs. 1-4*** of our text, let's read them again, "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you **the gospel which I preached unto you**,

which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand;...By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain....For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that **Christ died for our sins** according to the scriptures;...And that **he was buried**, and that **he rose again the third day** according to the scriptures:"

2. Now the word **"gospel"** comes from a Greek word that literally means **"a good message"** or **"good news,"** but **what is this good news**?
3. It is the good news that **Christ died** for our sins, that **He was buried**, and that **He rose again** the third day!
4. This is good news, indeed!!! (Amen?)

B. From this passage, we learn that the Gospel message has **three parts** (three part message).

1. The first part tells us that "Christ **died** for our sins."
2. The Bible also says in ***Rom. 5:8***, "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ **died** for us."
3. Now what does the Bible mean when it says that "Christ died **for our sins**" or that "Christ died **for us**"?
4. It simply means that Christ suffered our **penalty for sin**.
5. The Bible says in ***Rom. 3:23***, "For **the wages of sin** is death."
6. When Jesus died on the cross, He paid those wages on our behalf.
7. This is what the prophet Isaiah had in mind when He wrote these words, "Surely he hath **borne our griefs**, and **carried our sorrows**: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted....But he was **wounded for our transgressions**, he was **bruised for our iniquities**: **the chastisement of our peace was upon him**; and with his stripes we are healed....All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and **the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all**." ***(Isa. 53:4-6)***
8. And so, "Christ **died** for our sins."

C. The second part of the Gospel message tells us that Christ "was **buried**."

1. According to ***Mat. 27:57-60***, after Jesus had died on the cross, "a rich man of Arimathaea, named **Joseph**" went to Pilate and **asked for His body**.
2. After Pilate had given him His body, Joseph wrapped it in "a **clean linen cloth**" and placed it "in **his own new tomb**."
3. And so, Christ "was **buried**."

D. The third part of the Gospel message tells us that Christ "**rose again** the third day."

1. In other words, even though He died, and even though He was buried, **He didn't stay dead**. (Amen?)
2. After lying in the tomb for three days and three nights, **Christ arose**!
3. You know, we **shouldn't be surprised** that Jesus rose from the dead.
4. Why not? Because **He said He was going to do it!**
5. When Jesus cleansed the temple the first time, the Jews asked Him for a sign.

6. In so many words, Jesus said, "I won't give you a sign now, but **I will give you a sign later**." He said, "Destroy this temple, and **in three days I will raise it up.**" ***(John 2:19)***
7. Not only did Jesus tell the unsaved Jews that He would rise again, but on more than one occasion, He also told His disciples to expect His resurrection.

E. But that's the meaning of the Gospel.
1. It is a three part message.
2. It is **the good news** that Christ...
-"**died for our sins**,"
-"**was buried**,"
-"**rose again the third day**."
3. In a world filled with so much bad news, this is wonderful news! (Amen?)
4. Secondly, this morning, let us learn the...

II. <u>Evidence</u> Of The Gospel.

A. Let me ask you a question.
1. When a prosecutor is taking a case to trial, what is **the best kind of evidence** that he can have to convince the jury that the defendant is guilty?
2. The best kind of evidence is **an eyewitness**! (Amen?)
3. Well, we know that there were **many eyewitnesses** to Christ's crucifixion.
4. First of all, **the Jews** were eyewitnesses to His death.
5. You might remember that the Jews objected to the title that Pilate wrote and put on the cross identifying Jesus as **"The King of the Jews."** ***(Mark 15:26)***
6. Not only were the Jews eyewitnesses to His death, but **the Romans** were eyewitnesses as well.
7. You might remember that it was the Romans who **cast lots for Jesus' coat**. ***(Mark 15:24)***
8. Not only were the Jews eyewitnesses and not only were the Romans eyewitness, but **His own disciples** were eyewitnesses to His death (at least **John** was).
9. You might remember that while John was standing at the foot of cross with Mary, the mother of Jesus, Jesus looked down upon His mother and said, "Woman, **behold thy son**!" ***(John 19:26)***
10. And so, there were many eyewitnesses to Christ's death on the cross.

B. But did you realize that there were also many eyewitnesses to His resurrection?
1. Let's read again ***Vrs. 5-8***, "And that he was seen of **Cephas**, then of **the twelve**:...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....After that, he was seen of **James**; then of **all the apostles**....And last of all he was seen of **me** also, as of one born out of due time."
2. How do unbelievers explain the empty tomb?
3. Most hold to the theory that the disciples stole the body of Jesus and buried it in a secret place.

4. However, this would have been impossible because there was a detachment (garrison) of Roman soldiers who were guarding the tomb.
5. Their very lives depended on them doing their job.
6. The fact is,...
   -nobody stole the body of Jesus,
   -nobody buried His body in a secret place,
   -Jesus **rose from the dead**!
7. And there were **plenty of eyewitnesses** who saw Jesus after He arose from the dead.

C. Probably the one **most surprised** to see Jesus after His resurrection was **Thomas**.
1. You might remember that when Jesus appeared to His disciples the first time after His resurrection, **Thomas was not there**.
2. When they told him about it later, He said, "I don't believe you." He went on to say, "The only way I will believe is **if I can see Him with my own eyes and touch Him with my own hands**." ***(John 20:25)***
3. Well, the next Sunday Jesus appeared again to His disciples, and this time **Thomas was present**.
4. When He saw Jesus with his own eyes, all he could do was fall before Him and say, "**My Lord and my God**." ***(John 20:28)***

D. While Thomas was probably the one most surprised to see Jesus after His resurrection, **James** was probably the one who's **life was most changed** after seeing the risen Christ.
1. Of course, I'm talking about **James, the half brother of Jesus**.
2. Turn with me, very quickly, to ***John 7:1-5***, "After these things Jesus walked in Galilee: for he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him....Now the Jews' feast of tabernacles was at hand....His brethren therefore said unto him, Depart hence, and go into Judaea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest....For there is no man that doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, shew thyself to the world....For **neither did his brethren believe in him**."
3. Some people assume that all of Jesus' family believed that He was the Messiah.
4. It's true that His mother and father believed, however, from this verse we learn that there was a time when **His brothers did not believe, including James**.
5. Now this raises a question.
6. When did James become a believer?
7. We know that he did because he later became a leader in the church at Jerusalem.
8. He was also the human author of part of our New Testament, the epistle of James.
9. And so we know that he later became a believer, but the question is, "When?"
10. He probably became a believer when he saw the risen Christ.
11. Notice again ***Vrs. 7*** of our text, "After that, **he was seen of James**;"
12. Apparently Jesus had a private meeting with His brother soon after His resurrection.
13. After this meeting, James was not the same, but **his life was changed forever**.

E. The point is, **there were many eyewitnesses** who saw Jesus with their own eyes after He had arisen from the dead.

1. That's the evidence of the gospel.
2. Finally, this morning, let us learn the...

III. <u>Enormity</u> Of The Gospel.

A. Let me ask you a question.
1. How important is it that the Gospel message is true?
2. How important is it that Christ really died for our sins?
3. How important is it that He was really buried?
4. How important is it that He really rose again?
5. Just how important is it that the Gospel message is true?
6. The answer is, **it is enormously important**, especially when you are talking about **the resurrection**.

B. Notice again ***Vrs. 12-19*** of our text, "Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?...But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen:...And if Christ be not risen, then is **our preaching vain**, **and your faith is also vain**....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....For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised:...And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; **ye are yet in your sins**....Then **they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished**....If in this life only we have hope in Christ, **we are of all men most miserable**."

C. I once heard a famous preacher, Dr. Adrian Rogers, put it like this: He said that if Christ did not rise from the dead, then **six tragic things are true**.
1. Our **preaching** is **profitless**.
2. Our **faith** is **foolish**.
3. The **disciples** were **deceivers**.
4. **Sin** is **sovereign**.
5. **Death** has **dominion**.
6. Our **future** is **futile**.
7. That's how important the Gospel message is!
8. It is enormously important, because **our very salvation** depends on it.
9. This is why I love the first part of ***Vrs. 20*** of our text, which says, "But **now is Christ risen** from the dead,"
10. And because He is risen, our **preaching** is **profitable**, our **faith** is **feasible**, the **disciples** were **dependable**, **sin** is **subdued**, **death** is **defeated**, and our **future** is **fabulous**! (Amen?)

Conclusion:

A. What have we learned about the Gospel?
1. The **essence** of the Gospel. (death, burial, & resurrection of Christ).
2. The **evidence** of the Gospel. (above five hundred brethren at once).
3. The **enormity** of the Gospel (our salvation depends on it being true).

B. You know, I said earlier that because of the Gospel, especially the resurrection, those who have placed their faith in Christ has a fabulous future to look forward to.
   1. For example, we have **heaven** to look forward to.
   2. We have **the resurrection** to look forward to, when God is going to give us a new body.
   3. We have **the millennial reign of Christ** to look forward to, when Christ will reign upon this earth for a thousand years.
   4. We have **a new earth** to look forward to, upon which we will enjoy the blessings of God for all eternity.
   5. We have **the new Jerusalem** to look forward to, which God says will come down out of heaven like a bride adorned for her husband.
   6. We have all of this to look forward to.
   7. Why? Because **we have put our faith in the Christ** Who died for our sins, Who was buried, and Who rose again the third day.

C. Can I ask you a question?
   1. When you look at your future, **what do you see**?
   2. What do you have to look forward to, not just in this life, but also in the life to come.
   3. If you don't know Christ, your future is futile.
   4. But if you will trust Christ today, **your future can become fabulous**!

"By The Grace Of God"

Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 15:9-10

Introduction:

A. Three weeks ago our choir presented a beautiful Easter Cantata entitled, **"Amazing Grace."**
   1. And then two weeks ago, Bro. Rodney Myers, missionary to Tanzania, East Africa, brought an excellent message on **the grace of God** that was based on ***Tit. 2:11-12***.
   2. Now one might think that after **the Easter Cantata** and after **Bro. Rodney's message**, that we would have heard enough about God's grace to do us for a while.
   3. Not so!
   4. You see, we can **never hear enough** about God's grace!
   5. I don't know about you, but I could listen to a sermon on God's amazing grace **every day of my life**, and **never tire** of hearing about it. (Amen?)
   6. I hope you feel the same way. Why?
   7. Because that is precisely the subject that I have chosen for today's message.

8. Notice again Paul's words recorded in ***Vrs. 10*** of our text, "But by **the grace of God** I am what I am:"

B. I want to begin this morning by **defining exactly what we are talking about** when we talk about God's grace.
1. The word "grace" comes from a Greek word that literally means **"goodness"** or **"favour."**
2. The grace of God is "**the goodness or the favour that God bestows upon us.**"
3. But that's not all there is to the definition.
4. The grace of God is "the goodness or the favour that God bestows upon us, **even though we are totally undeserving**."
5. (Illus.- Let me illustrate. When a person works an eight-hour day and receives a fair day's pay for his time, that is **a wage**. When a person competes with an opponent and receives a trophy for his performance, that is **a prize**. When a person receives appropriate recognition for his long service or high achievements, that is **an award**. But when a person is **not capable** of earning a wage, can win no prize, and deserves no award—yet receives such a gift anyway—that is a good picture of God's grace. This is what we mean when we talk about the grace of God.)

C. Now with this definition of grace fresh in our minds, I want us to see, this morning, that there are at least **three kinds of grace**. First of all, there is...

I. <u>Saving</u> Grace.

A. The apostle Paul himself is perhaps the best Biblical example of the saving grace of God.
1. No one is less deserving of salvation than was Paul.
2. Why do I say that?
3. I say that because before Paul came to Christ, he was a persecutor of Christians.
4. Notice again Paul's words recorded in ***Vrs. 9*** of our text, "For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because **I persecuted the church of God**."
5. He said, "...I **persecuted** the church of God."

B. Turn with me, for just a moment, to ***Acts 7:54-58.*** Steven had just finished preaching the gospel to a group of hard-hearted Jews. Notice what happened, "When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth....But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God,...And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God....Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord,...And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and **the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul**."
1. Did you notice the last part of ***Vrs. 58***?
2. It says that "...the witnesses laid down their clothes at **a young man's feet, whose name was Saul**."

3. This young man was none other than the apostle Paul, before he came to Christ.

C. Not only did Saul have a part in Steven's death, but let's read on in ***Acts 8:1-3***, "And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time **there was a great persecution against the church** which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles....And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him....**As for Saul, he made havock of the church**, entering into every house, and **haling men and women committed them to prison**."

D. And so, before Paul came to Christ, he was a persecutor of Christians.
1. This is why I say he is the best Biblical example of the saving grace of God.
2. **No one is less deserving** of salvation that was Paul.
3. In fact, Paul himself made the following admission in ***1 Tim. 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**."

E. Do you realize what this means?
1. It means that **anyone can be saved**.
2. It means that **anyone can be forgiven**.
3. It means that **anyone can receive eternal life**.
4. No matter how...
   -sinful,
   -depraved,
   -unworthy or undeserving,
   anyone can be saved! (Amen?)
5. Do you know **why**?
6. Because salvation is **by God's grace**.
7. The Bible says in ***Eph. 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."
8. The Bible also says in ***2 Tim. 1:9***, "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but **according to his own purpose and grace**, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."
9. This is what I call **God's saving grace**.

F. In addition to saving grace, there is also...

II. <u>Securing</u> Grace.

A. I never cease to be amazed by those who believe that even though we are saved by grace, they believe **it is up to us to keep ourselves saved** afterwards.
1. In other words, they believe that while we don't have to be worthy to receive salvation, we do have to be worthy (live up to a certain standard) **if we are to keep (hold on to) our salvation.**
2. This, of course, is ridiculous!
3. Do you know **why** it is ridiculous?

4. It is ridiculous because the **same grace** that saves a lost sinner, also **keeps that sinner saved**. (Amen?)

B. Turn with me, for just a moment, to ***Rom. 5:1-2***, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:...**By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand**, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."
   1. Notice again the first part of ***Vrs. 2***, "By whom also we have access by faith into **this grace wherein we stand**."
   2. That word "stand" is translated from a Greek word that literally means "**to abide**," or "**to continue**."
   3. The idea is, the grace of God is not just something that we access when we are saved, and then depart from on a journey all our own.
   4. But rather it is something that we "**abide in**" or that we "**continue in**" long after we are saved.
   5. In other words, not only are we saved by grace, but we are also **made secure by God's grace**.
   6. Someone asks, "For **how long** are we made secure?"
   7. The answer is, "We are made secure **forever**!!!

C. I love the words that Jesus spoke in ***John 10:27-28***, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:...And I give unto them **eternal life**; and **they shall never perish**." Jesus said, concerning His sheep, "...I give unto them eternal life; and they shall **never** perish." That's what I call security!!! (Amen?)

D. Turn with me also to ***Phil. 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**:"
   1. When God saved us, He began "a good work" in us.
   2. By the way, the words "a good work" can also be translated "a work of grace."
   3. When God saved us, He began a work of grace in us.
   4. Someone asks, "**How long** will this work continue?"
   5. This work will continue "**until the day of Jesus Christ**."
   6. In other words, until **Jesus comes again** to be "**glorified in His saints**." ***(2 Thes. 1:10)***
   7. That's what I call security!!! (Amen?)

E. There is one more passage that I want us to look at this morning, with regards to **God's securing grace**.
   1. Turn with me to ***1 Pet. 1:3-5***, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath **begotten us again** unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,...To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,...**Who are kept by the power of God** through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."
   2. Notice that Peter tells us in ***Vrs. 4*** that, as believers in Christ, we have "**an inheritance** incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, **reserved in heaven**" for us!
   3. How can we be sure that we will one day enjoy this inheritance?

4. We can be sure, because, as Peter reminds us in ***Vrs. 5***, we "are **kept by the power of God** through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."
5. That's what I call security!!! (Amen?)
6. This is what I call **God's securing grace**.

F. There is at least one more kind of grace. In addition to saving grace and securing grace, there is also...

III. <u>Serving</u> Grace.

A. Let me ask you a question, "How many of you would agree that Paul was a great servant of God?" (Ask for a show of hands.)
1. I would say it is almost unanimous.
2. Indeed, Paul was a great servant of God.
3. In addition to winning many souls to Christ, he also established many New Testament churches, and then afterwards, through his letters and his return visits, he was able to nurture those churches.
4. But let me ask you another question, **"How do you account for Paul's greatness** as a servant of God?"
5. Well, before you answer, let's notice how Paul accounted for his greatness as a servant of God.
6. Look again the latter part of ***Vrs. 10*** of our text, "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.**"
7. How did Paul account for his greatness as a servant of God?
8. He accounted for greatness by declaring that it wasn't his greatness at all, but rather **the greatness of God's grace working in and through him**!

B. Turn with me to ***Eph. 3:7***, "Whereof I was made a minister, **according to the gift of the grace of God** given unto me by the effectual **working of his power**."
1. As we have already established, Paul was a very successful minister, but how do we account for his success?
2. According to this verse, Paul was successful because of "**the gift of the grace of God**" that was given unto him, and also because of "**the effectual working of**" God's "**power**."
3. Paul put it like this in ***Phil. 2:13***, "For **it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do** of his good pleasure."

C. Let me ask you a question,"Do you possess gifts that you are currently using in God's service?"
1. If so, let me caution you, this morning, to be very careful that you not get **"the big head."**
2. In other words, be very careful that you do not become **prideful** simply because you possess these gifts.
3. But someone asks, "Why not? **Why is it wrong to take pride in our gifts**?"

4. It's wrong because **God gave you those gifts**.
5. Listen to Paul wrote in ***1 Cor. 4:7***, "For who maketh thee to differ from another? and **what hast thou that thou didst not receive**? now if thou didst receive it, **why dost thou glory**, as if thou hadst not received it?"
6. The truth is, when it comes to gifts, whether it be natural gifts or spiritual gifts, we have **no gifts that did not originate with God**. (Amen?)
7. As James put it in ***Jam. 1:17***, "**Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights**, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

D. And so, what am I saying?
1. I'm simply saying that it is only because of the grace of God, because of His gifts of grace, that we are able to serve Him with our lives.
2. This is what I call serving grace.

Conclusion:

A. What did Paul say in ***Vrs. 10*** of our text?
1. He said, "by **the grace of God** I am what I am:"
2. I'm sure that you would all agree with me when I say that **we should all bow our heads and hearts this morning and thank God for His amazing grace**. (Amen?)
3. We should thank Him for **His saving grace** (we wouldn't be saved were it not for God's grace).
4. We should thank Him for **His securing grace** (we wouldn't stay saved were it not for God's grace).
5. We should thank Him for **His serving grace** (we wouldn't be able to serve God were it not for His grace).

B. Maybe I'm speaking to someone this morning who has not yet received Christ as Savior.
1. You know, I've talked to a lot of people who told me that the reason they did not come to Christ was because **they didn't feel worthy**.
2. Hey, I've got news for you, none of here this morning is worthy, but that's okay, because **God is a God of grace**.

C. (Illus.- Longing to leave her poor Brazilian neighborhood, Christina wanted to see the world. Discontent with a home having only a pallet on the floor, a washbasin, and a wood-burning stove, she dreamed of a better life in the city. One morning she slipped away, breaking her mother's heart. Knowing what life on the streets would be like for her young, attractive daughter, Maria hurriedly packed to go find her. On her way to the bus stop she entered a drugstore to get one last thing. Pictures. She sat in the photograph booth, closed the curtain, and spent all she could on pictures of herself. With her purse full of small black-and-white photos, she boarded the next bus to the big city. Maria knew Christina had no way of earning money. She also knew that her daughter was too stubborn to give up. When pride meets hunger, a

human will do things that were before unthinkable. Knowing this, Maria began her search. Bars, hotels, nightclubs, any place with the reputation for street walkers or prostitutes. She went to them all. And at each place she left her picture--taped on a bathroom mirror, tacked to a hotel bulletin board, fastened to a corner phone booth. And on the back of each photo she wrote a note. It wasn't too long before both the money and the pictures ran out, and Maria had to go home. The weary mother wept as the bus began its long journey back to her small village. It was a few weeks later that young Christina descended the hotel stairs. Her young face was tired. Her brown eyes no longer danced with youth but spoke of pain and fear. Her laughter was broken. Her dream had become a nightmare. A thousand times over she had longed to trade these countless beds for her secure pallet. Yet the little village was, in too many ways, too far away. As she reached the bottom of the stairs, her eyes noticed a familiar face. She looked again, and there on the lobby mirror was a small picture of her mother. Christina's eyes burned and her throat tightened as she walked across the room and removed the small photo. Written on the back was this compelling invitation. **"Whatever you have done, whatever you have become, it doesn't matter. I love you. Please come home." And she did.**)

1. Why have I shared this story with you, this morning?
2. Because I am convinced that God is saying to each of you who are not saved, **“Whatever you have done, whatever you have become, it doesn’t matter. I love you. Please come home to Me!”**

"Christ The Firstfruits"

Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 15:20-28

Introduction:

A. (Illus.- Although Benjamin Franklin did not profess to be a born-again Christian, the words that he penned for his own epitaph are quite interesting, to say the least, and seem to indicate that he was looking forward to a future resurrection. Listen to the words that are inscribed on his grave not far from Independence Hall in Philadelphia: **"The body of Benjamin Franklin, printer, like the cover of an old book, its contents worn out, and stripped of its lettering and gilding, lies here, food for worms. Yet the work itself shall not be lost, for it will, as he believed, appear once more, in a new and more beautiful edition, corrected and amended, by its Author."**)

B. This morning, as we continue our study of ***1 Cor. 15***, I want us to once again **focus our attention on the resurrection**.
   1. Now that shouldn't surprise you, seeing as how this chapter has been called, by many, **the resurrection chapter** in the Bible.
   2. Just like ***1 Cor. 13*** is called, the **love chapter**, and just like ***Heb. 11*** is called, the **faith chapter**, ***1 Cor. 15*** has been called, by many, the **resurrection chapter**.
   3. Why? Because **the whole chapter** is devoted to the subject of the resurrection.
   4. By the way, not only did Benjamin Franklin look forward to a future resurrection, but **I too**, partly because of the teaching found in ***1 Cor. 15***, am looking forward to a future resurrection. (Amen?)

C. As we focus our attention on the resurrection, I want to call you attention to, at least, **three things**. First of all, I want to call your attention to...

I. The <u>Confidence</u> Of The Resurrection.

A. You know, there are a lot of things relating to the future about which we **cannot be confident**. (Amen?)

1. (Illus.- For example, we cannot be confident about what the stock market is going to do. This is why [one of the reasons] I do not play the stock market. The stock market goes up, then it comes down. It goes up again, then it comes down again. You just cannot be certain about what the stock market is going to do.)
2. (Illus.- Neither can we be confident about what the price of gasoline is going to do. One day it goes up, then the following day it comes down. When gasoline hit $ 3.00 a gallon in our area, people were predicting that within a few weeks we would see $ 4.00 a gallon. However, once again, the prices are dropping.)
3. And so, there are a lot of things relating to the future about which we **cannot be confident**.
4. We can't even be certain that we will be alive this time tomorrow! (Amen?)
5. This is why God's Word admonishes us **not to presume upon the future**.
6. Listen to what the Bible says in ***Pro. 27:1***, "**Boast not** thyself of to morrow; for **thou knowest not what a day may bring forth**."

B. However, even though there are a lot of things relating to the future about which we cannot be confident, **there are also some things about which we can be confident!**
1. For example, we can be confident that one day our bodies will be raised from the dead.
2. Why can we be confident about this?
3. We can be confident, first of all, because **the Bible tells us that we will be raised** from the dead. (Amen?)
4. Look down, if you will, to ***1 Cor. 15:51-52***, "Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but **we shall all be changed**,...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."
5. Listen also to ***1 Thes. 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:"
6. And so, first of all, we can be confident because the Bible tells us that we will be raised from the dead.

C. But there is another reason that we can be confident, and that is **because Christ rose from the dead**.
1. You see, when Jesus rose from the dead, by doing so **He guaranteed our future resurrection**. (Amen?)
2. Notice again ***Vrs. 21-22*** of our text, "For since by man came death, **by man came also the resurrection of the dead**....For as in Adam all die, **even so in Christ shall all be made alive**."
3. Do you understand what Paul is saying here?
4. He is saying that because Adam died (spiritually), we died spiritually as well, and **because Christ arose, we also will rise one day**!
5. (Illus.- E.M. Bounds, in his book entitled, "The Glory of the Resurrection," wrote these words, "Hope throws its rich luster over the night of the tomb and thrills with deathless joy the heart where the resurrection of Jesus has been realized." He

went on to write, “We are to come out of the grave because Jesus came out of His grave. Our tombs will be empty...because Joseph’s new tomb was empty.”)

6. This is the confidence of the resurrection

D. Secondly, this morning, I want to call your attention to...

II. The <u>Coordination</u> Of The Resurrection.

A. As we saw a few weeks ago, our God is not a God of **confusion**, but rather a God of **order.**
   1. Everything that God has ever done, He has done in an orderly manner.
   2. Take **the creation**, for example.
   3. As you read through the first chapter of Genesis, one of the things that really stands out is **how orderly (coordinated)** the creation was.
   4. On the **first** day God created the **light**.
   5. On the **second** day God created the **atmosphere**.
   6. On the **third** day God created the **dry land** and the **seas**.
   7. On the **fourth** day God created the **sun, moon & stars**.
   8. On the **fifth** day God created the **animal kingdom**.
   9. And finally, on the **sixth** day God created **man**.
   10. There was a **definite order** to the creation.
   11. Why? Because **God is a God of order**!

B. Did you realize that there will be a definite order to the resurrection?
   1. Notice again the latter part of ***Vrs. 22*** and the first part of ***Vrs. 23***, “...even so in Christ shall all be made alive....But **every man in his own order**:”
   2. Just like the creation was coordinated, even so will the resurrection be coordinated.
   3. In other words, someone will be raised first, and then someone will be raised second, and so on.

C. Now this raises the question, “**Who will be raised first**?”
   1. Actually, the One who is to be raised first has **already been raised**, and that was **Jesus Himself**.
   2. Notice again ***Vrs. 23***, “But every man in his own order: **Christ the firstfruits**;”
   3. The term “firstfruits” referred to the first part of the harvest that, according to Jewish law, was to be given to the Lord.
   4. The Bible says in ***Pro. 3:9***, “Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with **the firstfruits of all thine increase**:”
   5. The firstfruits were the first part of the harvest.
   6. And so, Jesus was the first man to be raised from the dead.
   7. Now I know what some of you are thinking.
   8. You are thinking, “That can’t be true, because according to the Bible, there were several others, like Lazarus, who were raised from the dead before Jesus was.
   9. That’s true, however, there was **something very different** about Christ’s resurrection, something that **set it apart** from all others.
   10. When Christ, arose, He arose, **never to die again**.

11. Lazarus was raised, yes, but not...
-to never die again,
-in a glorified body,
-in the same sense that Jesus was raised.

12. And so, Christ was the first! (Amen?)

D. And so, if Christ was "the firstfruits" (the first to be raised from the dead), who will be next?

1. I'm glad you asked.
2. Notice again ***Vrs. 23*** of our text, "But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; **afterward they that are Christ's at his coming**."
3. Who will be raised next?
4. We will!!! Those of us who....
-belong to Christ,
-know Christ as Savior,
-have been saved by God's grace,
we are the next to be raised.

E. Not only does this verse tell us that we are next to be raised, but it also tells us **when** this resurrection will take place.

1. It will take place "...**at his coming**."
2. I quoted a verse earlier, but now I want you to turn there with me so that we can read it together.
3. It is ***1 Thes. 4:13-16***, "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope....For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him....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....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**:"
4. But someone says, "I thought you said that Christ was the firstfruits (the first to be raised from the dead), but here it says that **the dead in Christ (believers) shall rise first**."
5. When it says that "the **dead in Christ** shall rise first," it does not mean that they will rise before Jesus, but rather that they will rise before "the **living in Christ**."
6. You see, when the rapture takes place, both the dead in Christ (**those who have died**) and the living in Christ (**those who are still living**) will be "caught up together....to meet the Lord in the air." ***(1 Thes. 4:17)***
7. (Illus.- Someone asked me once, "Do you know why the dead in Christ will rise first?" I said, "No." They then said, "The dead in Christ will rise first because they will have 6 feet further to travel.")

F. But the point I'm making here is that resurrection will be coordinated.

1. There is another group who will be raised much later, **after the 1,000 year reign of Christ upon this earth has come to an end**, but this will not be a resurrection to eternal life, but rather **a resurrection to eternal death**.
2. The end result of this resurrection is summarized in ***Rev. 20:15***, which says, "And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was **cast into the lake of fire**."

G. Thus far we have noticed the **confidence** of the resurrection and the **coordination** of the resurrection. Finally, this morning, I want to call your attention to...

III. The <u>Consummation</u> Of The Resurrection.

A. There's something that we must realize, and that is immediately after Christ has redeemed our sinful bodies by raising us from the dead, **His work of redemption will still not be complete**.
1. For example, **He will still have the devil to deal with**.
2. Turn with me to ***Rev. 20:1-3*** (bear in mind that this will take place after the resurrection of the saved), "And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand....And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years,...And 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."
3. Now drop down to ***Rev. 20:7-10***, "And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison,...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....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....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."
4. Again, bear in mind that all of this will take place **AFTER the resurrection of the saved**.
5. Not only will Jesus still have the devil to deal with, but He will also still have death to deal with.
6. Turn with me to ***Rev. 21:4*** (again bearing in mind that this is at least 1,000 years after the resurrection of the saved), "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; **and there shall be no more death**."
7. And so, immediately after the resurrection of the saved, Jesus' work of redemption will not be complete (consummated).
8. In other words, there will **still be work to do!**

B. But **then "cometh the end" (consummation).**
1. Let's go back to our text, ***Vrs. 24-26***, **"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....For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet....**The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death**."

2. When will Christ's work of redemption be complete?
3. When **"the last enemy"** is destroyed, which is **"death."**
4. Can you imagine a world without death?
5. I can't, but I know that because of Christ's resurrection, **one day I will live in such a world**. (Amen?)

Conclusion:

A. What have we learned about the resurrection?

1. First of all, we learned that we can be **confident** that there is going to be a **resurrection** (that's the **confidence of the resurrection**).
2. Secondly, we learned that the resurrection will be a **coordinated** event (that's the **coordination of the resurrection**).
3. Finally, we learned that after our resurrection, will come the **consummation** (that's the **consummation of the resurrection**).

B. But perhaps the most important thing we've learned this morning is that because Jesus died and rose again from the dead, **there is hope** for those who put their trust in Him.

C. (Illus.- When he was Vice President, President Bush's father represented the U.S. at the funeral of former Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev. Bush was deeply moved by a silent protest carried out by Brezhnev's widow. She stood motionless by the coffin until seconds before it was closed. Then, just as the soldiers touched the lid, Brezhnev's wife performed an act of great courage and hope, a gesture that must surely rank as one of the most profound acts of civil disobedience ever committed: She reached down and made the sign of the cross on her husband's chest. There in the citadel of secular, atheistic power, the wife of the man who had run it all hoped that her husband was wrong. She hoped that there was another life, and that that life was best represented by Jesus who died on the cross, and that the same Jesus might yet have mercy on her husband.)

1. If the wife of a Soviet leader realized that there is hope in Christ, shouldn't you also?
2. Have you trusted in Jesus as your Savior?

"Awake To Righteousness"

Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 15:29-34

Introduction:

A. I will never forget the first time that I seriously studied ***1 Cor. 15***.
   1. I came to ***Vrs. 34,*** and the first thought that came to my mind was that "this verse is **out of place**, this verse **doesn't belong here**.
   2. Let's look again at the first part of ***Vrs. 34***, Paul said, "Awake **to righteousness**, and **sin not**;"
   3. Now **why** did I think that this verse was out of place and didn't belong here?
   4. I thought that simply because, as we have already seen, the theme of ***1 Cor. 15*** is **"the resurrection,"** both the resurrection of Christ, as well as our future resurrection, and I didn't understand why Paul would put this admonition to **live righteously** and **"sin not"** right in the middle of a discussion of the resurrection.
   5. Then it dawned on me.
   6. This verse **does belong here**!
   7. Do you know why it belongs here?
   8. It belongs here because **what we believe about the resurrection will influence the way we live our lives**!)

B. (Illus.- Let me illustrate. Suppose you have two people, we will call them Tom and Frank, who have very differing views about the resurrection. Suppose that Tom is a believer and believes in the resurrection. He believes that one day he will be resurrected and that soon afterwards he will stand at the judgment seat of Christ. Frank, on the other hand, is not a believer, and does not believe in a future resurrection. He believes that once this life is over, that's it, and there is nothing more to follow, no resurrection, no judgment! Now let me ask you a question. Are these two guys likely to live their lives differently? The answer, of course, is yes. Why? Because of their differing views. Tom is much more likely to live a righteous life because he believes that one day he will have to answer to Christ. Frank, on the other hand, is more likely to live an ungodly life, because in his mind there is going to be no judgment, no reckoning. And so, what a person believes about the resurrection will influence how they live their lives.)

C. By the way, this is true of other Bible doctrines as well.
   1. (Illus.- Several years ago I was talking to a man who was a professing Christian, and I was trying to explain to him why I chose not to be a part of ecumenical

organizations or participate in ecumenical events. When I told him that I could not do so because of serious doctrinal differences, he said something this effect, **"Some Christians place too much importance on Bible doctrine."** He then went on to say, **"It really doesn't matter what a person believes about the Bible as long as he loves God and lives right."**)

2. Now that may sound reasonable to some, but there are two problems with what that man said.
3. First of all, you can't love God without loving the truth.
4. Secondly, you can't live right without believing the truth.
5. You see, how we live our lives will be greatly influenced by what we believe about God's Word.
6. And so, Bible doctrine is important!!! (Amen?)

D. This morning, I want to speak to you on the subject, "How To Live Right."

1. Not only does Paul does Paul admonish us to **"Awake to righteousness, and sin not,"** but he also gives us at least **three very important keys** to doing so.
2. However, before we begin looking at these keys, I want to say just a word or two about ***Vrs. 29***, where Paul said, "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**?"
3. I'm sure that most of you know that the Mormon church practices being baptized for the dead, and they base their practice on this one verse.
4. The first thing that I want say is that **nowhere in Scripture** are we commanded to be baptized for the dead.
5. The second thing I want to point out is that **Paul does not condone the practice** here.
6. He merely states that he was aware of some people (we don't know who these people were) who practiced being baptized for the dead, and he uses this to support his argument for the resurrection.
7. What he is saying is this, "If there is no resurrection, then why do (how do you explain the fact that) some people practice being baptized for the dead?"
8. And so, don't come to me after the service and say, "Pastor, I would like to be baptized on behalf of my great great grandmother," because I'm not going to do it.

E. Now what are the **three keys** to living right? The **first key** is...

I. <u>Dying</u> To Self On A Daily Basis.

A. Notice again ***Vrs. 30-31*** (especially ***Vrs. 31***), "And why stand we in jeopardy every hour?...I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, **I die daily**."

1. Did you notice the last three words in ***Vrs. 31***?
2. Paul said, **"I die daily."**
3. Now **what** did Paul mean by that?
4. Some would have us to believe that what Paul meant was, **"I put my life in jeopardy every day."**

5. It's true that Paul put his life in jeopardy every day.
6. In fact, as he himself said in ***Vrs. 30***, he put his life "in jeopardy **every hour**."
7. However, when Paul said, **"I die daily,"** I believe me was talking about something else.
8. I believe he was talking about **"dying to self."**

B. Now this raises yet another question.
1. **What** does it mean to **"die to self"**?
2. I believe Jesus answered this question in ***Mat. 16:24-25***.
3. He was talking about **what is required in order to become one of His disciples**.
4. Listen to what He said, "If any man will come after me, **let him deny himself**, and take up his cross, and follow me....For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will **lose his life** for my sake shall find it."
5. According to Jesus, to **"die to self"** means to **"deny oneself."**
6. In other words, it means to **say "no" to what we want** to do with our lives, so that we can **say "yes" to what God wants** us to do with our lives (to sacrifice our will, so that we can do God's will).

C. When you stop and think about it, we really only make **two big decisions in this life**.
1. We make a lot of little (unimportant) decisions, but we really only make two big decisions in this life.
2. First of all, we have to decide: Are going to **accept Christ** as our Savior, or are we going to **reject Him**?
3. This is, by far, **the most important decision** one will ever make in this life.
4. However, once we decide to accept Christ as our Savior, we are **immediately faced** with life's second greatest decision, and that is: Are going to **serve God** with our lives, or are we going to **serve ourselves**?
5. The reason many Christians are not living right is simply because they **haven't made the decision to serve God** with their lives.
6. In other words, they haven't decided to **"die to self,"** so that they can **"live for God."**

D. By the way, this is not a decision that you can make once, and that one time do you for an entire lifetime.
1. Because of the depravity of our flesh and because of the **constant struggle between our spiritual nature and our fleshly nature**, the decision to **"die to self"** is a decision that has to be made, **at least on a daily basis**.
2. What did Paul say? He said, "I die **daily**."
3. But what does this mean for us today?
4. It means that we should begin each new day with a prayer similar to this, "Lord, I give this day to you. I'm not going to do what I want to do, but rather what you want me to do. I'm not going to serve myself, but rather I'm going to serve you."
5. And so, the first key to living right is **dying to self on a daily basis**.

E. The second key is...

II. <u>Living</u> With Eternity In View.

A. The fact is, the vast majority of people today are extremely "short sighted."
   1. In other words, as they live their lives, they are not looking very far ahead.
   2. In fact, many are not looking beyond today.
   3. Notice again ***Vrs. 32*** of our text, "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**."
      4. In other words, "If there is no such thing as a **resurrection**, if there is no such thing as **life after death**, if there is no such thing as a **coming judgment**, then we might as well just live our lives for today, because **"to morrow we die."**

B. This was clearly the attitude of the rich farmer in ***Luke 12***.
   1. Listen as I read ***Vrs. 16-19***, "And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully:...And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?...And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods....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**."
   2. But someone says, "This man was living his life with a view of the future. Didn't he say, I have much goods laid up for **many years**?"
   3. Yes he did say that, and yes, he was living his life with the future in view.
   4. However, the problem was, **he was not looking far enough** into the future (he was not living his life with **eternity in view**).
   5. Listen to what God told this farmer in the very next verse ***(Vrs. 20)***, He said, "Thou fool**, this night thy soul shall be required of thee**:"
   6. In other words, "You fool, although you are not prepared, you are about to go out into eternity."

C. Now this raises a question.
   1. How does one **live his life with eternity in view**?
   2. How does one **prepare himself (herself) to go out into eternity**?
   3. First of all, we prepare for eternity by **receiving Christ as our Savior**. (This is the **most important** thing!!!)
   4. (Illus.- I was sharing the gospel with a couple last Thursday evening, and one of the things that I told them is that we can accomplish all kinds of wonderful things in this life, however, if when we die, we don't go to heaven, **it is all meaningless**.)
   5. Jesus said it like this in ***Mark 8:36***, "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall **gain the whole world**, and **lose his own soul**?"
   6. The second way that we prepare for eternity is by **placing the emphasis in our lives on spiritual things** rather than material things.
   7. Now I realize that we must think about material things because **we live in a material world** and need certain material things in order to live.
   8. However, we should be **far more concerned** about laying up treasures in heaven, rather than laying up treasures on earth.

9. Do you remember what Jesus said in ***Mat. 6:19-20***? He said, "**Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth**, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:...But **lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven**, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:"

D. One of the reasons that many Christians are not living right is because they are **short-sighted**.
1. They are **not living with eternity in view**, but rather they are **living for today**.
2. Their attitude is, "**let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die**." ***(Vrs. 32)***
3. And so, the second key to living right is living with eternity in view.

E. The third key is...

III. <u>Choosing</u> The Right Kind Of Companions.

A. (Illus.- Someone once said to me, "A person cannot have too many friends." While that is true if you are talking about the right kind of friends, it is not true if you are talking about the wrong kind of friends. In fact, even if you only have one friend who is the wrong kind of friend, you have too many!)
1. Why is this true?
2. It's true because the wrong kind of a friend will most likely be a bad influence in your life.
3. Notice again ***Vrs. 33*** of our text, " Be not deceived: **evil communications corrupt good manners**."
4. The word "communications" is translated from the Greek word, "**homilia**," which literally means "companion-ships."
5. So what Paul is saying is, "Evil companionships corrupt good manners."
6. In other words, **the wrong kind of friends will be a bad influence on our lives**.

B. Solomon put it like this in ***Pro. 13:20***, "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but **a companion of fools shall be destroyed**."
1. While it is important that all believers choose the right kind of companions, it is especially important for young people.
2. Why? Because young people, especially teens, are more easily influenced by peer pressure than adults.
3. When Christian young people keep company with fools, they are asking for trouble.
4. This is why Solomon admonished us in ***Pro. 9:6***, "**Forsake the foolish, and live**; and go in the way of understanding."

C. If you will just stop and thing about it for a moment, it doesn't make sense that a believer in Christ would want to be close friends with a non-believer.
1. Why do I say this? I say this because when it comes to the things that really matter, **believers have nothing in common with unbelievers**.
2. Listen to what Paul wrote in ***2 Cor. 6:14-17***, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for **what fellowship hath righteousness with**

unrighteousness? and **what communion hath light with darkness**?...And **what concord hath Christ with Belial**? or **what part hath he that believeth with an infidel**?"

Conclusion:

A. Notice again Vrs. 34 of our text, Paul said, "Awake to righteousness, and sin not;"
   1. While this is easier said than done, it is possible for a believer to live right (not perfect, but a life that is pleasing to God).
   2. How?
   3. **Three** important keys.
   4. The first key is **dying to self** on a daily basis.
   5. The second key is **living with eternity in view**.
   6. The final key is **choosing the right kind of companions**.

B. Are you living right?

C. Are you saved?

"How Are The Dead Raised Up?"

Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 15:35-50

Introduction:

A. The apostle Paul had **several reasons** for writing letters to the various churches that God had used him to establish.
   1. For example, one reason that he wrote these letters was for **encouragement**.
   2. Paul's first letter to the Thessalonian believers is a prime example of this.
   3. Paul knew that these believers were being severely persecuted for their faith in Christ, and so he wrote them for the purpose of encouraging them.
   4. Another reason that Paul wrote these letters was for **instruction**.
   5. More than once, because of circumstances beyond his control, Paul was forced to leave a newly established church before he was able to complete the discipleship process, and so he later wrote letters for the purpose of further instructing them in the things of the Lord.
   6. A third reason that Paul wrote these letters was for the purpose of **correction**.
   7. The letter we are studying right now, Paul's first letter to the Corinthian believers, is a prime example of this.
   8. As we have already seen, there were many problems within the church at Corinth, and so Paul wrote this letter for the purpose of correcting these problems.
   9. And so, Paul had several reasons for writing letters to the various churches that God had used him to establish.
   10. Some were written for **encouragement**, others were written for **instruction**, and still others were written for **correction**.

B. But there was a fourth reason that Paul wrote these letters, and that was **in order to answer questions**.
   1. Again, the letter we are now studying, Paul's first letter to the Corinthian believers, is a prime example of this.
   2. Notice again ***Vrs. 35*** of our text, "But some man will say, **How are the dead raised up?** and **with what body do they come**?"
   3. Apparently these questions were being asked by some in the Corinthian church who were having doubts about the reality of a future resurrection.
   4. In the verses that follow, Paul answers these two questions.
   5. As we look at his answers, we will focus our attention on three things.
   6. First of all, we will focus our attention on the...

I. <u>Process</u> Of The Resurrection.

A. Notice again the first question in ***Vrs. 35***, "But some man will say, **How are the dead raised up**?"
   1. In other words, "Paul, I am having a hard time understanding how someone who has died can come alive again. **Can you explain the process** by which this will happen?"

2. Well, that's the first thing that Paul does here as he answers these two questions, he explains the process of the resurrection, and he does so by using a **very common illustration**, that of **a seed of grain**.
3. Notice again ***Vrs. 36-38***, "Thou fool, **that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die**:...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:...But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and **to every seed his own body**."

B. How many of you have planted (or will plant) a garden this year?
1. If you have done any amount of gardening, you understand what Paul is saying here.
2. You understand that if you have a package of seed (let's say, corn seed), the only way you are going to grow any corn is to take that seed and to **plant it in the ground**.
3. **Why** is this true?
4. It's true because before a corn stalk can come from a seed, **the seed must**, first of all, **die**.
5. It must...
   -be planted,
   -decompose,
   -literally rot in the ground,
   before it will **sprout new life**.
6. (Illus.- I will never forget my first attempt at farming. I was just a little boy, but I remember tilling up a small patch of ground in our back yard and planting some dried pinto beans that I had gotten out of our kitchen cupboard. I planted the beans, waited a couple of days, and when the beanstalks did not appear, I dug up one of the seeds to see why. I discovered that he bean had already begun to decompose and actually had a 'rotten' odor to it. I dug up another bean, and it was the same. Because I didn't understand the process of germination, I concluded that the seeds were bad and walked away disappointed. You can imagine how surprised I was a couple of days later when the seed that I left in the ground finally sprouted and the little stalks appeared!)
7. And so, **the seed has to die**, but after it dies, **look out**, because new life is about to spring forth! (Amen?)

C. The same thing is true us, as believers.
1. Before we will ever be resurrected, we must first of all die.
2. Before we will ever receive our new bodies, this old body must first of all **die**, and **be buried**, and **decompose in the ground**, but once that happens, **look out**, because one day new life will spring forth! (Amen?)
3. That's the process of the resurrection.
4. I don't understand it, but I believe it!!!

D. Secondly, this morning, I want us to focus our attention on the...

II. <u>Product</u> Of The Resurrection.

A. Notice again the second question in ***Vrs. 35*** of our text, "But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and **with what body do they come**?"
   1. In other words, once the process of the resurrection takes place, what kind of a body is produced.
   2. Exactly **what kind of a body** will come out of the grave?

B. The **first thing** that comes across to me as I read Paul's description of our resurrection bodies is the fact that **our resurrection bodies won't be anything at all like the bodies we now have**!
   1. In other words, the body that will one day come out of the grave **will be quite different** than the body that's going into the grave.
   2. Notice again ***Vrs. 39-44*** of our text, "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....There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another....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....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**:...**It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body**."

C. Now this raises a question.
   1. How will our resurrection bodies be different?
   2. The most obvious difference will be the fact that our resurrection bodies will **not be subject to sickness nor death**.
   3. Notice again ***Vrs. 42***, "So also is the resurrection of the dead. **It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption**:"
   4. The word "**incorruption**" here means "**not subject to decay**."
   5. We say at least three things about our resurrection bodies, they will not **age**, they will not **get sick**, and they will not **die**.
   6. **They will be incorruptible**!
   7. Paul said later on in this same chapter, "For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." ***(1 Cor. 15:53)***
   8. And so, the most obvious difference will be the fact that our resurrection bodies will not be subject to sickness nor death.
   9. Amen? Won't that be wonderful? No more...
      -doctor visits,
      -hospital stays,
      -having to take prescription medicines,
      -visits to the funeral home, then later to the cemetery!

D. Another difference will be the fact that our resurrection bodies will be **without sin**.
   1. Notice again ***Vrs. 47-49***, "The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven....As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly....And **as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly**."

2. Did you notice that last verse ***(Vrs. 49)***? Paul said, "...as we have borne the image of the earthy, **we shall also bear the image of the heavenly**."
3. In other words, "One day we shall be like Jesus!"
4. One day, we will have a body that is **pure and sinless** in every way possible.
5. But someone says, "Isn't that exaggerating just a bit?"
6. No, that's not exaggerating at all.
7. Listen to ***Rom. 8:29***, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate **to be conformed to the image of his Son**,"
8. Listen also to ***Phil. 3:20-21***, "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:...**Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body**, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."
9. Finally, listen to ***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."
10. This is the product of the resurrection.
11. A body that is **not subject to sickness or death**.
12. A body that **without sin**.

E. There is one more way that our resurrection bodies will be different, and that is they will **not be subject to physical constraints**.
1. Notice again ***Vrs. 44***, "It is sown a natural body; **it is raised a spiritual body**."
2. Now what does that mean, "a spiritual body"?
3. Do you remember the first time that Jesus appeared to His disciples after His resurrection?
4. Listen as I read ***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."
5. You can be sure that not only were the doors shut, but they were also locked, yet Jesus "came...and stood in the midst."
6. How was he able to do this?
7. He possessed a **spiritual body, not subject to physical constraints**.
8. Because the Bible says that "we shall be like him," I assume that our resurrection bodies will **possess similar qualities**.
9. That's the product of the resurrection.

F. Thus far, this morning, we have focused our attention on two things.
1. First of all, we focused our attention on the **process of the resurrection**. (Just like a seed planted in the earth, we will **die**, we will **be buried**, our bodies will **suffer decay**, but somehow, out of that decay, **new life** will spring forth.)
2. Secondly, we focused our attention on the **product of the resurrection**. (We will receive a body nothing at all like the body that we now possess, a body **not subject to sickness or death**, a body that is **pure and sinless** in every way, a body that is spiritual, **not subject to physical restraints**.)
3. Finally, this morning, I want to call your attention to the...

III. <u>Purpose</u> Of The Resurrection.

A. Let me ask a question.
   1. Why is God going to give us a new body?
   2. We know that He is, but the question is, why?
   3. The answer is found in ***Vrs. 50*** of our text, "Now this I say, brethren, that **flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption**."
   4. Why is God going to give us a new body?
   5. Simply because the body that we now have is **in no way suited** for God's eternal kingdom.

B. Now don't misunderstand what I am saying.
   1. The bodies that we now have are wonderful, and are perfectly suited for life as it is now.
   2. I am reminded of the psalmist's prayer recorded in ***Psa. 139:14***, "I will praise thee; for **I am fearfully and wonderfully made**::
   3. The bodies that we now possess are clearly a masterpiece of God's creation and are exactly what we need for life as it is now.
   4. This is why we should take care of our bodies, because God only gives us one.
   5. But as wonderful as these bodies are, **they are in no way suited for life as it is going to be one day**, life in God's eternal kingdom.

C. This is why when God takes us to heaven, we have to leave these bodies behind.
   1. (Illus.- Several years ago I was preaching this same truth, and I made the following statement, "If God were to take us to heaven in these sin cursed bodies, we wouldn't enjoy being in heaven." Well, we had a little lady who attended our church back then named Virginia Davenport. Well, when I made that statement, all that Virginia heard was, "If God took us to heaven, we wouldn't enjoy being there." She immediately responded by saying, "Oh, yes we would!" I made the statement again, stressing the words "in our sin cursed bodies," but again, Virginia spoke up and said, "Oh, yes we would." Well, needless to say, she never did grasp what I was saying, so I just went on.)
   2. But the fact is, if God were to take us to heaven in these old sin cursed bodies, we would be miserable there.
   3. Why? Because these bodies are not suited for heaven.
   4. Neither are they suited for God's eternal kingdom.
   5. But that's okay, because He is going to give us new bodies.
   6. That's the purpose of the resurrection.

Conclusion:

A. What have we learned this morning?
   1. First of all, we learned about the **process of the resurrection**. (Just like a seed that is planted in the ground, we will die, we will buried, our bodies will suffer decay, but somehow, out of that decay, new life will spring forth one day!)

2. Secondly, we learned about the **product of the resurrection**. (God is going to give us a body nothing at all like the body that we now possess, a body **not subject to sickness or death**, a body that is **pure and sinless** in every way, a body that is spiritual, **not subject to physical restraints**.)
3. Finally, we learned about the **purpose of the resurrection**. (As wonderful as these bodies are, they are not suited for God's eternal kingdom.)

B. Now I want to ask you a very personal question.
1. Do you know Jesus Christ as your personal Savior?
2. Can you say, beyond a shadow of doubt, that if you were to die this very moment, heaven would be your home?
3. The reason I ask this question is because if you are not saved, none of what we have learned this morning applies to you.
4. Oh, you too will be resurrected one day, but your resurrection will be quite different from the resurrection of the saved.
5. Let me read to you what the Bible says about your resurrection. It is found in ***Rev. 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....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....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....And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death....And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."
6. If you do not know Jesus as your Savior, my advice to you is to receive Him as Savior this morning.
7. Tomorrow may be too late!

"Death Is Swallowed Up In Victory"

Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 15:51-58

Introduction:

A. There's one thing that every human being on planet earth has in common, that is **we are all going to die**!

1. It matters not whether we are **rich or poor**.
2. It matters not whether we are **beautiful or homely**.
3. It matters not whether we are **educated or uneducated**.
4. It matters not whether we are **prominent or unknown**.
5. We are all going to die one day!
6. Paul reminds us in ***Heb. 9:27*** that "....**it is appointed unto men once to die**, but after this the judgment:"
7. Do you remember what God told Adam, soon after He confronted him with his sin? He said, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, **till thou return unto the ground**; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and **unto dust shalt thou return**." ***(Gen. 3:19)***
8. Solomon put it like this in ***Ecc. 3:20***, **"All go unto one place**; all are of the dust, and **all turn to dust again**."
9. And so, every human being on planet earth has one thing in common, and that is we are all going to die!

B. However, if you know the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, **death is not your enemy**.

1. It used to be our enemy, but because of the fact that Jesus died for our sins and then rose again from the dead, it is no longer.
2. Do you know why?
3. There are least two reasons why death is not our enemy.
4. First of all, death is not our enemy because **immediately after we die, our soul (spirit) is transported to heaven**.
5. Do you remember the beggar named Lazarus? Listen to what Jesus said about him in ***Luke 16:20-22***,, "And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores,...And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores....And it came to pass, that **the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom**:"
6. It says that "the beggar died," and then it says he "was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom."
7. That's what happens when a believer in Christ dies, he is immediately carried by the angels into the presence of our Savior in heaven.
8. That's why death is not our enemy.
9. There is another reason that death is not our enemy, and that is because, as we have seen here in our study of ***1 Cor. 15***, **one of these days God is going to give us a new body**. (Amen?)

C. Now as Paul concludes this chapter, as well as his discussion on the subject of the resurrection, he points out at least three things. First of all, he points out...

I. The <u>Change</u> That We Will Experience.

A. Notice again ***Vrs. 51*** of our text, "Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but **we shall all be changed**,"
1. Now what did Paul mean when he said, "We shall not all sleep."?
2. The word **"sleep"** here refers to **death**, not taking a nap.
3. What Paul is saying here is that some believers will not experience death, but rather will **still be alive when the rapture takes place**.
4. And so, "We shall not all sleep," however, "we shall all be changed."
5. In other words, **all believers**, including those who **die before the rapture**, as well as those who are **still alive at the rapture**, all believers **will "be changed**."

B. **How long** will it take for this change to take place?
1. According to the first part of ***Vrs. 52***, it's not going to take very long.
2. Notice again what Paul wrote, "In **a moment**, in **the twinkling of an eye**,"
3. The Greek word translated "**moment**" here, is the word "**atomos**."
4. It is the same word from which we get our word **"atom,"** and it means **something so small that it is indivisible**.
5. That's the amount of time that it will take for this change to take place.
6. The word "**twinkling**" comes from a Greek word that means "**to jerk or to blink**."
7. (Illus.- Have you ever heard anyone say, "**Don't blink** your eyes when you go through 'such and such' town, because if you do, **you will miss it.**"?)
8. The same thing can be said concerning the change that will one day take place in each and every one of us, **if you blink your eyes, you will miss it**!
9. That's how quickly this change will take place.

C. **When** can we expect this change?
1. Paul answers this question, as well.
2. According to ***Vrs. 52***, we can expect this change **at the time of the rapture**.
3. Notice again what Paul wrote, "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, **at the last trump**: for **the trumpet shall sound**, and the dead shall be raised."
4. How do I know this is the rapture?
5. I know because of "the trumpet."
6. Listen as I read ***1 Thes. 4:15-16***, "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....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**."

D. Thus far we have answered **three** questions about the change that will one day take place.
1. First of all, we answered the question, "**Who will be changed**?" (All believers will be changed.)
2. Secondly, we answered the question, "**How long will it take for this change to take place**?" (In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.)
3. Thirdly, we answered the question, "**When can we expect this change to occur**?" (At the last trump, or the time of the rapture.)

E. There is one more question that we want to answer, and that is, "**What will be the nature** of this change?"

1. Paul answers this question in ***Vrs. 53***, "For **this corruptible must put on incorruption**, and **this mortal must put on immortality**."
2. As we saw last Sunday, the most obvious change will be that our new bodies will **not be subject to the aging process or to death itself**! (Amen?)
3. No more **aging**.
4. No more **arthritis**.
5. No more **aches and pains**.
6. No more **getting sick**, or **going to the doctor**, or **taking medicine**, or **having surgery**.
7. And best of all, no more **death or dying**! (Amen?)
8. And so, the most obvious change will be the fact that our new bodies will not be subject to aging or death.
9. But there will be another change.
10. Not only will our new bodies not be subject to aging or death, but they will also be pure and sinless in every way.
11. Let me quote a passage that I quoted last Sunday, ***Phil. 3:20-21***, "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:...Who shall **change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body**, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."

F. And so, first of all, Paul points out the change that we will experience. Secondly, he points out...

II. The <u>Conquest</u> That Will Become Ours.

A. Notice again ***Vrs. 54*** of our text, "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**."

1. The **"saying"** that Paul mentions here is actually a prophecy found in ***Isa. 25:8***, which says that the Lord will one day "...**swallow up death in victory**;"
2. **What** is this **conquest (victory)** that will one day will become ours?
3. It is victory over **death**.
4. It is victory over **the grave**.
5. It is victory over **corruption and mortality**.
6. And when I say, victory, I am talking about a **complete and total** victory.
7. As far as believers are concerned, once the resurrection takes place, death will be a thing of the past.
8. Why? Because **Christ's conquest over death will become ours**!

B. Now please don't misunderstand what I am saying.

1. There is a sense in which we are already victorious over death.
2. Do you remember what Paul wrote in ***Rom. 8:35-37***? He said, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or

famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?...As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter....Nay, in all these things **we are more than conquerors** through him that loved us."

3. Notice that Paul didn't say, "we **shall be** more than conquerors," but rather, "we **are** more than conquerors."
4. And so, there is a sense in which the victory is already ours.

C. This is because **"death" has lost its stinger**.
1. Notice again ***Vrs. 55*** of our text.
2. In this verse, Paul addresses **"death"** itself.
3. In fact, he asked **"death"** a question, he said, "O death, **where is thy sting**?"
4. What Paul is implying here is that while death still has some power over us, and while death will still come for us one day, it clearly has **lost its "sting," or it's ability to hurt us.**
5. And it's almost like Paul is **taunting death** here.
6. (Illus.- Do you remember when you were a little child? Do you remember how you used to taunt the other children who weren't as fast a runner as you? You would say, "Na, na, na, na, na! You can't catch me! You can't catch me!")
7. Well, its almost like Paul is taunting "death" here by saying, "Na, na, na, na, na! You can't hurt me! You can't hurt me!
8. And that's true, **death can't hurt us**!
9. Why not? Because just like a bee that has had its stinger removed can't hurt us, **death has had its stinger removed**. (Jesus removed it when he died on the cross for our sins, then rose again from the dead!)
10. And so, there is a sense in which the victory is already ours.

D. However, when the resurrection takes place, we will realize this conquest in it's entirety, which means, **no more death**!
1. This is the conquest that will become ours.
2. The final thing that Paul points out here, as he concludes his discussion of the resurrection, is...

III. The <u>Compelling</u> Obligation That Befalls Us.

A. In other words, because of **the change** that we will one day experience, and because of **the conquest** that will one day become ours, **we have a compelling obligation**.
1. "An obligation to do what?" someone asks.
2. Notice again ***Vrs. 58*** of our text, "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."

B. First of all, we have an obligation to be "**stedfast**" or "**unmoveable**."
1. Both of these words mean basically the same thing.
2. They simply mean to be...
-"**steady**,'
-"**constant**,"

-**"unwavering"** in our devotion to Christ!

3. In other words, a "stedfast" or an "unmoveable" Christian is **a Christian upon whom God can always depend**.
4. You know, as well as I do, that many Christians today are anything but "stedfast."
5. (Illus.- They are like a chainsaw that I had a number of years ago. Talk about frustrating. You never knew when you picked it up whether or not it was going to start. And when it did start, you never knew how long it was going to run, before it would shut off. I finally became so frustrated with it, that I sold it.)
6. A lot of Christians are just as "fickle" as that chain saw, when it comes to their devotion to Christ.

C. Not only do we have an obligation to be unwavering in our devotion to Christ, but we also have an obligation to be **abounding in our labor for Christ**.

1. How did Paul put it?
2. He said, "...**always abounding in the work** of the Lord."
3. You know, part of being devoted to Christ is working for Him.
4. It is astounding how many Christians are not involved in ministry.
5. They **read their Bibles and pray** every day.
6. They **attend church services** every Sunday morning.
7. They even **attend prayer meeting** on Wednesday nights.
8. However, they are **not** involved in ministry.
9. Not only are they **not "abounding** in the work of the Lord," they are **not even involved** "in the work of the Lord."
10. **Listen to me!**
11. Those of us who have...

-been **saved by the grace of God**,
-been **promised a home in heaven when we die**,
-been **promised a glorified body at the resurrection**,
we have a **compelling obligation** to be **unwavering** in our devotion to Christ, as well as **abounding** in our labor for Christ.

D. By the way, there is a **very precious promise** here for those who are involved in ministry.

1. Notice again the latter part of ***Vrs. 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**."
2. He said that our "labour is not in vain in the Lord."
3. In other words, it is not wasted.
4. (Illus.- I must admit that sometimes it seems, from a purely human standpoint, that we are wasting our time and effort. I feel that way sometimes when we go out soul winning and no one gets saved.)
5. I have to keep reminding myself of what the Lord said in ***Isa. 55:10-11***, "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater:...So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my

mouth**: it shall not return unto me void**, but **it shall accomplish that which I please**, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

Conclusion:

A. And so, as Paul concluded his discussion on the resurrection, he did so by pointing out three things.
   1. First of all, he pointed out **the change that we will experience** (from corruption to incorruption, from mortality to immortality).
   2. Secondly, he pointed out **the conquest that will become ours** (victory over death and the grave).
   3. Finally, he pointed out **the compelling obligation that befalls us** (to be stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord).

B. As I get ready to close, this morning, let me ask you a couple of questions.
   1. First of all, **are you saved**?
   2. Do you have a home in heaven waiting for you?
   3. Will you receive a glorified body at the resurrection?
   4. If not, then please consider your need to trust Christ as Savior this morning!
   5. Secondly, if you are saved, **are you fulfilling your obligations as a Christian**?
   6. Are you **unwavering in your devotion** to Christ?
   7. Are you **abounding in your labor** for Christ?
   8. If not, then please consider your need to dedicate your life to Christ and live the kind of life that He would have to you live.

"Now Concerning The Collection"

Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 16:1-4

Introduction

A. In my opinion, ***1 Corinthians 15*** is one of the greatest chapters in the Bible.
   1. The reason I say that is because, as we have just seen, it deals with one of the greatest subjects in the Bible, **the resurrection**.
   2. It deals with the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ and the fact that because He rose from the dead, those of us who know Jesus as our Savior will also experience a resurrection. (Amen?)
   3. This is why this chapter is one of the most...
      -exciting,
      -encouraging,

-uplifting
chapters in all of the Word of God.

4. Just reading it and thinking about the truths that it teaches will make you want to shout, "**Hallelujah** and **praise the Lord** and **glory to God**!" all at the same time.

B. But then we come to ***1 Corinthians 16*** and the first four words we read are these, "Now concerning **the collection**..."

1. Talk about **coming back down to earth**!
2. Now some would say, "Preacher, I don't understand it. Why would God take us all the way to the gates of heaven with talk about the resurrection, only to quickly bring us back down to earth (**with a thud**) with talk about the collection? Why would God do that?"
3. Well, let me say, first of all, that many believers have a **very wrong perception** when it comes to the collection.
4. Many believers perceive the collection (giving) as being very **ordinary**, very **mundane**, and very **unspiritual**.
5. (Illus.- I even had one guy, several years ago, say something like this to me. He said, "Pastor, for the most part, I love the worship services of our church. I love the singing, I love the special music, I love the testimonies, I love the preaching, but **why do we have to spoil it all by passing the collection plate**?")
6. Now I realize that this is an extreme example, but the fact is many believers have a similar perception when it comes to the collection.
7. But **it doesn't have to be that way**, and it shouldn't.
8. The collection time can and should be **one of the most exciting, one of the most rewarding, one of the most spiritual** times in the entire worship service experience.
9. Of course, if that is to be the case, we must have **the right attitude**, that is, **God's attitude**, about giving.

C. It is interesting to note that the Greek word translated "**collection**" in our text comes from a root word which has at least two meanings.

1. The word is **lego** (not the toy).
2. According to "Harper's Analytical Greek Lexicon," the word can mean "**to lay by, to arrange or to gather**."
3. But it has another meaning, it can also mean **"to say, to speak or to make an address."**
4. (Illus.- Wouldn't it be interesting, if our collection plates could literally speak? I wonder what they would say? I think I know what they would say at least some of the time. They would say things like, **"Skin flint!"** or **"Cheap skate!"** or **"Thief!"** Wouldn't that make the collection interesting, if not exciting, if the collection plates could literally speak?"
5. Well, of course, the collection plates cannot literally speak, and it's probably good that they cannot, but the fact is, **the collection does speak, in a way**.
6. To begin with, it says something about our church, but it also says something about us as individuals.
7. It says something about our **love for God**.

8. It says something about our **obedience to His Word**.
9. It says something about our **commitment to His church**.
10. And there is one thing about the collection - it **never lies**.
11. This is why Jesus said in ***Mat. 6:21***, "For where your treasure is, **there will your heart be also**."

D. As we examine our text, this morning, there are three things that we should learn about our giving.

E. First of all, our giving should be...

I. Punctual.

A. Look again at the first part of ***Vrs. 2*** of our text, "Upon **the first day of the week**..."
1. Now let me stop here for a moment and point out something that some of you may not know.
2. Sunday is **not the Sabbath**.
3. Sunday is **the first day of the week**, while the Sabbath is the **seventh day** (Saturday).
4. Every now and then someone will ask me, "Pastor, if Saturday is the Sabbath, then why don't we worship on Saturday?"
5. There are basically two answers to this question.
6. First of all, we don't worship on Saturday **because we are not Jews**.
7. You have to remember that the Sabbath commandment was **given to the Jews**.
8. It was given for the purpose of **commemorating God's work of creation**, which took a total of six days.
9. The Bible says in ***Gen. 2:2***, "And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and **he rested on the seventh day** from all his work which he had made."
10. And so, we do not worship on Saturday because we are not Jews.
11. The second reason that we do not worship on Saturday is **because Jesus rose from the dead on Sunday, the first day of the week**.
12. If you study the book of ***Acts*** carefully, you will see that the early church, for the purpose of **commemorating Christ's resurrection**, came together for fellowship and worship on **the first day of the week**.
13. Now I realize that Christians today have set aside one special day out of the year (Easter) for the purpose of celebrating Christ's resurrection, but the truth is **we celebrate his resurrection every Sunday**!
14. And so, contrary to what you may have thought, Sunday is not the Sabbath.

B. But Paul said, "**Upon the first day of the week**..."
1. In other words, **every Sunday**!
2. I'm afraid that there are an awful lot of believers who only give when...
   -they feel like it,
   -the mood strikes them,
   -they are emotionally inclined to give.

3. If there is a **urgent need**, or if there is a **special appeal**, or if there is an **emotional plea**, they **might** be persuaded to give, but as a general rule, they don't.
4. Do you know what I call these believers?
5. I call them **"spasmatic" givers**.
6. But that is not the way that we should give.
7. Rather than being "spasmatic" givers, we should be **"systematic" givers**.

C. What is a "systematic" giver?
1. A systematic giver is a believer who gives systematically.
2. In other words, he gives **every Sunday**, whether...
   -he feels like or not,
   -the mood strikes him or not,
   -he is emotionally inclined to give or not.
3. He gives **every Sunday**, because he knows that it is **the right thing to do** (out of obedience to God).
4. And, by the way, when he is forced to miss coming to church on a particular Sunday, he always **doubles up** on the following Sunday.
5. Why?
6. Because **he wants to be obedient to God**.
7. He is a **systematic** giver, rather than a **spasmatic** giver.

D. Whenever I preach on this subject, invariably someone will come to me and say, "Pastor, I know the Bible says that I should give **on a weekly basis**, but I don't get paid every week. I get paid **every two weeks** or I'm retired and my checks come only **once a month**. What should I do?"
1. I'll tell you what I would do, if I were in your shoes.
2. No matter how I got paid, I would sit down with a calculator and **figure what my "weekly" tithe** should be, and go ahead and **give it on a weekly basis**.
3. That's what I would do, and let me tell you why.
4. First of all, I would do that because that's what the Bible tells us to do.
5. But there is another reason.
6. I would do it because **I need to be reminded on a weekly basis that everything I have belongs to God**.
7. That's one of the reasons that we tithe, to remind us that everything we have belongs to God, and I personally need to be reminded of that at least once a week. (Amen?)

E. And so, first of all, our giving should be punctual.

F. Our giving should also be...

III. Personal.

A. Look again at ***Vrs. 2*** of our text, "Upon the first day of the week **let every one of you**..."
1. He didn't say, "...**let some of you**."
2. He didn't say, "...**let the more fortunate**."

3. He didn't say, "...**let those who are well to do.**"
4. But he said, "...let **every one** of you."
5. Do you realize what that means?
6. It means that **every believer**, without exception, should give.

B. There are some believers who wrongly think that **they are exempt** from the responsibility to give to the Lord.
   1. For example, some think they are exempt because **their income is lower than others**.
   2. Their reasoning is, because they are not able to give as much as others, they shouldn't be expected to give at all.
   3. Apparently they have the idea that giving to God is a lot like paying taxes, if your income is below a certain level, you are exempt from paying any taxes at all.
   4. While that may be true when it comes to paying taxes, it **certainly doesn't apply** when it comes to giving to God.
   5. Every believer should give, no matter how low his income might be.
   6. Do you remember the poor widow that came into the temple one day and put **her last two "mites"** into the Lord's treasury? ***(Mark 12:41-44)***
   7. Rather than telling this poor widow that she should keep her money because she was too poor to give, instead **Jesus commended her for her sacrifice**.
   8. And so, no matter how low your income may be, you should still give to the Lord.

C. Other believers think that they are exempt from giving to the Lord simply **because they are in debt**.
   1. (Illus.- I remember one brother in particular who came to me not long after I had preached on the subject of tithing and said, "Pastor, surely God doesn't expect me to tithe." I asked him, "Why wouldn't he expect you to tithe?" He said, "Well, Pastor, by the time I finish making the **monthly payments to all of my creditors**, there is just nothing left over to give." This man honestly believed that because he had gotten himself heavily into debt, he was off the hook as far as his giving was concerned.)
   2. Let me ask you a question, in case I'm speaking to someone this morning who feels the same as this brother.
   3. Did anyone **force you to go into debt**?
   4. Did anyone **force you to buy that new car**?
   5. Did anyone **force you to buy that new furniture**?
   6. Did anyone **force you to buy that new entertainment center**?
   7. If you are in debt, this morning, chances are it is because **you made the decision yourself** by buying things you could not afford and really did not need.
   8. So don't try to use that as an excuse for not giving to God (it won't hold water).

D. What I'm simply saying is that there is **no excuse** for not giving to God.
   1. **Everyone should give to God**.
   2. **Our giving should be personal**.

E. Finally, our giving should be...

III. Proportional.

A. Look again at ***Vrs. 2*** of our text, "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, **as God hath prospered him**,"
1. Notice again the words, "**as** God hath **prospered him**."
2. In other words, "according to how much God has blessed him."
3. That's proportionate giving, giving in proportion to how much God gives to us.

B. Now this raises a question.
1. If we are to give proportionately, **what proportion** or **what percentage** should we give?
2. The Biblical standard, which goes all the way back to Abraham and Jacob, **has always been 10%**.
3. Listen to what Jacob promised the Lord in ***Gen. 28:22***, "...and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give **the tenth** unto thee."
4. What does this mean?
5. It simply means that when it comes to giving to the Lord, **the very least that we should give is 10%** of that which he gives to us.
6. In other words, if your gross salary is $ 1,000 per week, the very least that you should give to the Lord is $ 100 per week.
7. If your gross salary is...
   -$ 500 per week,...$ 50 per week,
   -$ 400 per week,...$ 40 per week,
   -$ 300 per week,...$ 30 per week,
   -$ 50 per week,...$ 5 per week.
8. Notice that I said **gross** salary.
9. By gross I mean what you earn **before anything is taken out**, including taxes (that's the amount that we should tithe on).

C. Do you know what I like about tithing?
1. It puts everyone **on the same level**.
2. It enables the retired person who is living on nothing but his social security check, **to give just as much** as the person who makes $ 100,000 a year.
3. How can a retired person living solely on social security give as much as someone who makes $ 100,000 a year?
4. By **giving a percentage**.
5. (Illus.- Someone has said that rather than looking at the amount that we give, God instead looks at what we have left over after we give. Amen?)

D. And so, our giving should be proportional.

Conclusion

A. What have we learned about giving?
1. Three things.

2. Our giving should be **punctual** (Upon the first day of the week)
3. Our giving should be **personal** (let every one of you).
4. Our giving should be **proportional** (as God hath prospered him).

B. But someone says, "Pastor, I don't care what you say, or what the Bible says, I'm just not going to give to the Lord! I'm just not going to tithe!"
   1. That's fine, but please realize that you aren't hurting God by not giving to Him, but rather you are hurting yourself.
   2. You are the one who stands to lose the most (and your family, if you have one).

(Illus.- How many of you have heard of Bobby Bowden? Bobby Bowden wrote a book entitled, "More Than Just A Game." Let me read you a small excerpt from his book. "There was a brief period of time when I stopped tithing. I'm not proud of that because I forgot what momma taught me. When I left Bill Peterson's staff at Florida State and joined the staff at West Virginia in 1966, I owed so much money...that all I thought about was paying the bills and keeping the creditors away from our door. I got so caught up in 'poor little ole me' that I forgot to give 1/10 to God. And, Buddy, we just kept getting deeper and deeper in debt. That went on for three years. I knew I was doing wrong and I knew that the money belonged to God, not me. My conscience was really beginning to hurt me...One day Ann and I sat down and talked it over. We decided we had to start tithing again. I said God gave us everything we have. He gave us good health. He gave us healthy babies. He gave us a home. He gave us a job. We've got to start tithing again even if it means we don't have money to buy food. We are going to give God His before we spend the rest of it, no matter how it hurts. So, we started tithing again. It wasn't but about six months later that I got the head job at West Virginia and my salary doubled. It has gone that way ever since. I've tithed and God just keeps giving it back to me. My salary just keeps going up and up. I know it sounds like a fairy tale, but it's true. When we give God what is His, He gives even more back to us." Now, that's from a football coach, not a preacher!)

"The Work Of The Lord"

Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 16:5-11

Introduction:

A. I want to begin this morning by again calling your attention to ***Vrs. 10*** of our text, Paul wrote, "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."
   1. Did you notice, near the end of the verse, the phrase **"the work of the Lord**"?
   2. Paul said, concerning Timothy, "...for he worketh," now notice the phrase, "**the work of the Lord**."
   3. You know, we use that phrase a lot, don't we.
   4. For example, we refer to the work that we do **in the church** and **for the church**, as **the Lord's work**.
   5. Whether it be...
      -**teaching** a class,
      -**preaching** a sermon,
      -**working** in a certain ministry,
      we always refer to it as "**the Lord's work**."

B. Now I want to ask you a question.
   1. Why do we refer to it as "**the Lord's work**"?
   2. Why don't we refer to it as...
      -**our** work,
      -**church** work,
      -**ministry** work?

3. Why do we refer to it as "**the Lord's work**"?
4. Well, the **most obvious** answer is, "We refer to it as the Lord's work because **it belongs to Him** and **we are doing it for Him**."
5. Now it's true, the work does **belong to Him** and we should be doing it **for Him**.
6. However, having said that, according to our text, there are at least **three more reasons** why it is **"the Lord's work**."

C. For example, it is the Lord's work because in order to do it, we are **completely dependent** upon...

I. His <u>Providence</u>.

A. Notice again what Paul told the Corinthian believers in ***Vrs. 7*** of our text, "For I will not see you now by the way; but I trust to tarry a while with you, **if the Lord permit**."
1. Did you notice the last four words in that verse? Paul said, "...**if the Lord permit**."
2. In other words, Paul said, "Because of circumstances beyond my control, I cannot come and see you right now. However, **if God will permit me,** I will come and see you later and will spend some time with you."
3. While Paul evidently desired to fellowship with the Corinthian believers at least one more time, he knew if that was going to happen, God was going to have to, first of all, **change his circumstances**.
4. In other words, he knew that **he was dependent** upon the Lord's providence.

B. You know, we, as believers today, are **just as dependent** upon the Lord's providence as Paul was then!
1. In fact, did you realize that **we can't do anything**, apart from God's providence?
2. We could **not** have come to church this morning, had God not permitted us.
3. I could **not** have taught my S.S. class this morning, had God not permitted me.
4. I would most certainly **not** be up here preaching right now, had God not permitted it.
5. The point is, we can't do anything, apart from God's providence (unless God permits it)!

C. God had to remind of group of Jewish businessmen of this truth in ***Jam. 4:13-15***.
1. Turn there with me, for just a moment, and notice what He said, beginning with ***Vrs. 13***, "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**:"
2. Here was a group of Jewish businessmen who had their lives **all planned out**.
3. They knew exactly **what** they were going to do, **when** they were going to do it, and **how** they were going to do it!
4. There was **only one problem** with their plan.
5. They had failed to take into consideration God's providence (left God out of their plans).
6. This is was a **BIG** mistake.
7. Why? Because we are **totally dependent on God providence**, whether it be in our business ventures or the work that we do for the Lord.

8. Notice what God told them in ***Vrs. 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."
9. (Illus.- If I were to ask each of you the question, "What are you going to do tomorrow?" you would all have an answer, and the reason you would all have an answer is because you all have a plan. However, the truth is, none of us really knows what we are going to do tomorrow.)
10. We think we know, because we have a plan.
11. However, there are a billion different things that could happen between now and tomorrow that would **totally wreck our plans**. (We could be **dead**! Instead of going to work, we could be **visiting the undertaker**!)
12. Solomon put it like this in ***Prov. 27:1***, "Boast not thyself of to morrow; for **thou knowest not what a day may bring forth**."
13. And so, while these Jewish businessmen had a plan for the future, they had failed to take into consideration God's providence when they made their plan.
14. Notice what God told them in ***Vrs. 15***, "For that ye ought to say, **If the Lord will**, we shall live, and do this, or that."

D. Now what is the lesson here for us today?
1. Is it wrong to have a plan, when doing the Lord's work?
2. Of course not. Not only is it not wrong, but it is **wise** to have a plan. (We **should** have a plan.)
3. (Illus.- It has been said that he who aims at nothing, usually hits what he is aiming at.)
4. And so, we should most definitely have a plan.
5. However, having said that, we should also be aware of the fact that at any time, **God can wreck our plans**.
6. Someone asks, "**What should we do** when that happens, What should we do when God wrecks our plans?"
7. The answer is, "**Make a new plan**."
8. You see, when God wrecks our plans, it is usually because He wants us to...
   -make a new plan,
   -set a new direction for our lives,
   -change the focus of our lives or our ministry.
9. In other words, if God, by His providence **closes one door**, it is usually because He has **another door** that He want us to go through.

E. (Illus.- While I was attending the pastors' meeting in Daytona Beach week before last, I talked to several young men who were on deputation preparing to go to the mission field for the first time. They all had at least one thing in common. **They all had a plan**. However, I have also talked with many veteran missionaries who told me that when they got to the field, they had to **scrap their plans** and **go with God's plan**.)
1. We need to be able and willing to do just that, to scrap our plan to go with God's plan.
2. **Why**? Because when doing the Lord's work, we are totally dependent on His providence.

F. We are also totally dependent on...

II. His <u>Power</u>.

A. Why do we need God's power?
1. There are a lot of reasons why we need God's power, but according to our text, one reason that we need God's power is to **open doors** (create opportunities for ministry).
2. Notice again ***Vrs. 8-9*** of our text, "But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost....For **a great door and effectual is opened** unto me."
3. The reason that Paul could not go to Corinth was because God had opened a door of opportunity for him in the city of Ephesus.
4. Notice the two words that Paul used to describe this open door (ministry opportunity).
5. First of all, he used the word "**great**."
6. This word comes from the Greek word "**megas**," which means "big, really big" and is probably the same word from which we get our word "mega."
7. God had opened up a "mega," a "big, really big" door (ministry opportunity) for Paul.
8. The second word that Paul used was the word "**effectual**," which is translated from a Greek word that literally means "active, operative or powerful."
9. And so, God had opened up a "**big**" and a "**powerful**" door (ministry opportunity) for Paul.
10. Only a **big** and a **powerful** God could have done that!

B. By the way, as believers today, we are just as dependent on the power of God to open doors (create ministry opportunities) as Paul was then!
1. But someone says, "I don't need God to do that for me. I can **open my own doors**."
2. Well, you may be able to open your own doors, but I can assure you that it won't be the same as when God opens those doors.
3. The doors you open won't be "**great**" and "**effectual**" doors, because **only God** can open those kind of doors. (Amen?)
4. This is why we need to pray for God to open doors.
5. When Paul wrote his letter to the Colossian believers, he made a special prayer request in ***Col. 4:3***. He asked the Colossian believers to pray that God would "**open**" unto him what he called "**a door of utterance**," that he might be able to preach "**the mystery of Christ**."
6. (Illus.- Whenever I go soul winning, I almost always pray a prayer similar to this, "Dear Lord, we need You to go with us today. We need your Holy Spirit to go before us to open doors and give us an opportunities to share Christ.")
7. This is why we are dependent on the power of God.

C. By the way, not only are we dependent on God's power to open **doors** (ministry opportunities), but we also are dependent on Him to open **hearts**.

1. (Illus.- A few weeks ago I tried to share the gospel with a man who **absolutely wanted nothing to do with it.** We've all encountered people like that, I'm sure. After the man had walked away, my partner said, "Pastor, that man sure has a **closed mind**." I said, "Yes he does, but his real problem is that he has a **closed heart**.")
2. Many of those to whom we try to minister today are **just like that man**, they have a closed heart, and no amount of preaching or teaching or witnessing on our part is going to change that.
3. But someone asks, "What do we do, pastor, with people like this? Do we consider them hopeless and just "write them off"?
4. There is only one thing that we can do with people like this, and that is **pray for them**, because while we cannot pry their hearts open, **the power of God can**! (Amen?)

D. And so, when doing the Lord's work, we are totally dependent upon His **power** (to open doors and to open hearts).
   1. We are totally dependent upon His **providence**.
   2. We are totally dependent upon His **power**.
   3. Finally, this morning, we are totally dependent upon...

III. His <u>Protection</u>.

A. **Why** do we need God's protection?
   1. Notice again ***Vrs. 9*** of our text, "For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and **there are many adversaries**."
   2. Now **who** are these "adversaries"?
   3. Well, first and foremost, **the devil** is our adversary.
   4. The Bible says in ***1 Pet. 5:8***, "Be sober, be vigilant; because **your adversary the devil**, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:"
   5. Why do we need God's protection from the devil?
   6. Because, as this verse tells us, he is our adversary, and as such, **he will do everything within his power** to keep us from doing God's work.

B. Turn with me, for just a moment, to ***1 Thes. 2:17-18***.
   1. In his letter to the Thessalonian believers, Paul wrote these words, "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....Wherefore **we would** have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but **Satan hindered us.**"
   2. How far will Satan go to hinder us from doing God's work?
   3. **As far as he can!**
   4. Let me ask you a question.
   5. Do you think Satan would have **killed** the apostle Paul had be been able to do so?
   6. **Of course** he would have, but he couldn't, even though he tried time and time again, and the reason he couldn't is **because God's hand of protection was upon him**!
   7. Do you remember what the Lord told the devil when he came to Him accusing Job?
   8. He said, "Behold, he is in thine hand; but **save his life**." ***(Job 2:6)***

9. In other words, "Do what you want to with Job, only **don't take his life**!"
10. The devil would have loved to kill Job, and most certainly would have, had God not had His hand of protection upon him.

C. Not only is the devil our adversary, but he has **many representatives** doing his work in the world today, and they too are our adversaries.
1. Listen to what Paul wrote to the young preacher, Timothy, in ***2 Tim. 3:12-13***, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution....But **evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse**."
2. Listen, as we go about doing God's work, we need to **pray daily for God's protection**.
3. And I'll tell you something else, we need to **pray for one another** as well.
4. We need to pray for God's hand of protection to be upon...
-our **pastors**,
-our **Sunday school teachers**,
-our **AWANA and teen leaders**,
-all those who are **involved in ministry** in this church.
5. Why? Because "...there are **many adversaries**."
6. (Illus.- Every time I hear about one of God's workers becoming one of the devil's victims, especially if it is a fellow pastor, I can't help but wonder if he had someone praying for him that God would protect him, and if not, would it have made a difference had someone been praying for him. I can't help but believe that it would have made a difference. Amen?)

D. And so, when doing the Lord's work, we are totally dependent upon His protection.

Conclusion:

A. Now I want to go back to my original question.
1. Why do we call the work that we do in the church and for the church "the Lord's work"?
2. We call it "the Lord's work" for at least three reasons.
3. First of all, we call it the Lord's work because in order to do it, we are totally dependent upon **His providence**.
4. We can't do anything **without God's permission**.
5. Secondly, it is the Lord's work because in order to do it, we are totally dependent upon **His power**.
6. We can't do anything **unless God by His power opens doors**.
7. Finally, it is the Lord's work because in order to do it, we are totally dependent upon **His protection**.
8. We can't do anything **unless God protects us from our many adversaries**.

B. Let me ask you a question, this morning.
1. Are you involved in the Lord's work?
2. If so, are you depending upon...
-His **providence**?

-His **power**?
-His **protection**?

3. If not, you are doomed to failure.
4. Isn't this what Jesus Himself told us in ***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**."?
5. Perhaps you have been trying to do the Lord's work without the Lord's help???

"Watch Ye"

Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 16:12-24

Introduction:

A. As we come to the end of Paul's first letter to the Corinthian believers, I must admit that I have mixed emotions.

1. **Part of me is happy**, because after 15 months of being in 1 Corinthians, we will now be able to move on to something **new**.
2. But at the same time, **part of me sad**, because **we have learned so much** from this study.
3. For example, we have learned the importance of **maintaining church unity**.
4. We have also learned the importance of **trusting in God's wisdom, rather than man's wisdom**.
5. We have also learned the importance of **growing spiritually and being prepared for the judgment seat of Christ**.
6. We have also learned the importance of **being good stewards with all that God has entrusted to us.**
7. We have also learned the importance of **maintaining church purity by exercising church discipline**.
8. We have also learned the importance of **settling our differences among ourselves, rather than taking one another to civil court**.
9. We have also learned the importance of **making the right choices in life when it comes to marriage**.
10. We have also learned the importance of being considerate of one another and not offending our weaker brother.
11. We have also learned the importance of **understanding and respecting the roles of men and women in the church**.
12. We have also learned the importance of **observing the Lord's supper the way that God meant for it to be observed**.
13. We have also learned the importance of **understanding the nature and purpose of spiritual gifts, and avoiding the misuse of these gifts**.
14. We have also learned the importance of **the resurrection of Christ, especially as it affects our own future resurrection**.
15. We have also learned the importance of **honoring God with our tithe on the first day of each week**.
16. And these are just some of the things that we have learned during the past 15 months.
17. And so, while **part of me of is happy** because we will now be able to move on to something new, **part of me is sad** because we have learned so much from this study.

B. Now how does Paul conclude this letter?

1. He does so by giving the Corinthian believers some, what I call, "last minute" admonitions.
2. For example, he admonishes them to be...

I. <u>Cautious</u> Christians.

A. Notice again the first two words in ***Vrs. 13***, Paul said, "**Watch** ye."
1. This is not the only admonition that we find in God's Word to "watch."
2. For example, in ***Col. 4:2***, the Bible says, "Continue in prayer, and **watch in the same** with thanksgiving;"
3. Also, in ***1 Thes. 5:6***, we read, "Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but **let us watch** and be sober."
4. Also, in ***2 Tim. 4:5***, it says, "But **watch thou** in all things,"
5. Finally, we read in ***1 Pet. 4:7***, "But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and **watch unto prayer**."
6. And so, over and over again, God's Word admonishes us to watch.

B. Now what does it mean to **"watch"**?
1. The word translated "watch ye" in our text comes from a Greek word that literally means **"to keep awake."**
2. It can also mean **"to be vigilant or watchful."**
3. Now this raises a question.
4. What exactly are we to be watching for?
5. Well, there are a lot of things that can harm us spiritually.
6. For example, **the devil** can harm us spiritually, if we are not careful.
7. This is why we are told in **1 Pet. 5:8**, **"Be sober, be vigilant (watchful);** because **your adversary the devil**, as a roaring lion, walketh about, **seeking whom he may devour**:"

C. Not only can the devil harm us spiritually, but there are many other things that can harm us as well.
1. For example, we should watch out for **temptation**.
2. Do you remember what Jesus told his disciples, after finding them sleeping in the garden?
3. He said this to them, "**Watch** and pray, **that ye enter not into temptation**: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." ***(Mat. 26:41)***
4. Now I realize that some temptations cannot be avoided, because they come upon us suddenly and without any warning.
5. However, having said that, I am also convinced that **many temptations can be avoided, if we will just watch for them**!
6. Of course, when we see them coming, we must take evasive actions. (Illus.- It has been said that he who sees temptation coming, yet does not take measures to avoid that temptation, is not very wise. I would agree!)

D. Now only should we watch out for temptation, but we should also watch out for **false teachers**.

1. Do you remember the warning that Paul gave to the elders from the church at Ephesus, when he met with them for the last time?
2. He told them, "For I know this, that after my departing shall **grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock**....Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to **draw away disciples** after them....**Therefore watch**, and remember, that by the space of three years **I ceased not to warn every one** night and day with tears." ***(Acts 20:29-31)***
3. Jesus put it like this in ***Mat. 7:15***, "**Beware of false prophets**, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but **inwardly they are ravening wolves**."
4. If there were false prophets in Jesus' day and in Paul's day, you can be sure that there are false prophets in our day. (Amen?)
5. By the way, our best defense against false prophets is to **be well grounded in the Word of God** ourselves.
6. If we know the truth of God's Word, it is not likely that we will be led astray by false teaching.

E. Not only should we watch out for temptation and false teachers, but we should also watch out for **covetousness**.
1. Listen to what Jesus said in ***Luke 12:15***, "**Take heed, and beware of covetousness**: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."
2. I've so many Christians who, while they didn't fall prey to temptation (immorality) or false teachers, **they did fall prey to covetousness**.
3. Their Christian lives were made totally ineffective by **their greed** for the things of this world.
4. We should remind ourselves often of the words found in ***1 John 2:15,17***, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world....And **the world passeth away**."
5. How foolish it is to live our lives for something that one day is going to pass away!

F. And so, first of all, Paul admonished these Corinthian believers to be **cautions Christians**.
1. **We too need to be cautious Christians**.
2. Why? Because there are a lot of things in this world, things like...
   -**temptation**,
   -**false teachers**,
   -**covetousness** (greed),
   -not to mention **the devil** himself,
   that can **harm (ruin)** us spiritually.
3. So we must **be "on guard" at all times**!

G. Notice, secondly, that Paul not only admonished these Corinthian believers to be **cautious** Christians, but he also admonished them to be...

II. <u>Constant</u> Christians.

A. Notice again ***Vrs. 13*** of our text, "Watch ye, **stand fast in the faith**."
1. Now what does it mean to "**stand fast** in the faith"?
2. Well, the words "**stand fast**" are translated from the Greek word "**steko**," which literally means to "**be stationary**."
3. In other words, it means to "**not move**," or to "**be firmly fixed in one place**."
4. And so, when Paul admonished these Corinthian believers to "**stand fast in the faith**," he was actually telling them to "be stationary and to not be moved away from **their faith in God and in His Word**."
5. In other words, to "be **constant** Christians."

B. Let's face it, there are so many believers today who are anything but "constant Christians."
1. The expression that I would use to describe these believers is "**wishy washy**."
2. What is a "wishy washy" Christian?
3. A "wishy washy" Christian is a believer who is **easily moved away** from his faith and his devotion to God.
4. He has no **firmness**.
5. He has no **steadfastness**.
6. He has no **constancy in His Christian life**.
7. The **least little thing** will deter him from doing what God would have him to do with his life.
8. He's "wishy washy."

C. Why are so many believers today "wishy washy"?
1. It is because they **have not grown spiritually**.
2. It is because they **are still spiritually immature**.
3. It is because, as Paul put it in ***1 Cor. 3:1***, they are still "**babes in Christ**."
4. Notice again ***Vrs. 13*** of our text, "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, **quit you like men**, be strong."
5. Now what did Paul mean when he said, "...**quit you** like men."
6. He simply meant, "**act like men.**"
7. In other words, "**Grow up!**"

D. Now this raises a question.
1. **How** does a believer grow spiritually?
2. There is really only one way to grow spiritually, and that is to **spend time in God's Word**.
3. The Bible says in ***1 Pet. 2:2***, As newborn babes, **desire the sincere milk of the word**, that ye may **grow thereby**:"
4. Of course,...
   -being faithful in church will help,
   -fellow shipping with other believers will help,
   -listening to good Bible teachers on the radio will help,

but the bottom line is, one **cannot** grow spiritually without **spending time in God's Word**.

5. Why do you think the devil works so hard trying to keep us out of the Word?
6. It is because he doesn't want us to...
   -**grow spiritually**,
   -**become spiritually mature**,
   -**become firm, steadfast, constant Christians**,
   he would much rather that we be "wishy washy."

E. And so, secondly, Paul admonished these believers to be constant Christians.
1. We too need to be constant Christians! (Amen?)
2. We too need to be Christians who will...
   -be **stationary**,
   -**not be moved**,
   -be **firmly fixed** in our faith and our devotion to God.
3. Are you this kind of a Christian?

F. Finally, this morning, not only did Paul admonish the Corinthian believers to be **cautious** Christians and **constant** Christians, but he also admonished them to be...

III. <u>Caring</u> Christians.

A. Notice again ***Vrs. 14*** of our text, "Let all your things be done **with charity**."
1. You know, this is not the first time in this letter that Paul has addressed the subject of charity (**love**).
2. In fact, he devoted **a whole chapter**, ***chapter 13***, to the subject of charity (love).
3. Listen to how that chapter begins, Paul said, "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**....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**....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**." ***(Vrs. 1-3)***
4. And now, in one of his final admonitions to this church, he says, "**Let all things be done with charity**."
5. You sort of get the idea that charity (love) is important! (Amen?)

B. Now please don't misunderstand what I am about to say.
1. There is a sense in which we, as Christians, should be...
   -**stubborn**,
   -**hard headed**,
   -even somewhat **obstinate**,
   especially when it comes to **standing for truth** and **standing against sin**.
2. When it comes to false teaching and immorality, there is no justification for tolerance! (Christians should be absolutely intolerant of these things!)

3. But at the same time, we must be very careful to couple (combine) love with our **stubbornness**, and with our **hardheadedness**, and with our **obstinacy**.
4. (Illus.- Let me illustrate. Suppose a Jehovah's witness knocks on your door. Now for sure, part of you needs to be stubborn and hardheaded and obstinate, in that you **absolutely refuse to give an ear to their false teaching**. However, at the same time, you should lovingly make an effort to reach out to them with the truth. While we should **hate the false doctrine** that Jehovah's witnesses espouse, we should **love them** as we would any lost sinner in need of Christ.)
5. (Illus.- Let me give you another illustration. Suppose it should become necessary to discipline a member of this church for open and unrepentant immorality. Now for sure, part of us needs to be stubborn and hardheaded and obstinate, in that we **absolutely refuse to tolerate this kind of immorality** in the church. However, at the same time, we should lovingly reach out to the offending brother, and encourage him to repent so that he can be brought back into the fold.)
6. It's like this, we should **hate** the sin, but **love** the sinner!

C. By the way, love is something that should be **demonstrated by our actions**.
1. Bible says in **1 John 3:18**, "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth."
2. It's not enough just to tell someone that you love them, but we should demonstrate our love by our actions.
3. Love is a lot like faith.
4. The Bible says that "faith without works" is worthless.
5. The same thing can be said of love, love without works is totally worthless.
6. How can we demonstrate our love?
7. By ministering to the needs of one another.
8. Look again at Vrs. 15 of our text, and notice what Paul said about a convert named Stephanas and his family, "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**,)"
9. Not only did this Christian family minister to the needs of other saints, Paul said that they had become addicted to that ministry.
10. This is **one addiction that I would encourage**.
11. Want to get "high," then get "high" on helping others!

Conclusion:

A. What final admonitions did Paul give to the Corinthian believers?
1. First, he admonished them to be cautions Christians. (He said, "Watch ye.")
2. Secondly, he admonished them to be constant Christians. (He said, **"stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong."**)
3. Finally, he admonished them to be caring Christians.(He said, **"Let all your things be done with charity."**)

B. As I prepare to close, let me ask you three questions. Are you a **cautious** Christian? Are you a **constant** Christian? Are you a **caring** Christian?

PROBLEMS OF A PRIMITIVE CHURCH

Paul's first letter to Corinth addresses a congregation rich in gifts, yet troubled by division, moral compromise, disorder, and spiritual immaturity. In this collection of expository sermons, Pastor Mike Withem follows the letter passage by passage, drawing clear lessons for the local church and the individual believer. These studies call Christians to stand fast in the faith, grow in spiritual maturity, serve one another in love, and do all things to the glory of God.

"Watch ye, stand fast in the faith...
Let all your things be done with charity."

1 Corinthians 16:13-14

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