

1 Corinthians

[2nd Edition – May 2006]

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Introduction

Lesson 1

A. Paul in Corinth

Read Acts 18:1-17

1. In AD 52 the Apostle Paul spent 18 months in Corinth.
2. In this short time he managed to establish a brand new church, which did not lack any spiritual gifts. 1 Corinthians 1:4-9.
3. These 18 months of activity are compiled into only 17 verses. We therefore actually know little of Paul's wonderful ministry.

B. Paul uses the natural contact point

Read verses 2 and 4 again

1. In this strange city he finds a fellow countryman (Aquila, who was a Jew). He was even of the same trade as Paul.
2. Can you imagine Paul saying, "Hello, so you also make tents, can I help you...?" (This couple were probably Paul's first converts.)
3. Then he goes to the Jewish Synagogue, where all Jews were given an opportunity to speak and share.
4. Several got converted, including the ruler of the Synagogue, before Paul was thrown out.
5. They then formed the first church in Corinth, in the house of Justus, next door to the Synagogue.
6. After Paul left, Apollos the teacher arrived and spent some time building up the church. Acts 19:1.

C. Difficulties and problems for the young church in this wicked city

(See Teacher's Notes on the conditions in Corinth.)

1. It seems easier to stand against persecution than against carnality, temptations and worldliness.
2. That was the problem in Corinth, where they fell far short of God's standard for Christian living.

D. The reason for the letter to the church of Corinth

1. The first letter to Corinth was written in AD 55, three years after the church was founded.

Teacher's Note

There was an earlier letter from Paul, as indicated in 1 Corinthians 5:9-10 but it has been lost, although some Bible scholars think that 2 Corinthians 6:14 – 7:1 is that letter.

2. Paul, who at that time was in Ephesus, received information through letters and visitors from Corinth that the young church was in great trouble. See 1:11, 5:1 and 7:1.
3. Paul, greatly disturbed by the sad news, wrote (dictated) 1 Corinthians, mightily inspired by the Holy Spirit.

E. Problems in the church of Corinth

1. From Paul's letter we can see that there were many problems facing the church in Corinth.
 - a) Division and jealousy. 1:10-12.
 - b) Immorality. 5:1-5 and 6:15-20.
 - c) Lawsuits against each other. 6:1-8.
 - d) Marital problems. 7:1-40.
 - e) Abuse of the Lord's Supper. 11:17-34.
 - f) Misuse of spiritual gifts. Chapters 12 and 14.
 - g) False teaching concerning resurrection. 15:12-58.
2. The problems in Corinth have repeated themselves throughout church history. Therefore God's answers, through Paul, are as relevant today as then.

F. The opening greeting

Read 1 Corinthians 1:1-9

1. **Please take note of the fact that Paul doesn't start out with any accusations.** He does not even mention their problems at this stage.
2. **He reminds them what and who they are in Christ. Verse 2.**
 - a) You are the church (Ekklesia). God's called-out people.

- b) “You are sanctified in Jesus”. It is by His accomplished work on Calvary. Ephesians 2:8, “It is by grace you have been saved, through faith, it is not by works, it is a gift of God”.
- c) “You are called to be saints”, set apart for God, you belong completely to Jesus Christ!
- d) You belong to His blood-washed, worldwide people, called the Body of Christ. “All who everywhere call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ”.

You do not just belong to a local church or denomination.

3. He reminds them of their wonderful beginning in God’s grace. Verses 5-7.

- a) Remember how you were **enriched in everything**. A wonderful change happened in their lives.
- b) Remember how the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you – surely, with signs and wonders, and the fullness of the Spirit.
- c) Remember how you received all the spiritual gifts – “You do not lack any spiritual gifts”.
- d) Waiting eagerly for the revelation of Jesus Christ.

4. He reminds them of God’s faithfulness. Verses 8-9.

- a) God’s grace and faithfulness will keep you to the end.
- b) God’s grace and faithfulness will bring you to perfection. “That you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ”.

5. Victorious Christian living is possible only in Christ.

- a) In this opening greeting, Paul mentions Jesus Christ ten times:

“We are called in Him, sanctified in Him, showered with grace and peace in Him, enriched with spiritual gifts in Him, kept to the end in Him, called into fellowship with God in Him”.
- b) Paul wanted them, and us, to understand that Jesus is the answer to all our problems and shortcomings. Only in Him can we succeed. Colossians 2:9, “In Him dwells the whole fullness of the Godhead bodily, and you are complete in Him”.

Memory verse

John 15:4, “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me”.

Teacher's Notes

Corinth was a wicked city:

1. Its place on the map.

The southern part of Greece is nearly an island, only joined to the mainland by a narrow strip of land, about four miles across. Corinth was situated on this narrow strip. This meant that all traffic going north or south had to pass Corinth. The traffic going from east to west also had to pass the city because it was extremely dangerous to sail south of Greece around Cape Malea. So Corinth had two harbours and smaller ships were pulled across the narrow strip. The cargo of bigger ships was off-loaded and loaded onto another ship on the other side.

This means:

- a) All traffic passed through Corinth.
- b) Sailors from all over the known world visited Corinth, bringing all their bad influences with them.
- c) The city was rich and filled with goods from all over.
- d) In Paul's time, Corinth was the Roman capital of that part of the world.
- e) There were big schools of art and philosophy.
- f) It was the second most important place for the Olympic Games.
- g) The city had 12 temples for Greek gods.

2. The population of Corinth in Paul's time.

There were about 600 000 to 700 000 people from many parts of the world. About 400 000 of them were slaves.

3. The wickedness of Corinth.

As a double harbour city, it was filled with drunkenness, immorality and reckless living. The temple of Aphrodite, the goddess of love, was situated there. This temple had one thousand "woman priests" who were "sacred prostitutes", who at night time flooded the city with their "secret mission".

This was surely a very difficult place for a young church to develop in a healthy and holy way!

Division in the church

Lesson 2

A. Introduction

Division and disunity is the first serious problem Paul deals with, because it is the fertile soil in which many other evils grow, such as jealousy, strife, suspicion, gossip, etc. It is a clear sign of carnality, 1 Corinthians 3:1-4, which can only produce problems, like the many we find in the Corinthian church. Galatians 5:19-21. Division is one of Satan's major tools to get his way in the church. (See Teacher's notes)

B. The natural groups in the Corinthian church

1. The church consisted of many different groups.

The Jews, the gentiles, the slaves, the men, the women, the influential people, the intellectual people, the rich, the poor, and so on.

But all these were supposed to melt together in the love of Christ. Galatians 3:28, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus".

2. Satan used this to divide them.

- a) There were four parties: Paul, Apollos, Peter and Jesus.
- b) They may have been divided in the following way:
 - i) Around Paul rallied the gentiles, the slaves and the poor.
 - ii) Around Apollos rallied the influential, rich and intellectuals.
 - iii) Around Peter rallied the Jews.
 - iv) Some said, "I belong to Christ", but they were still a party. Their real fault was not that they said, "I belong to Christ", but probably they acted as if Christ belonged to them **only**. They were a small, intolerant, self-righteous group, "the holy club".

3. The natural groups in the church today.

- a) There are many natural groupings in the church today, such as the rich, the poor, men and women, the different races, the businessmen, the ministers, etc.
- b) This variety can make the church rich and colourful.
- c) Let us guard against "groups", "cliques" and even "holy clubs".

C. Paul's dealing with the problem of disunity

1. The right approach.

Read verse 10

- a) "I appeal to you", (or plead with you). It is not an attack or a "critical, pointing finger" but a burning, loving heart pleading with them.
- b) He makes the statement even stronger by using the word "brothers". It is not the great apostle or the "schoolmaster" speaking down to them, **but a loving brother**. They are also reminded that they are brothers and should live in brotherly love.
- c) He puts the strongest power of all behind his appeal by saying, "in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord".

Illustration: If I appeal to you not to park your car in front of my gate, you could choose to ignore it. But if I appeal to you in the name of the Chief of Police, my appeal becomes much more powerful. How much more when Paul appeals in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ whose whole message was "love one another", and whose final prayer was, "that they may be one".

- d) Here Paul uses the full title: Jesus Christ **our Lord** – so we had better obey Him.

2. "That you all speak the same thing", verse 10.

- a) Division always begins with the tongue. When Aaron and Miriam rose up against Moses, they said, "Are you the only one God has spoken to?" Numbers 12:1. Soon that attitude spread to 250 other leaders in Israel. Numbers 16:2.
- b) The Apostle James writes that the tongue is like a little fire that can set a great forest aflame. James 3:5.
- c) What has taken years to build up can burn down in a few hours. Many churches have experienced this.
- d) **"Speak the same thing"** means to have a unified testimony and vision – to be of the same opinion.

3. "Be perfectly joined together", verse 10.

Perfectly joined – like a human body. If your body were not perfectly joined together, you would be unable to function properly. Ephesians 4:16.

4. "The same mind and thoughts", verse 10.

Read 2 Corinthians 10:3-5

- a) Is that really possible? Yes, but only if we all have the mind of Christ. Philippians 2:5.
- b) We are encouraged to bring "every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ".
- c) We cannot stop thoughts from coming, but negative, critical thoughts should be captured and thrown out.

A Proverb:

You cannot stop the birds from flying over your head, but you can stop them building a nest in your hair.

5. Do not be a "worshipper" of men, verses 12 and 13.

Read 1 Corinthians 3:5-9

- a) Paul says we are just workers, servants and gardeners.
- b) We have different gifts, but we can only work according to the grace God gives us. Verse 7.
- c) Paul even says, "we servants **are one**", verse 8. So please do not make divisions around us.
- d) If God's servants could truly say the same today, we would be a long way down the road to unity.

6. Paul proves strongly that we together belong to Christ and to Him alone.

Read 1 Corinthians 1:13

- a) His first question is, "Who was crucified for you?" It was no spiritual leader – it was nobody else but Jesus. You were bought at a price (a very high price), do not become slaves of men. 1 Corinthians 7:23.
- b) His second question is, "In whose name were you baptized?"
 - i) **Read Romans 6:3.** It tells us that we are baptized **into** Christ Jesus, **into** His death, buried with Him and raised with Him to a completely new life.
 - ii) The Greek word for "into" indicates that we willingly give ourselves to His ownership, "a love-slave relationship".
 - iii) Romans 6 goes on to say, "Reckon yourself to be dead to sin, and alive to God in Christ Jesus".
 - iv) That leaves no place for a party spirit or any other sin.

Memory verse

John 17:21, *"I pray that they all may be one, as You, Father are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be one in Us that the world may believe that You have sent Me".*

Teacher's notes

Disunity is a satanic "quality".

Disunity started at the throne of God!

1. When Lucifer rebelled and broke the wonderful unity of heaven, he was thrown out together with his satanic host.
2. When man fell in the Garden of Eden, Satan had planted that terrible seed in his nature.
3. See what the sinful human nature looks like:

Read Galatians 5:19-21

Things like: enmity – strife – jealousy – anger – selfishness – dissensions – factions.

4. So when the carnal, sinful nature reigns, it will always create disunity.
5. It manifested itself right from the beginning.
 - a) When there were only a few people on earth: Cain killed Abel. Genesis 4:6-10.
 - b) It even manifested itself in the close circle of disciples around Jesus. Luke 2:24. There was also rivalry among them.
 - c) That was the root cause of all the problems in Corinth. 1 Corinthians 3:3, "...you are still carnal ..."
6. Satan knows the result of disunity, which Jesus so clearly stated, ".... every city or house divided against itself **will not stand!**" Matthew 12:25.

The central message of the church

Lesson 3

Read 1 Corinthians 1:18-31 and 2:1-16

A. Introduction

When worldliness, carnality and disunity rule in the church, the Cross of Christ loses its central place and human wisdom and philosophy become important.

That is what had happened in Corinth, and here the Apostle Paul sets man's wisdom and God's wisdom up against each other.

He proves that there is no comparison between the two, and that there is no solution if we go according to man's wisdom.

B. God's wisdom, expressed in "Christ crucified"

1. Foolish to the human mind.

Read 1 Corinthians 1:18

- a) How can the Almighty, Eternal God, the Creator of all things suffer and die at the hand of His creation...?
- b) In fact, it was a most cruel and humiliating death.
- c) What real power could there be in that? How would that be able to help man throughout history?
- d) The human mind will say, "Don't speak so much about all this 'blood theology'. Let us concentrate on brotherhood, love and social upliftment".

2. To the Jews it was a "stumbling block".

Read verse 23

- a) Christ means "the anointed one" which is the same as "Messiah".
- b) To the Jews, the Messiah was going to be a victorious King, ruling from the throne of David.
- c) To them "Christ crucified" was total foolishness.

3. Christ crucified is God's wisdom.

Read 1 Peter 1:18-20

- a) The Cross was not just a quick plan God made, it has a very central place right throughout history.

- b) In fact, there is a "red thread of blood" going right through the Bible from eternity past to eternity future, which points to the Cross.
 - i) In God's council room in eternity past the plan concerning Christ, the Lamb of God, was made. 1 Peter 1:20.
 - ii) Adam and Eve were covered by blood, since animals were killed to provide skins to cover their nakedness.
 - iii) Israel was delivered from Egypt by blood. They smeared blood on the doorposts so that the angel of death would pass them by.
 - iv) There are millions of blood sacrifices for the atonement of sin in the Old Testament.
 - v) The "Lord's table" right throughout church history points to the Cross.
 - vi) The theme of the song in eternity future is the blood.
- c) There was only one person great enough to pay the ransom price to cover all the sin of the world – God Himself – as the sacrificial lamb.

4. Christ crucified is God's power.

Read Colossians 2:14-15

- a) At the Cross all our sin and guilt is washed away; blotted out.
- b) At the Cross God's demand for the righteous judgement of sin is perfectly satisfied. Romans 3:23-25.
- c) At the Cross the power of Satan is totally broken. Hebrews 2:14.
- d) The Cross can bring us back into a deep, wonderful, love-relationship with God. Colossians 1:19-22.

5. The Cross is God's perfect solution.

Read Colossians 1:20

- a) "All things" – anyone can be reconciled to God by the blood of the Cross.
- b) The person who has fallen deeply into sin, the one that man would regard as hopeless, that person can be raised up to wholeness at the foot of the Cross.

That is God's wisdom – that is God's power!

6. What can "man's wisdom" do with the real problems and needs of the human race?

- a) **Man's real needs are:** Healing, peace, joy, satisfaction, a warm relationship with man and God.

- b) **Man's real problems are:** sin, guilt and slavery to evil, death and hell.
- c) What answer does man's wisdom have to all this? Absolutely nothing! Man's wisdom has utterly failed where it really counts.

The wisdom of man is foolish! 1 Corinthians 1:20.

- d) But Christ crucified, is the solution to all of man's problems and needs.

7. Let us glory (boast) in Him and His finished work. (and nothing else)

Read 1 Corinthians 1:26-31

- a) There is nothing in ourselves we can boast of, "I am just a sinner, saved by grace".
- b) But by grace I am in Him. Verse 30.
 - i) He is my wisdom – now "we speak the wisdom of God", 1 Corinthians 2:7.
 - ii) He is my righteousness – a right standing with God.
 - iii) He is my sanctification – separated for God.
 - iv) He is my redemption – totally set free.
- c) We are called only to speak and boast about what He is and what He has done. Verse 31.

C. Let the message of the Cross sound clearly!

1. Paul's determination.

Read 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

- a) Paul arrived in Corinth to this "nest" of worldly wisdom (Greek philosophy was known all over the world).
- b) But he had made a clear decision and was determined not to mix "worldly wisdom" with the wonderful gospel of Christ.
- c) Paul could easily have argued intellectually with the worldly wise. He was educated in one of the best schools under Gamaliel. He was also trained to be a Pharisee.
- d) He knew, however, that the way to reach and revive the spirit of man was not through his head, but through his heart.
- e) Very few people (if any at all) are won over and changed by arguments.

2. **The right use of the "pulpit".**

Read 1 Corinthians 2:2

- a) The "pulpit" is not for performance or demonstration of homiletical skills – that only leads to pride.
- b) The "pulpit" is not for humanistic and nationalistic ideas.
- c) The "pulpit" is not for political statements.
- d) The "pulpit" is for nothing other than the pure gospel of Christ. "For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified".

Illustration: In a certain church they had a beautiful stained glass window just behind the pulpit. It illustrated Christ. The local minister was a very big man but one day they had a guest speaker who was a very small man and, as he stood in the pulpit, a little boy asked his mother, "Where is the man that usually stands there so that we cannot see Jesus?"

- e) Let us be careful to portray Jesus Christ in all His glory, and never to stand in His way with our own wisdom.

3. **The danger of mixing the message with human wisdom.**

Read 1 Corinthians 1:17

- a) Human wisdom makes the Cross of no effect and, therefore, nobody will get saved and nobody will get changed with that kind of message.
- b) Human wisdom will never be anointed by the Holy Spirit, and will therefore be completely powerless. **Read 1 Corinthians 2:14.**

4. **The right way to proclaim the message of Christ.**

Read 1 Corinthians 2:1-5 again

- a) **As a living witness:** "... declaring to you the testimony of God"

This is an expression from the legal courts. What is a testimony?

- i) A first hand experience.
- ii) A statement of clear facts.
- iii) "The truth and nothing but the truth".

Jesus said, "You are my witnesses". We are called to speak out of experience the wonderful truth about Jesus and nothing else.

- b) **In fear and much trembling.**
 - i) I don't think Paul was afraid or nervous, but the great burden of this powerful message rested upon him.
 - ii) There was a certain "fear" of not proclaiming it correctly. Ephesians 6:19.
 - iii) May God put that kind of fear and trembling on His messengers today.
- c) **In demonstration of the Spirit's power.**
 - i) The messenger must be very sensitive to the Holy Spirit – to move and act on His prompting.
 - ii) The demonstration may also be in the use of the supernatural, spiritual gifts. 1 Corinthians 12:7.
 - iii) The wonderful transformation in the lives of the people in the congregation is a demonstration of the power of the Spirit. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11.
 - iv) Jesus promised that the signs of the Holy Spirit would follow the proclamation of the Word. Mark 16:15-18.
 - v) Let us expect the sovereign move of the Spirit.

5. **The Holy Spirit is the only one who can reveal the message to us in all its fullness.**

Read 1 Corinthians 2:6-12

- a) The message of the gospel is beyond what we can imagine, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him". Verse 9.
- b) "But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit". The "deep things" of God can only be understood by the Spirit of God. Verse 10-12.
- c) Paul says, "When we speak about these things we speak with words taught to us by the Holy Spirit". Verse 13.
- d) That is the only way to speak about these wonderful things. May God give us grace!

Memory verse

1 Corinthians 1:18, *"For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God".*

Grow up to maturity

Lesson 4

A. Introduction

Read 1 Corinthians 3:1-11

In this passage Paul shows us that the actual reason for carnality and strife is immaturity. They are still "babes in Christ" and are not able to receive the solid food of the Word. There is a strong encouragement to grow up to maturity. 1 Corinthians 3:1-3.

The goal set for the church.

Read Ephesians 4:13-16

1. Here the Word states, "We should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind..." verse 14.
2. We should "grow up in all things into Him who is the head – Christ" verse 15.
3. And this is how far we should grow: "...to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" verse 13.
4. So we have some growing up to do – the Bible tells us that "in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily". Colossians 2:9.

B. Three illustrations are used to encourage growth

1. **The church is like a family (with babies) 1 Corinthians 3:1-4.**
The goal here is growth to maturity.
2. **The church is like a field. 1 Corinthians 3:5-9.**
The goal here is growth in quantity.
3. **The church is like a building, a temple. 1 Corinthians 3:9-17.**
The goal here is growth in quality. Pleasing to God and Him alone!

Let us go through these illustrations one by one and obtain valuable teaching from them.

1. The church is like a family.

Read 1 Corinthians 3:1-4. Growth to maturity.

- a) **Leaders in the church must be "spiritual fathers/mothers" who produce "spiritual children" and who bring them up to maturity.**

In Galatians 4:19 Paul writes, "My little children, for whom I labour in birth again until Christ is formed in you". (The next lesson will deal in greater depth with this role.)

b) **The spiritual children.**

- i) The newly saved people are "babes in Christ" and must be treated as such.
- ii) A baby needs milk and not solid food – that could actually make him sick or kill him. 1 Peter 2:2.

The "milk" of the Word consists of the first foundational principles about repentance, baptism, faith in Christ, etc. Hebrews 5:12-14.

The "solid food" is the deeper doctrines of the Word, which the newly saved person would not understand and could even be offended by.

iii) **A natural baby needs special care; otherwise it could develop into a malformed person. The same applies to spiritual children.**

- **They need love, fellowship and encouragement.** These things are nearly as important as food (without these a natural baby will not develop properly).
- **They need discipline.** A child who is never disciplined, who can do exactly as he/she pleases, will be a spoiled and useless child. Discipline is therefore also necessary for spiritual children. Hebrews 12:5-11.
- **They need to experiment** with what those that are mature do. They should be encouraged and they should be allowed to make mistakes without being criticized. Let that happen for the newly converted in the church.

iv) **What we must expect from the "children":**

- **Constant growth and development.** If a ten-year-old child is still crawling around and can do very little for himself, we know that there is something wrong and we must take action. What about a ten-year-old Christian who can do very little for himself?
- **We expect him/her to take on more and more responsibility** and to take an active part in the work and activities of the home. In the same way a spiritual child should take part in his/her spiritual home.
- **We expect, as he/she matures, that all childish behaviour should disappear.** Paul also expected this from the church in Corinth. 1 Corinthians 3:1-4.
- **We expect all children to grow up to full maturity and adulthood.** We must work at, and expect, the same when it comes to spiritual children.

2. The church is like a field.

Read 1 Corinthians 3:5-9. Growth in quantity.

- a) The church, like a field, should be worked with, so that it is open and receptive to the seed of the Word and the prompting of the Holy Spirit.
- b) The expectation is that each plant (each Christian) should constantly grow and develop and bring forth fruit according to "its kind". (Remember that there are different gifts).
- c) **Leaders should be like gardeners.**
 - i) They must work with "the field" to make it ready. The prophet Hosea said, "Break up your fallow ground...". "Fallow ground" is hard ground that has not been used for a long time. Hosea 10:12.
 - ii) The whole field (the whole church) should be used to bring forth fruit for the Lord.
 - iii) They should sow plenty of the seed of the Word. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 & 4:1-2.
 - iv) They must water and fertilize each plant; that means encourage, exhort and counsel each believer.
 - v) They should always be ready to root out all weeds, prune and cleanse the "plants" from anything that does not belong to the Christian life.

Teacher's notes

Diversity, but unity in the ministry

See 1 Corinthians 3:5-8.

- 1. Paul, Apollos and probably Peter all visited Corinth and gave wonderful and different ministries into the church. 1 Corinthians 1:12.
- 2. This diversity of ministry is good for the growth of the church.
- 3. But Paul says, we are "one" in unity and purpose; we are servants working in "God's field". He is the one who gives the growth and He must have all the glory. Verse 8.
- 4. Ministers should never work to create a "fan-club" or "party" around himself or herself.
- 5. Only when all the different ministries work together in unity will we see perfect growth in the field (the church). Study Ephesians 4:1-16.

3. The church is like a building; a temple.

Read 1 Corinthians 3:9-17. Growth in quality.

- a) The church as a building, a temple, built with "living stones", which means that all the members are joined together in unity and love. 1 Peter 2:5.

The purpose of this spiritual temple:

- i) That God can dwell among us and reveal His grace, power and glory. Ephesians 2:20-22.
- ii) A spiritual temple for the service of God where sacrifices of praise will be offered.

- b) **The servants are called "master builders" – God wants quality!**

- i) We must build on the right foundation, verse 11: Jesus Christ, who is also called the "chief cornerstone". Ephesians 2:20.

The cornerstone was the very first stone to be laid when a building was erected in those days and the other stones were related to that one. All measurements for the whole building were taken from that stone.

- ii) Make sure that all members in the church are placed "on Jesus": properly saved by His grace.

- c) We must build with the right material.

1 Corinthians 3:12-17 speaks about the quality of the "stones" we build with.

Wood, hay and straw.

What kind of material – what kind of Christian character is that?

- i) **Very cheap stuff:** "My Christianity must cost me as little as possible".
- ii) **Very temporary:** It is weak and will never endure hardship; will easily turn rotten.
- iii) **Very light stuff:** It will be blown around by any wind of doctrine.
- iv) **It is all found on the surface:** It takes no effort, no dedication.

Verse 15. A Christian character such as this will do no lasting work for the Lord. The person will be saved, however, because we are saved by grace, not by works. Ephesians 2:8-9.

- d) **Gold, silver and precious stones.**

This stands for a sanctified, dedicated Christian character.

- i) **Very precious and valuable:** "The genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold...." 1 Peter 1:7.
 - ii) **Very enduring:** "Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things...." Matthew 25:23.
 - iii) **Solid and everlasting:** "... he who does the will of God abides forever". 1 John 2:17.
 - iv) **It is not superficial stuff:** You must dig for it. It takes great effort and dedication to get hold of this Godly character. Hebrews 12:1-2.
- e) **Develop the right kind of material.**

Read Hebrews 5:12-14

- i) This Scripture tells us that the Word, starting with the “milk” and going on to the solid food, develops the Christian character.
 - ii) It also speaks about training and exercising oneself to walk and live in the Word.
- f) **The sad result of building with the wrong material.**

Read 1 Corinthians 3:13-17

- i) The result will be weak, useless and eventually burnt up by fire.
- ii) Many works have been destroyed because they did not have God's quality of holiness.

Memory verse

Ephesians 4:15, "*.... speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head – Christ*".

Our attitude towards the ministry

Lesson 5

Read 1 Corinthians 4:1-21

A. Introduction

One of the great problems in the Corinthian church (even in the church today) was that people made parties around men and their ministries. We must avoid extremes when it comes to evaluating ministers and their ministries.

1. On the one hand we can elevate them to a position that is far too high.

Read 1 Corinthians 4:6-7

- a) **Some ministers are exalted** like chiefs or kings. They get special treatment, an especially good chair, special choice food, etc.
- b) **People praise and "worship" them** for the work God is doing through them.
- c) **It is even worse** if the minister expects that kind of treatment and accepts the praise and adulation.
- d) **The danger of that kind of attitude is:**
 - i) That both the minister and the people can become "puffed up" and filled with pride.
 - ii) This leads to the withdrawal of God's blessing and their eventual downfall.
- e) **Keep a humble attitude**, verse 7.
 - i) The only thing that makes ministers different is the gift that God has bestowed on them. It is not of themselves.
 - ii) That is why God should have all the glory and He is the only one we should exalt.
 - iii) Everyone should of course love, respect and honour each other.

Illustration: If a musician, a master, plays wonderfully on an instrument, we would never praise and exalt the instrument, only the master who played it. A minister is just an instrument, used by the Master.

2. On the other hand we can judge, criticize and isolate the servants of God.

Read 1 Corinthians 4:3-5

- a) A minister is often criticized for his sermons, his actions or lack of action. Even his personality will be scrutinized. After the Sunday morning service, he will be "eaten up" at the dinner table!
- b) **Men judge by the wrong standard.**
 - i) Men judge others according to their own limited understanding.
 - ii) According to personal preference, they compare minister with minister, e.g. he is too stiff – too quiet – too loud – too wild, etc.
 - iii) Criticism is often caused by wrong systems in the church, where one person has to do everything and has to cover all the different ministries required.
- c) **Men judge with the wrong motive.**
 - i) The cause could very easily be envy and selfishness.
 - ii) It could also be because of a party spirit, as it was in Corinth.
- d) **A minister (a servant) must put himself beyond people's judgement.**
 - i) As the Apostle Paul puts it in verse 3, "But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a human court".
 - ii) "You can say what you like, but I have to be faithful to the call and the ministry God has entrusted to me". That must be every servant's attitude.
- e) **"I do not even judge myself", says Paul.**
 - i) It is difficult to come to an exact assessment of one's own achievements.
 - ii) Man's judgement of himself can be clouded by many things:
 - One is self-satisfaction ("I did really well"), which could lead to pride.
 - Another is self-condemnation (the opposite) with feelings of inadequacy, which leads to despair.
- f) **Leave all judgement to God. Verse 4.**
 - i) Let the Holy Spirit search you and direct you. He knows all circumstances and the deepest motives of the heart.
 - ii) "Then each one's praise will come from God", verse 5. God's approval is really the only thing that counts.

B. The ministry is only for those who are willing to lay down their own lives

Read 1 Corinthians 4:8-13

1. The clear teaching of Jesus.

Read Matthew 16:24

- a) “If you will follow Me, deny yourself, take up your cross.....”
- b) The cross stands for any adverse condition or situation that following Jesus could require.
- c) For the early church it meant rejection, persecution and martyrdom for tens of thousands of believers.

2. Paul makes it very clear that the ministry is not for personal gain or elevation.

- a) The list Paul produces in 1 Corinthians 4:9-13 can only be endured by people who have a clear call from God to the ministry.
- b) See also the list in 2 Corinthians 11:23-33 and you will understand that the ministry is not for people who are looking for an easy life in prosperity or glamour.

3. But there is great reward for the faithful servant.

Read Mark 10:29-30

- a) Jesus speaks about a hundredfold reward both in this present time and in the age to come, in eternity.
- b) When we compare the spiritual riches and deep fellowship with the Lord to what the world can offer, the riches of the world fade into insignificance. Philippians 3:7-11.

C. How to consider the minister and how the minister should consider himself

1. As a servant.

Read 1 Corinthians 4:1-2, "Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards..."

- a) The Greek word used here for servant is "Huperetes" which means "an under-oarsman", or "an under-rower".
- b) This was a slave (an oarsman) who sat under the deck of the ship and worked hard to take the ship forward.

- c) What a comparison Paul uses here to describe a minister: a slave under the command of his Master, working hard, often out of sight, to take the church forward.

2. As a steward.

Read verse 1, "stewards of the mysteries of God".

- a) A steward was also a slave, but he was in charge of the whole household and wealth of his master.
- b) The minister is in charge of the "mysteries of God". The Word of God speaks about at least five mysteries:
 - i) The mystery of the cross. 1 Corinthians 2:7-10.
 - ii) The mystery of God's plan. Ephesians 1:9-10.
 - iii) The mystery of Christ's relationship to His church. Ephesians 5:32.
 - iv) The mystery about Israel and the gentiles. Romans 11:25-29.
 - v) The mystery of the resurrection. 1 Corinthians 15:50-55.
- c) God's mysteries are understood only by revelation from God.

Read Ephesians 3:2-5

Understanding cannot be obtained just by studying to obtain degrees. If a minister relied on that alone, he would miss the deep mysteries of God.

- d) Remember a minister is a steward of all God's mysteries, so the minister is to share them with the people – what a wonderful task!

3. As a father.

Read 1 Corinthians 4:14-21

- a) "... though you might have ten thousand instructors". Instructors only have an audience, but a father has children. Paul called them, "my beloved children"... "in Christ I am a father to you".
- b) An instructor will deliver his message and then leave; a father will lay down his life for his children.
- c) A father must be a good example. Verse 16. "Therefore I urge you, imitate me", Paul says. In another place he says again, "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ". 1 Corinthians 11:1.
 - i) Every leader should be able to say that.

- ii) A leader will never take his followers further than he is willing to go himself.
- d) Spiritual fathers will produce and release sons into the ministry. See verse 17. "... I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere"
- e) Spiritual fathers must discipline when it is needed. See verse 18-21. "Shall I come to you with a rod ...?"
 - i) An undisciplined child is a "pest" and will never develop properly.
 - ii) What do you discipline a child for? For mistakes, accidents, inabilities, a lack of understanding? No, No! Only for disobedience, rebellion and evil. It is the same with a spiritual child.
- f) Spiritual fathers, like natural fathers, must be loved, respected, honoured and obeyed for the home to function well.

Discipline for sexual sin and idolatry

Lesson 6

A. Introduction

Read 1 Corinthians 5:1-13, 6:9-20 and 10:1-35

Remember the wickedness of the city of Corinth, which had two harbours and was visited by sailors from all over the world. It also had the temple of Aphrodite, the goddess of love, where there were a thousand woman priests who were "sacred prostitutes". The young church had to grow up in such a nest of idolatry and sexual perversion, and some of it even sneaked inside the church and had to be dealt with.

B. The sexual sins

1. Sexual sins are in a special category.

Read 1 Corinthians 6:16-18

- a) These sins are special because they are in the body and against the body of the person who sins.
- b) They are also special because the marriage relationship is very special to God. Both in the Old Testament and the New Testament marriage is a picture of God's relationship to His people. Any violation of this is abhorrent to God.

2. They spread like wildfire.

Read 1 Corinthians 5:1

"It is actually reported"

- a) The news of sexual sin has a tendency to spread very fast. Paul heard the news in Ephesus far away on the other side of the sea.
- b) If the situation is not properly dealt with, it is not just the news that will spread, but the sin itself, because it appeals to the flesh of many other weak persons.
- c) Sexual sins are sins such as:
 - i) Adultery.
 - ii) Fornication.
 - iii) Homosexual relationships.
 - iv) Sexual immorality, i.e. all unclean sexual acts.
- d) Notice also how seriously the Lord deals with these sins. In the Old Testament both parties involved had to be executed, Leviticus 20:11-16. In the New Testament, if the sinner was unrepentant, he was to be given over to Satan. 1 Corinthians 5:5.

3. **Before and after the Cross.**

Read 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 and 18

Before salvation:

- a) A person's life before salvation could have been very impure, full of confusion and could be in deep bondage. There is no end to the depth of sin a person could have been in.
- b) But at the cross a person can be totally set free, be delivered from all bondage and washed clean from every sin.
- c) Notice the type of people that are mentioned here: fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, homosexuals, sodomists, etc. Those were the sins that they had been involved in.
- d) It is of the utmost importance that any newly saved person is set free from sin and delivered from any chains of bondage or demonic activity in their life.

After salvation:

- a) None of the things mentioned here can be practiced in the Christian life. If someone practices them, he should be strongly disciplined.
- b) The exhortation given to the church in Corinth and to us is:
 - i) "Flee sexual immorality". Run away like Joseph, don't stay around tempting situations. Genesis 39:11-12.
 - ii) To "flee" can also mean: seeking counsel, help and deliverance if you are fighting an uneven battle.
 - iii) The whole of 1 Corinthians chapter 7 contains God's advice and rules for a good, healthy marriage or single lifestyle which will prevent the temptations from taking root.
 - iv) If someone lives in sexual sin and refuses to repent, Paul's advice to the church is:
Have no fellowship with him. Do not even eat with him. 1 Corinthians 5:11. Put him away from among you. 1 Corinthians 5:2. Give him over to Satan. 1 Corinthians 5:5.
 - v) The reason for, and aim of, this tough treatment is:
To try to lead the person to repentance and back into the fold again and, also, to protect the church.
- c) The Spirit, through Paul, rebukes the tolerant attitude: "Well, we should, in love, be able to accommodate and tolerate peoples' weaknesses". 1 Cor.5:6.
 - i) A love that tolerates everything is not real love.

- ii) Paul warns us that it will contaminate the whole church if the situation is not dealt with, "....a little leaven, leavens the whole lump...."

Teacher's notes

What does it mean to deliver a person to Satan? It probably meant excommunication from the local church, a public announcement in the church, which withdrew all rights, privileges and protection from the person. A Christian in fellowship with the Lord and the local church enjoys a special protection from Satan, but when he is out of this fellowship, he is wide open to attacks from the evil one. God could even permit Satan to attack his body, in order to drive him to repentance and to returning to the Lord.

Some Bible scholars believe that the repenting person found in 2 Corinthians 5-9 is the same person from 1 Corinthians 5 who was given over to Satan.

C. Flee idolatry

Read 1 Corinthians 10:14 and 19-22

1. What is an idol – what is idolatry?

- a) An idol is anything that man worships, apart from the Triune God.
- b) Idolatry is worship and extensive devotion to and expectation of supernatural intervention from any person, spirit or thing, apart from the Triune God.
- c) In Corinth it was a female statue called Aphrodite.

Today each nation has its own idols:

- i) The people worship and look to something for supernatural intervention.
- ii) In many African nations it is ancestral worship and the magic related to that.
- iii) Some even mix ancestral worship with their Christian worship, as was obviously the case in Corinth. Verse 21.
- d) The Word of God points out that the idols in themselves are nothing. However, there are demons working behind each one of them. Verses 19-20.
- e) Anyone who devotes himself to any idolatry or magic is opening his own life up to demonic activity.
- f) The command to every Christian from the Word of God is:
Flee idolatry, verse 14. Have no fellowship with demons, verse 20. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons, verse 21.

2. **Do not provoke the Lord. Verse 22.**

Read 1 Corinthians 10:1-11

- a) **Israel – as an example to warn us.**
 - i) They were saved by the blood of the lamb (from Egypt).
 - ii) They were baptized in the water and the cloud (the Spirit), verse 2.
 - iii) They drank from the Rock (Christ) just like us, verse 3.
- b) **But they tried to drink from the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons at the same time.**
 - i) They were idolaters, verse 7.
 - ii) They committed sexual immorality, verse 8.
 - iii) They murmured and rebelled against God, verse 10.
- c) These people have become a warning to us, who live in the end times, verse 11.
- d) Don't do as they did, instead "flee sexual immorality", 6:18. "Flee from idolatry!" 10:14.
- e) Those who commit such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. 6:9-10.

3. **The reason that we should flee all these things.**

Read 1 Corinthians 6:11-20

- a) **Jesus delivered us from them.**
 - i) You were washed by the blood. Verse 11.
 - ii) You were justified by Jesus. Verse 11.
 - iii) You were sanctified by the Spirit. Verse 11.
 - iv) There is total freedom in Him. Verse 12.
- b) **He wants to use our spirit, soul and body for His wonderful purpose.**
 - i) Your body is meant for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. Verse 13. He wants to dwell there, He wants to use it.
 - ii) God will raise up your body by His power. Verse 14. He wants it to be a channel for His glory.

- iii) Don't you know that your bodies are members of Christ? Verse 15. We are members of the body of Christ, and each one has a glorious function.
- iv) Don't you know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit? Verse 19. Where God wants to dwell in all His glory, where He is to be praised and worshiped.
- v) You belong to Him. "For you were bought at a price; **therefore glorify God in your body....**" verse 20.

Memory verse

1 Corinthians 3:16-17, *"Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are"*.

The Christian liberty

Lesson 7

Read 1 Corinthians 8:1-13 and 9:1-27 and 10:23-33

A. Introduction

The Corinthian church was facing the problem: "Are we as Christians allowed to eat meat offered to idols?" Some said yes, others said no!

Not many are facing that particular problem today, but there are many other areas where some Christians say "yes", and others say "no". For example:

Some say that a Christian must not drink anything with alcohol in it, yet others say it does not matter as long as the person does not get drunk.

Some say that a Christian must dress in a "holy" way, others say that it does not matter how you dress.

Some say that Sunday must be kept quiet and "holy", others say it can be used for church sport and recreation, etc.

Who is right?

B. Where is the boundary for a Christian?

1. Knowledge balanced with love.

Read 1 Corinthians 8:1-3

- a) Knowledge alone can be very cold and stiff; even knowledge of God's Word and principles.
- b) If knowledge is used in a wrong, hard way, it can destroy people and push them far away from God. 2 Corinthians 3:6.
- c) Knowledge alone "puffs up" and makes Christians proud and condemning, like the Pharisees.
- d) Verse 2 tells us that we never know if we have the full truth on any particular matter. There could always be more we haven't yet seen.
- e) Knowledge **must always be balanced with love!**

2. The "weak" Christians need protecting fences.

Read 1 Corinthians 8:9

- a) In this instance their "weakness" probably came from their former deep involvement in the occult. Now they say, "don't ever eat that meat".

- b) Others who have never been near the occult, don't feel that there is any danger in eating the meat.
- c) They could say with Jesus, "Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out..." Matthew 15:11.

3. The mature Christian's attitude.

Read 1 Corinthians 8:11-13

- a) I will keep away from anything that could cause anybody else to stumble.
- b) Even if I feel that a certain thing is all right for me as a Christian, **I must keep away from it** if I know that I would offend a brother if I partake.

4. Don't live in the "border area".

Read Romans 12:2

- a) In the spiritual world there are only two kingdoms, the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the world (Satan).
- b) Some try to walk with one leg in each kingdom, or walk so close to the border that it is very difficult to see where they belong.

Illustration: As a family we used to live very close to the border of another country in Africa. Although we felt we were on the right side of the border, we had great trouble with thieves and robbers coming over from the other side. **Border areas are always dangerous!**

- c) Spiritual border areas are also very dangerous!
- d) Some may say, "Don't worry, I am strong, I will never fall". **Please read 1 Corinthians 10:12.** Mighty men of God have fallen because they were unwise!

5. Israel, a warning.

Read 1 Corinthians 10:1-13

- a) Verses 1-4. They started strong in the Lord.
- b) Verses 6-10. After a while they began to move to the border area and even crossed over the border.
- c) As we see, their fall was terrible.

6. Where should a Christian put down his "standard"?

Read 1 Corinthians 10:23-33

- a) When faced with a controversial decision, put it to the following test:
 - i) Verse 23. Is this helpful for me and for others?
 - ii) Does this build others and me up?
 - iii) Verse 32. Does this give offence to anyone?
 - iv) Verse 31. Does this glorify God?
- b) Remember we cannot let our knowledge of the Bible be our only measuring stick.
 - i) "You know nothing as you ought to know it". 1 Corinthians 8:2.
 - ii) "The letter kills". 2 Corinthians 3:6.

Let divine love balance our decisions. 1 Corinthians 8:1-3.

C. Paul as a shining example

1. He was willing to give up anything for the sake of the Gospel.

Read 1 Corinthians 9:1-27

- a) As their apostle, Paul had certain rights, which he was willing to give up because they obviously offended some. Verses 1-2.
- b) His right to eat and drink and be entertained by the church. Verse 4.
- c) His right to marry and bring a wife with him on his journeys. Verse 5.
- d) His right to be paid for his hard work. Paul uses several pictures to illustrate his right to be supported by the church:
 - i) The soldier.
 - ii) The farmer.
 - iii) The shepherd.
 - iv) The Old Testament priest.
 - v) Even an ox has the right to eat when it works, according to the law of God.
 - vi) The Lord even commands, "The one who preaches the gospel, should live by the gospel".

- e) In spite of such strong evidence, Paul was willing to give up any rights, which could be a stumbling block for any other person. Verse 12.
- f) Paul was even willing to change his whole lifestyle so as not to offend people and win them for the Lord. Verses 19-23.
- g) Listen to his statement, "I have become all things to all men that I might by all means save some". Verse 22.

2. **Like sportsmen, we are called to total dedication.**

Read 1 Corinthians 9:24-27

- a) The sportsman's attitude:
 - i) He gladly abstains from anything, which does not promote his course.
 - ii) He is completely dedicated, his mind is set on one thing; to reach the goal and win the prize.
 - iii) He will live a disciplined life, keep his body fit and under control.
- b) Paul says, "They do all that to obtain a crown which will soon perish".
- c) What about you and me? How much dedication are we willing to put in to win a crown **which will never perish?**

3. **Conclusion.**

Read 1 Corinthians 9:26-27

- a) It should never be a question of "How far can I go?" "How close to the world can a Christian live without being defiled?"
- b) But like Paul we should say, "I am willing to give up anything for the gospel". "I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord". Philippians 3:8.
- c) Even Paul had to keep himself dedicated and on fire, for fear of becoming slack and lukewarm and eventually being disqualified and losing his crown.
- d) Run in such a way that you may obtain the crown. 1 Corinthians 9:24.

Teacher's notes

The different crowns the Christian can obtain:

1. "The crown of righteousness". 2 Timothy 4:7-8.

Given to those who finish the race and keep the faith. Given to those who love the Lord's appearing.

2. "The crown of glory". 1 Peter 5:4.

Given for faithful service for the Lord with the right spirit and attitude.

3. "The crown of life". James 1:12.

Given for living a victorious life out of deep love for the Lord. Given for faithfulness until death. Revelations 2:10.

4. "The incorruptible crown". 1 Corinthians 9:25.

Given for total dedication, running the race according to God's rules and regulations. 2 Timothy 2:5.

Memory verse

2 Corinthians 6:17-18, *"Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is **unclean**, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty".*

Woman's position in ministry

The Lord's Supper

Lesson 8

Read 1 Corinthians 11:1-16

A. Introduction

When the gospel came to Corinth, it brought liberty and hope to all who received it; women and slaves suddenly experienced a new freedom.

The gospel message made all people equal before God, regardless of race, sex and social standing. Galatians 3:26-28.

So the church was a wonderful gathering of slaves and free, rich and poor, men, women and children. However, that also created many problems. The problems are not unique to the Corinthian church. Through Paul, the Holy Spirit gives us clear instructions on how to deal with them.

B. Woman's position in ministry

1. The scope of ministry for a woman.

Read 1 Corinthians 11:5

- a) Wonderful ministries in the church are available to women.
- b) Here prayer and prophecy are specifically mentioned. In 1 Corinthians 14 prophecy is mentioned as one of the greater spiritual gifts.
- c) Certainly a woman, under the proper covering of her husband, can function in many great ministries and gifts. If she is unmarried, she should be under the covering of a mature spiritual leader.

2. The problem in Corinth and many other places.

Read 1 Corinthians 11:5-10

- a) Some women carried their new freedom to excess, stepping out of submission to leadership.
- b) In those days the head covering was a sign (a symbol) of submission and purity.
- c) The temple prostitutes (there were 2000 of them in Corinth) had loose, uncovered hair, which was one of the ways to recognize them.

- d) According to the Law of Moses, when a woman was suspected of adultery, she was taken before the priest. He would first uncover her hair and then go through a certain ritual. Numbers 5:18.
- e) So the head covering was an important sign in those days, and the women of Corinth were really driving their freedom to the limit of rebellion by not wearing it.

3. **God's order of things.**

Read 1 Corinthians 11:3-5

- a) The Word clearly states that God's order of authority is that the man is the head of the woman.
- b) That is why, if a woman ministers without her head covered, she dishonours and brings shame on her head.
- c) It could be interpreted in this way: A woman who ministers without being in submission to her head (husband or spiritual leader) brings shame on him.
- d) As we have seen the head covering in those days was the symbol of that submission. Today many feel that covering the head is not so important, but the divine principle of submission never changes and must be respected.
- e) Even the angels who are sent to help the believers, and who know and respect God's order of things, get confused when they see a woman out of submission. See verse 10.

C. God made the differences between man and woman

1. **A different creation.**

Read Genesis 2:18-24

- a) They were not created at the same time or in the same way.
- b) They were different physically and mentally, probably even spiritually. (Notice how many more women than men respond to the gospel.)
- c) This difference does not mean that one is inferior to the other. They just have different roles:
 - i) The man's role is one of leading, protecting, providing and planning.
 - ii) The woman's role is one of responding, sensitivity, creativity, reproducing (the glorious miracle of motherhood).
- d) At first glance the woman's role could look much more interesting than the man's, but we had better all stay in the order God has given us.

Illustration: God created the fish for the water and the birds for the air. If we try to make them change places we will have great problems and confusion.

2. **A wonderful partnership.**

Read 1 Corinthians 11:11-12

- a) When God's order of authority is established, the Word shows us how much man and woman are dependent on each other.
- b) In fact, we cannot even survive without each other.
- c) A husband and wife are a wonderful complementary team in life, **but also in ministry.**
- d) They should work very closely together in ministry for the Lord. God even says, "the two shall become one".

D. The Lord's Supper

Read 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

1. **In an unworthy manner.**

Read 1 Corinthians 11:17-22

- a) Paul's powerful teaching about Communion grew out of strife, division and selfishness in the Corinthian church.
- b) They ate and drank without discerning or recognizing the body of Christ at all. Verse 29.
 - i) They did not recognize and love one another, as members of the body of Christ, but were totally indifferent and unkind to one another. We cannot fellowship with the Lord like that. Matthew 5:23-24.
 - ii) They did not recognize or pay much attention to the wonderful message of the Lord's Table, which is the very central message of the gospel.
- c) This was the reason for Paul's strong warning and inspired teaching about Communion.
- d) Even today many people partake of the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner and the result is clearly seen among God's people.

2. **A powerful act.**

Read 1 Corinthians 11:29-30

- a) Communion is one of the sacraments given to the church. What is a sacrament? It is a holy act, with a deep spiritual meaning and a powerful effect.
- b) A sacrament speaks very powerfully because it reaches all our senses; we hear it, see it, taste it, smell it and touch it. So the message should really sink in and never be forgotten.
- c) Paul warns of its powerful effect. When it is done in the wrong way, people can get weak and sick and even die.
- d) If it is done in the right way, it will have an equally powerful, positive effect of spiritual healing, strength and life.

3. **An act of remembrance.**

Read 1 Corinthians 11:24-25

- a) "Do this in remembrance of Me".

By this act we partake in the fulfilled work of Calvary. 1 Corinthians 10:16-18.
- b) At the cross Christ bought full redemption, deliverance from the curse and work of the enemy, healing and victory for each one of us.
- c) Jesus said, "Take it" – "Eat it" – "Drink it". This actually means: draw redemption, deliverance, healing and victory from the fountain of Calvary.

4. **An act of proclamation.**

Read 1 Corinthians 11:26

- a) "You proclaim the Lord's death until He comes".

The most powerful proclamation that has ever sounded on earth are the three words from Calvary when Christ died; "It is finished!"
- b) It is not possible for us to see and understand the full depth of this proclamation yet.
 - i) Satan and his host were defeated and disarmed. Colossians 2:14.
 - ii) All our sin and guilt was dealt with and nailed to the Cross.
 - iii) The curtain to the most holy place was split from top to bottom, indicating free access into the presence of God.
 - iv) "It is finished" – the work of the Cross is a fountain, which we should draw from daily, by our proclamation of faith.

- c) **The Word of God says:** When you eat the bread and drink the cup you proclaim the finished work of Calvary over your life.
 - i) **Do it by faith** and proclaim to yourself with great joy, "All my chains are broken".
 - ii) **Do it by faith** and proclaim to the Lord with praise and worship, "Thank you Lord for dying for me".
 - iii) **Do it by faith** and proclaim to Satan and his demonic forces, "By the blood of Jesus Christ you are rendered completely powerless in my life, I am free to live in His victory".

5. It is a covenant meal.

Read 1 Corinthians 11:25

- a) "This cup is the new covenant in My blood".

A biblical blood covenant means: "You and I are completely one in everything through this blood".

- b) **So what Jesus is saying is,** "I lay down My life for you, all that I am and all that I have is yours, I will hold nothing back to bless you, defend you and bring you through". Romans 8:31-39.
- c) When you drink this cup, you are constantly reminded of God's blood covenant relationship with you.
 - i) **Revelation 5:9.** By His blood Christ redeemed us to God. You can lift this cup right in the face of Satan and say, "This is my receipt, the price is paid for my freedom!"
 - ii) **Hebrews 10:14.** "For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified".

By the blood of Jesus you are perfect in His sight, now and forever. Through Jesus, God sees the finished product.

We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous one. What a wonderful, loving advocate! He is the atonement for our sin – past, present and future. 1 John 2:2.

- iii) **Hebrews 10:19.** By the blood of Jesus we have confidence to enter right into the presence of God.

It is the place where angels tread with trembling, where they cover their faces and feet and they cry "Holy, Holy, Holy!"

By the blood of Jesus you can enter in with confidence and praise. He loves you as a bride prepared for Himself.

- d) When you and I drink this cup of the covenant, we are actually saying to Him, "Jesus, I lay down my life for you, all that I am and all that I have is yours".
- e) We can be one hundred percent sure that He will keep His side of the covenant.
- f) He is waiting for you and I to keep our side of the covenant so that we can reap all the wonderful benefits of the finished work of Calvary.

6. As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup.

Read 1 Corinthians 11:26

- a) When we see the blessing and power in this meal, it is no wonder they did it daily in the early church. Acts 2:46.
- b) As often as we do it, let us do it in a worthy manner so that we together can draw from the fountain of life.

Memory verse

1 Corinthians 10:16, *"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?"*

Teacher's notes

Books have been written about the subject of "blood covenants", how tribes and individual persons have made blood covenants with each other under serious rituals. (It is not right for a Christian to be part of that kind of thing.)

A blood covenant is the most binding agreement one can make. It is a commitment to a relationship, which cannot be broken under any circumstances. The two parties are actually saying to each other, "All that I have, even my life, I lay down for you".

This kind of covenant is normally made between two equal groups or persons who have something to offer each other.

But in the biblical blood covenant, God Almighty in Christ offers us a covenant based on mercy and grace, "Take this and drink it, it is the new covenant in My blood".

All He expects from us is that we receive it by faith and commit our lives completely to Him.

How to operate in the spiritual gifts

Lesson 9

1 Corinthians 12, 13, 14.

A. Introduction

In Paul's greeting at the beginning of this letter, he mentions that the Corinthian church lacked no spiritual gift (1:7), but later we see that the enemy had come into this area and created misuse, disagreement and confusion. So, in these three chapters, the apostle Paul sets things in order.

In a separate book we deal with the spiritual gifts one by one, so here we will just deal with the correct use of the gifts.

B. Let the gifts flow from the right source

1. The three possible sources.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:2-6

- a) Verses 2-3 indicate that demons can be behind spiritual manifestations, even in the church, because people lean towards their old way of worship.
- b) The human mind (soul) can also manufacture a counterfeit of several of these gifts, sometimes without the realization of the person manifesting the "gift".
- c) The only acceptable source is God.
 - i) Verse 4-6, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, the Triune God is mentioned as the source.
 - ii) Remember that all three sources can be experienced in the same congregation. Let us keep and encourage the right manifestation.
 - iii) **Illustration:** There were many useless stones in a bucket. Among the stones there were even some poisonous snakes, but among the stones and snakes there were some diamonds. Wouldn't we pick out the diamonds before throwing out the bucket's contents?
 - iv) **Gifts, ministries and activities** are all mentioned here in great variety, but the source must always be the same.

2. His part and our part in the manifestations.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:31 and 14:1

- a) Our part is to earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, to be willing and obedient to step out at the Spirit's prompting.

- b) His part is to work in His sovereignty and to give **each one** gifts according to His own will and purpose.
- c) Spiritual gifts should only function under the Holy Spirit's anointing.

C. Let the gifts be manifested for the right purpose

1. Only for positive purposes.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:7 and 14:3

- a) "For the profit of all" – the gifts should never create a negative result of condemnation, confusion or disunity.
- b) The gifts must **edify, exhort and comfort**. They all aim at building up and perfecting the church.
- c) **Illustration:** When a natural building is raised, many different gifts are needed, and they all work together towards the same goal – to build up and complete the building. If somebody mainly breaks down he will soon be taken off the team.

2. The gifts are for the common good.

Read 1 Corinthians 14:12

- a) The gifts, according to this word, are not for "personal use", but for the "common good" of the whole church.
- b) The gifts should never glorify or exalt any man; only Christ through His church should be glorified.

D. The gifts must be used in the right attitude

1. In the spirit of love.

Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-7

- a) Divine love is the only atmosphere in which the gifts will function and develop in the right way.
- b) Without this love the gifts become noisy, useless and divisive.
- c) Look at the qualities of love in connection with the use of spiritual gifts.
 - i) It is patient and kind.
 - ii) It does not parade itself.
 - iii) It is not puffed up.

iv) It does not behave rudely.

2. In the spirit of submission.

Read Ephesians 5:18 and 21

- a) This scripture also deals with spiritual manifestation and clearly emphasizes the importance of submission.
- b) Some people think that when they are under the “anointing of the Holy Spirit” that they don’t need to pay attention to any other leadership.
- c) We must remember that God will never work against His own principles of authority and submission.
- d) Sometimes the so-called “anointing” is nothing other than fleshly zeal and ambition, that will always tend to be rebellious.

E. Let us follow the God-given model for the gifts

“The function of the human body”

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

1. All the members have a function.

Read 1 Peter 4:10

- a) As in the human body, all members of the body of Christ have a function and are gifted in different ways.
- b) 1 Corinthians 12:11 clearly states that the Spirit gives to each one as He determines.

2. A great variety of gifts.

- a) As in the human body, the body of Christ has a variety of gifts and all of them need to function for the body to be really effective.
- b) In spite of the variety, there is still a glorious harmony and unity in the human body. Let this be an example for the body of Christ.
- c) In the human body there is no competition or envy between the different members. This should also be an example for the body of Christ.

Teacher’s note

Try to find more comparisons between the human body and the body of Christ, the church.

F. The three requirements for functioning in the gifts

1. Let everything be done decently.

Read 1 Corinthians 14:40

- a) Decently means: in a way that glorifies God.
- b) Remember, “the Spirit of the prophet is subject to the prophet”, verse 32.
- c) It is only an evil spirit that grabs control and uses a person as it likes.
- d) The Holy Spirit is gentle like a dove and waits for us to agree to His prompting to step out in faith.

2. Let everything be done in order.

Read verse 40

- a) God is a God of order. Just looking at creation, although the fall has upset it all, we still see God’s fingerprint of order in all creation. Chapter 14:33.
- b) Therefore the manifestations of the Spirit of God should also come in a Godly way, under the Spirit’s clear direction.
- c) It is carnality and pride that will upset and confuse everything.
- d) In chapters 12 to 14 Paul, by the Spirit, tries to bring things back into God’s order.

3. Let everything be done.

Read verse 40

- a) We often put such an emphasis on decency and order that we forget to let everything be done.
- b) These three chapters are a powerful encouragement to allow all the gifts to function in the church.
- c) The words “earnestly desire” are used several times concerning the gifts.
- d) Let us welcome all God’s wonderful gifts in our midst according to this pattern and order.

Teacher's notes

1 Corinthians 14:34 is not meant to stop women from ministering in the church, because all God's gifts are for all Christians. In 1 Corinthians 11:5 Paul speaks about women praying and prophesying. How can we then interpret this verse? In this instance Paul is trying to bring order into the church gatherings, where there was obviously a lot of confusion. In those days the women sat together by themselves so it could have happened that they actually talked together when there was something that they didn't understand. Paul is saying, "Don't do that, ask your husband at home if there is something that you want to learn".

Memory verse

1 Corinthians 12:11, *"But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills".*

Resurrection

Lesson 10

1 Corinthians 15:1-34

A. Introduction

The doctrine of the resurrection from the dead met a lot of resistance in Corinth because this doctrine was completely against Greek philosophy. A sceptical attitude had somehow invaded the church, and the Apostle Paul faced this problem head on, because it is one of the very central doctrines in the gospel. Without this, everything else becomes empty and meaningless. Verses 16-19.

In this chapter Paul deals with some basic questions about the resurrection and we will take them up one by one.

B. Are the dead raised?

Christ rose as a wonderful example and guarantee for us. Paul gives three strong points to prove this as fact.

1. Salvation is a clear proof that Jesus rose from the dead.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:4

- a) Paul had come to Corinth and preached the gospel, which had completely transformed their lives.
- b) He points out that the core of the gospel that saved them is the death and resurrection of Jesus.
- c) So, the very fact that lives are changed, people are set free and delivered from the power of Satan is a strong proof of the resurrection.

2. Christ's death and resurrection were according to God's eternal plan.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:3-4

- a) Twice Paul says, "according to the Scriptures". He is speaking about the Old Testament scriptures.
- b) In Acts 2:23-31, Peter proves the resurrection of Jesus with Old Testament scriptures.
- c) In Acts 13:29-37, Paul proves the resurrection of Jesus with Old Testament scriptures.
- d) In Matthew 12:38-41, Jesus Himself proves His own resurrection using the Old Testament story about Jonah.

- e) Even the story of Abraham offering Isaac points to the same fact. Hebrews 11:17-19.
- f) Right throughout the Old Testament, in different ways, we are shown the wonderful victory of the cross, which culminated in the resurrection.

3. The many witnesses prove Christ's resurrection.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:5-11

- a) Here is a very trustworthy list of witnesses, among them Peter and the twelve Apostles as a group.
- b) They did not just see Jesus; they talked with Him, touched Him and had meals with Him after His resurrection.
- c) James, the half-brother of Jesus is a good example of the powerful impact this experience had. He didn't believe in Jesus at first but after the resurrection, he became one of the main leaders in the church. John 5:5, Galatians 1:18-19.
- d) More than five hundred people saw Him at the same time.
- e) Paul seems to prove to the sceptical that it was not just a vision or the hallucination of a few emotional people.
- f) It is real – Christ is risen! "I even saw Him myself", said Paul.
- g) Paul is not trying to give us an exhaustive list here. We know of many others who saw Jesus after He had risen, e.g. the soldiers at the grave, Mary Magdalene, the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, probably also Jude the other half-brother of Jesus.

4. Conclusion.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:12-23

- a) That Jesus Christ is risen, is a fact beyond any doubt.
- b) Christ who was truly human, "the second Adam", rose as the "first fruits". It was God's assurance to us that we shall also be raised one day, as part of the full harvest.
- c) The first Adam brought death to us all by his fall, "the second Adam" (Jesus) brought eternal life to us all through His victory.

Teacher's notes

Leviticus 23:9-14. When the priest waved the sheaf of "the first fruits" before the Lord, it was a sign that the whole harvest belonged to Him.

C. When will the dead be raised?

1. "In his own order".

Read 1 Corinthians 15:23-24

- a) The resurrection will be in the order God has arranged. These verses indicate three different resurrections.
 - i) First, Christ Himself.
 - ii) Then, those who belong to Him.
 - iii) "Then comes the end", the final resurrection.
- b) Paul says here that those who belong to Him will be resurrected at His coming.

2. The resurrection of the believers at the coming of Christ.

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:15

- a) This is a resurrection to life, and it is only those who belong to Him who are raised.
- b) It will take place at the return of Jesus. They will be resurrected and raptured together with the living believers to meet the Lord in the air.

3. The final resurrection.

Read Revelation 20:11-15

- a) This resurrection is right at the end of time, just before the new heaven and earth are introduced.
- b) It is also called the resurrection of damnation, where all unbelievers through all time will be raised for judgement.

D. How are the dead raised?

1. What happens at the point of death?

Read Luke 16:19-31

- a) **For a true believer.**
 - i) The body goes to the grave and back to the dust where it came from.
 - ii) The "inner man" will be carried by angels into the presence of the Lord.

- iii) Jesus said to the repentant man on the next cross, "today you shall be with Me in Paradise". Luke 23:43.
 - iv) Paul says, "to be absent from the body means to be present with the Lord". 2 Corinthians 5:8.
- b) **For an unregenerate person.**
- i) The body also goes to the grave and back to the dust, where it came from.
 - ii) The "inner man" goes to the kingdom of death, a hell-like prison where he will wait for the final resurrection to judgement.

2. **The resurrection of the body.**

Read 1 Corinthians 15:52

- a) At God's appointed time the soul and spirit of man will rejoin a new resurrected body.
- b) It will not be a process, but an instant miracle in a moment.

3. **What kind of body?**

Read 1 Corinthians 15:35-49

- a) The description is only given for the resurrection of the true believer. What kind of body the unsaved will have in their resurrection, we are not told.
- b) The resurrection body will be far more glorious than the one we have now.
- c) The illustration used here is that of a small, colourless seed, which is sown in the ground and up comes a beautiful, colourful, perfect flower. Such is the difference between the old and the new body.
- d) This present body is decaying, growing old and weak, but the new body will be incorruptible, full of glory and power. Verse 42-44.
- e) This present body is temporary, the new body is eternal, a spiritual body.
- f) As we now bear the image of Adam, we shall then bear the image of Christ. Verse 49.
- g) All the resurrection bodies will be glorified bodies, but the Word indicates that there will be different degrees of glory. 1 Corinthians 15:41-42. Daniel 12:3.

E. Why do we need a new resurrection body?

1. We shall reign with Christ.

Read Revelation 5:9-10

- a) The Bible teaches that we shall reign with Christ when He returns to earth with His saints to set up His millennium kingdom.
- b) For that task we will need a body like His. Revelation 20:6.

2. To fully enjoy eternity.

Read Revelation 22:1-5

- a) In eternity there will be the new heaven and earth where the Lord God will dwell with man. We will live in a new, glorious society, in harmony with God, one another and nature around us.
- b) We will serve Him and reign with Him forever and ever.
- c) For this glorious eternity we need a new glorified, eternal body.

Memory verse

1 Corinthians 15:58, *"Therefore my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord".*