

Bible Study: 1 Corinthians

(Part 1—Chapters 1-3)

by Gary T. Panell

Author: Paul

Date: A.D. 56

Key Verse: 1 Corinthians 14:33 "For God is not *the author* of confusion (disorder) but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints."

The letter in a 'nut shell': Paul the apostle, to the much loved church at Corinth. I tell you this carnal thinking you have is like man's wisdom, which has always been opposed to God's wisdom. As long as you are carnal you cannot expect to have order in the church. Don't you know that there are principles about marriage you can follow during this time of distress? By all means, consider your weaker brother in the questionable things. Be in subordination to God's order of things: The Lord's Supper, spiritual gifts, and their use in love. (Christian love is the solution to all your problems!) Listen, do not dispute about the resurrection, for it is your foundation for faith! By the way, here is some other business you should tend to before I come, with this I close. Paul

Theme statement: "*Christian Conduct*" A carnal church will have arguments which will in turn result in divisions.

Dr. Unger divides the book into a simple outline of three parts:

I. The Unity of the Church vs. Divisions Chapters 1-3

II. The Order of the Church vs. Disorder Chapters 4-11

III. The Use of Gifts and Doctrines of the Church vs. Their Abuse Chapters 12-16

OUTLINE TITLE: BECAUSE OF CARNALITY, DIVISIONS HAVE COME

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Chapter 1

(1) Paul identifies himself as the writer by using his own name in 1:1; 1:13, and 16:21. The date cannot be fixed with absolute certainty, but it seems probable that the letter was written during the last part of Paul's prolonged stay at Ephesus, Acts 19:1-20:1. That would put it about A.D. 55 or 56. We do know this letter was written from Ephesus because of 1 Corinthians 16:8, 9. It was written during Paul's three year ministry there in Ephesus (Acts 20:31).

"Called to be an apostle," God had done the "calling." This last phrase plus, "the will of God" is directed at those in Corinth who may have questioned his right to speak with authority.

It is a good possibility that, Sosthenes our brother, is the ruler of the synagogue in Corinth, mentioned in Acts 18:17. If he is in fact the Sosthenes of Luke's Acts account, then he had become a Christian since then. If this is the case the beating he received from the Greeks was a blessing; he became a believer! Now with this trophy of grace, Paul is proud to be able to write this letter with brother Sosthenes a former enemy of Christ. "My Sosthenes," was Paul's stenographer.

(2) The city of Corinth was the biggest in Greece at that time. Look at, Acts 18:1-17, to review the beginning of the Church there which Paul started. It was at the hub of the commercial world at that time, and goods would be unloaded there and then latter shipped or transported to all points of the then known world. It was the capital of the Roman province of Achaia (check map). Due to the many sailors and merchants that passed through the city, it was known for its immorality. Also because of the highly organized worship of Venus, Corinth had earned the title: "Korinthiazomai," meaning literally, to act the Corinthian," which came to mean "to practice fornication" (cr. LSJ, p. 981). "Every Greek," wrote Moffatt, "knew what a 'Corinthian girl' meant" (MNT, loc. Cit.). The old city had contained the famous Temple of Aphrodite (Venus, the goddess of licentious love), where one thousand prostitutes were made available to its "worshippers."

To continue the study on the background of Corinth the Scottish commentator, William Barclay, has said, "Aelian, the late Greek writer, tells us that if ever a Corinthian was shown upon the stage in a Greek play he was shown drunk" (William Barclay, The Letters to the Corinthians, p. 3).

Paul had started the church at Corinth about A.D. 50-51. He spent a year and a half there on his second missionary journey, Acts 18:1-17. He continued to write, and cared deeply for the church, 1 Corinthians 5:9. Afterwards, during his three-year ministry in Ephesus, on his third missionary journey (Acts 19), he received disturbing news about moral problems among the believers in Corinth. To solve the problem, he sent the church a letter (1 Corinthians 5:9-11), which has since been lost. A little later a delegation sent by Chloe, a member of the church in Corinth, told Paul about the existence of divisions in the church. Before Paul could write a letter to correct these problems, another group came to visit with a letter asking him to answer certain questions (1

Corinthians 7:1; 16:17). Paul immediately sent Timothy to Corinth to help correct the problems. He then wrote the letter that we now know as 1 Corinthians, hoping to reach Corinth before Timothy (16:10). Since this letter was written near the end of his Ephesian ministry (16:8), it is probably about A.D. 56. The Greeks were known for idolatry, divisive philosophies, litigation, and rejection of resurrection. The spirit of this worldly city showed up in the church.

The purpose of the letter was to instruct the new converts saved in this immoral society. It was not easy for the new convert to separate himself from his/her degraded past. Carnality or worldliness and spiritual immaturity needed to be addressed by Paul. Corinth, with its vain, worldly wisdom, offered a challenge to Christianity. If a church could be planted here where East and West met, its influence could be expected to be far-reaching. The purpose of the letter was to instruct the new converts whether they were living in this city or any city, since this letter was to be circulated throughout the Church. Therefore the letter also applies to us today.

"Sanctified," means "set apart," and Paul seems to be emphasizing this, and that we are called to be "saints." The Greek word is (HAGIOS). The Bible teaches that we are saints when we get saved, Philippians 4:21. If you are "in Christ" you are a saint. There is no teaching in the Word of God that we will one day be saints, we are saints now when we get saved. Everyone, "all" believers are saints by standing in the blood of Jesus and in the cross of Christ. The word is not applied only to people of exceptional holiness, or to those who, before they died were characterized by exceptional acts of saintliness. 2 Thessalonians 1:10; Jude 14, saints are said to be "all those who believe." He is not saying we are going to be perfect here on earth, but we are to live like we are called to be "saints," living godly lives not being filled up with the world. So often today it is very hard to tell the Christians from the people who are not saved. In the United States, as I write this, there are as many Christians getting divorces as the unsaved. It seems like there is no difference here between those in the world and those in the Church! Paul was addressing people in Corinth, in his day, in similar conditions. They were carnal, as many Christians are today. We need this letter too!

Paul recognized only one church at Corinth, even though it probably met in several places. In Corinth, as everywhere else, except maybe in Jerusalem, Christians had no one great central meeting place. Church buildings were not really erected until about 200 years later, after persecution began to ease a bit. These were the born again ones addressed here, "saints" by position in Christ, maybe not so much in practice.

It is interesting that they were "called" by God, and were also those "who in every place 'call' on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." The sovereignty of God and the free will of man cannot be separated, when it comes to salvation. God provides salvation, but we must accept it for ourselves before it is ours!

(3) They surely needed God's grace and here the word is used more as a greeting of Paul's in Greek (chario- it meant "to rejoice", and was a mode of greeting among Greeks). This is Paul's "trade mark" so to speak, since he uses it at the first of all his letters. They certainly needed God's joy and peace since they were always fighting. Can you imagine how this must look to the world to see Christians always fighting? God the Father and Jesus the Son certainly are not fighting and neither should we be!

(4) He thanked God for them and the grace that had been given to them by Christ Jesus. Can we

thank God for Christians, even those who upset us? Can we be thankful they are in the family of Christ, and we will spend eternity with them? If we cannot we need to pray for them, and then God helps us to love them. It is hard not to love someone when we are praying God's good on them. No doubt, Paul had to pray a lot for the Corinthians!

(5) They had been given the "gifts of the Spirit," and we will talk about these in more detail later in the book. It is sufficient now to say they were using the gifts God had bestowed on them such as "the word of wisdom," "the word of knowledge," 1 Corinthians 12:8, 2 Corinthians 8:7. What they had was given to them by God, and was not something they had before they became believers. These are spiritual gifts.

(6) When we are saved and filled with the Holy Spirit we have this testimony in us that God has changed us, not ourselves.

(7) They had all the spiritual gifts that had been given to them by Jesus Christ, so they could get themselves and others prepared for Christ's return.

(8) Christ will save us until His return, and wants us to be living blameless in front of men as He returns. "Blameless" does not mean perfect in this case, it means that we are confessing our sins, 1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

(9) God is faithful, but you and I often are very unfaithful to Him. I am glad that He still loves us even when we are not so faithful.

(10) God wants us to have unity in the church. There are so many divisions today that people ask, "Which is the right church?" Really there is only one true church, the Holy Catholic Church (Catholic means Universal) It is made up of all born again Christians from the day of Pentecost until the rapture of the church.

(11) Someone told on them, it was Chloe's household, he said that there were contentions or quarrels among them. No doubt, Paul felt maybe even Chloe was part of the divisions, so he says, those of Chloe's household. Notice the names of those people are not mentioned. Paul must have believed them or else he would not have encouraged a rumor. We have to be very careful in the church not to spread something that is not really true. However if there are problems they need to be dealt with out in the open.

(12) Some of them were saying, "I am of Paul's teaching." Others are saying, "I am of Apollo's teaching." On and on it went, some were even saying, "I am of Christ's teaching." Does it sound like today people saying, "I am a Roman Catholic", "I am an Orthodox," "I am a Baptist," "I am a Methodist," "I am a Lutheran," and so on! Do you think this is what God wanted us to say?! Look at John 17, and the rest of this book. There is really only one church. All born again Christians will spend eternity together so we may as well get use to the idea now. Not only that, we are commanded to love each other for the sake of the church and our testimony. Whatever happened to the statement, "I am a Christian?"

(13) Had Christ started several Churches? Did Paul start a Church different from the one Christ started? The answer is No, No, No! We are baptized in the name of Christ, not in the name of any other leader, not even Paul's name. We are baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy

Spirit and no one else.

(13-16) Paul says, "It is good I did not baptize too many people or else they may have split off and started another church." It is interesting he was not sure how many; he did not keep records on this sort of thing. Also, he may have been showing his age in not remembering.

(17) Paul says, "I did not come to be proud about how many people I have baptized, but to get the Gospel of the Cross out. Now listen, Paul says, "I did not come to you with fancy speech, but with the simple message of the cross of Christ!" If he had been proud, then his pride would have hindered the message, as people would look at him and not at the cross of Christ! The Word says, "...Not by might or power, but by My Spirit, says the LORD of hosts." (Zechariah 4:6)

(18) You see, the world does not understand the message of "the cross." Oh yes, they understand the words we are saying, but it doesn't make sense to them. How could someone dying on a cross be of any good to anyone? The Muslims, for one example, cannot comprehend a Savior being sacrificed for the World. They say, "We do not need a sacrifice, we just need to do good." Which doing good for them is keeping the Qur'an.

To most people in the world, being good is what they feel we need to do in order to get to heaven, if there is even a heaven. To think of a bloody Roman cross is not something they consider good. To us that are on our way to heaven it is just the opposite, it is God's method of justifying letting us into His presence. It is on the cross where Jesus took the sins of the whole world on Himself so we would not have to be separated from God forever in our sin. We think of verses like, "For indeed Christ, our Passover was sacrificed for us." (1 Corinthians 5:7) "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." (2 Corinthians 5:21) "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:23) "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." (John 3:14-16) So, yes, the cross to us is wonderful and the power (dunamis—"ability or authority") of God. It is the only way we could be saved from our sins, and God still be a God of justice!

Paul is saying to the Christians, "Listen, brothers, do not forget you are different now. If you go and tell someone that Christ died for you they, no doubt, will in most cases laugh or make fun of this idea which to them is pure foolishness. So you better get use to the idea, and remember there is a difference, because we have the Spirit of God to guide us into all truth."

(19) God has a plan in mind that will be seen in the end to be the right way. All the people in this world that think they are smarter than God will find out differently. Here Paul quotes from Isaiah 29:14. See how he uses Scripture to explain Scripture and so should we in our Bible study. He is saying in so many words, "God uses simple things to confuse the "wise" the ones that think that they are smarter than God."

(20) Isaiah 19:12; 33:18; and Job 12:17 is used here to make his case. God will win in any argument. When Jesus was discussing with the religious leaders, their wisdom was no match for His. Put all the debate "kings" up against God and see how they do. They will not be a match for the God of the universe believe it or not! The message of salvation is so simple a child can receive it, but often a scientist (Romans 1:22), or someone who thinks they are smart, is too

smart to understand it.

(21) The god of this world, Satan has blinded the hearts of men so they can not know the truth without the Spirit of God speaking to them. God does use people to share His Good News about the cross so they can hear and believe as the Spirit of God helps them. Romans 10:8-10 says, "But what does it say? 'The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart' (that is the word of faith which we preach); that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" ...also...Romans 10:14 "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? The message is a simple message and people stumble on it because they are looking for something hard. The message is that we are all sinners, God loves us and died for our sins, and if we repent and trust Jesus' blood alone to save us we will be saved!

(22) Jews were use to miracles God did for them, and Greeks thought they were wise. You have many miracles God did in Israel's past so they kept seeking for more signs. The Greeks had great thinkers like Plato, Aristotle, and so on, so if you could not reason it out through human logic, it was foolishness.

(23) Jews think Christ crucified should still be cursed because He died on a tree, how could His death save anyone? In fact this is why the Jewish religious leaders wanted Jesus crucified rather than stoned; they felt He was a blasphemer of God so He should be crucified or hung on a tree. "If a man has committed a sin deserving of death, and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain overnight on the tree, but you shall surely bury him that day, so that you do not defile the land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance; for he who is hanged is accursed of God." (Deuteronomy 21:22-23) The thing the Jews do not understand is that Jesus was taking our place on that tree (the cross), but we were the ones who deserved it. "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree...') (Galatians 3:13).

(24) To those who are called (of course, they have answered the call, but the emphasis is always on the One who calls us—not on us who answer the call of salvation). No matter if they are Jew or Greek (Gentile), they see God's power to save, through His death on the cross, and also the wisdom of God to think of such a plan. The plan let's God be just at the same time He can show His mercy or grace attribute.

(25) Who do we think we are when we think we are smarter than God? Job thought he was wise, and look at what God said to Him. (Read Job 38:1-7)

(26) If you took a survey of Christians, you would find some outstanding, brilliant people it is true, but for the most part the vast majority of us are average "Joes." That is why I have written this Bible study on the level of the average person. I believe Jesus when He taught, He taught to the average person. I believe we should teach this way. Someone has said, "Put the cookies on the lower shelf so people can reach them."

(27) If God used brilliant, rich, famous people all the time to win others to Christ, where would the glory go?

(28-29) If you look in the Old Testament at the stories, look how God always used weak or broken things and people to win victories, that way the glory does not go to man, but to God! Think about Gideon, and how God made Gideon get rid of most of the soldiers, except only three hundred. In this way God alone could receive the glory! (Judges 7, 9)

(30-31) God has done the work in our lives in that He saved us, so if you want to boast about someone, try boasting about God!

Chapter 2:

(1) This chapter, as well as the next, is still talking about divisions in the church. Paul says when I came to you I did not come as some fancy orator. The thing he did was to share the Gospel using his own personality. I believe this is what God intended, we are to use our own personality. Some preachers or evangelists try to be like someone else, only to fail because that is not what God wanted for them. Paul gave us an example as to how to reach the hearts of people. Some would insist that unless you can preach a good homiletically correct message you will never make it as a minister of God's Word. Thank God, and Paul whom God used to speak to us through; you do not have to be an excellent speaker for God to use you in His service. Look at Moses as an example here, he said he was not a good speaker, but look how God used him.

(2) The thing we do need to know how to do is to show Christ and His love for us in dying on the cross for our sins. You see He is the theme of the Scriptures, Luke 24:25-27, tells us this very clearly. This is right after the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, when He was walking on the road to Emmaus. Jesus started talking to two of the believers without them knowing who He was, "Then He said to them, 'O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?' And beginning at Moses (Genesis) and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." Then Jesus went on to repeat this to the other disciples when he met with them. This was shortly after the two disciples from Emmaus told the others how they did not recognize Jesus until He ate with them. "Now it came to pass, as He sat at the table with them, that He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight. And they said to one another, 'Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?'" (Luke 24:30-32) "Then He said to them, 'These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses (the first five books of the Old Testament) and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.' And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. Then He said to them, 'Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things.'" (Luke 24:44-48) If you are preaching anything other than Christ as shown in all the Scriptures, you are missing the point!

(3) Listen, isn't this great, Paul too became very nervous at times when he had to speak in public or elsewhere. There is hope for you and me! I like Paul, he is so down to earth, and especially in this letter and the next one.

(4) You see all the time people think the way to be a good preacher or teacher is to be a good orator. We take these classes on preaching and teaching, and sometimes it amazes us when God takes someone that has no training or little training in speaking and they are used mightily of

God! Paul says you do not have to use "persuasive words of human wisdom," but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. Luke 24:49 says that after we understand the message, then we need to know that our message of Christ crucified is to be preached in the power of the Holy Spirit! "Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high." So now we know the secret of Paul's success in his ministry. Guess how we can have success in our ministry!

(5) You do not want to put your trust in what another man has convinced you of by his fancy public speaking. Many people have been led away from the truth today by this very thing. We think of people that have great speaking ability, but then they may not even be saved. Hitler claimed that his program was Scripturally based. Just because someone uses Scripture does not mean he or she is even a Christian. Satan uses Scripture too, look at how he used it in the Garden of Eden to deceive Eve. Satan twists Scripture. He mixes good with the bad, if he never used any Scripture people would not be deceived as easily. Watch out for false prophets in our day! Be careful Christian lest you be taken up with the wisdom of men and not the power of God. "But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber." (2 Peter 1-3)

(6) A "mature" Christian sees the wisdom of God in things thought foolish by others who claim to be wise. These will pass away, but God's Word will never pass away. "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away." (Matthew 24: 35)

(7) The wisdom of God is really a "mystery," this is something that up until the day of Pentecost had not fully been understood by the believers. The Church can not be found in the Old Testament, it is there by types and symbols, but it is not spelled out in detail. When Christ came He spoke about the Church that He would establish soon. "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." (Matthew 16:18) In the Old Testament it talked about the time when Gentiles would have free access to salvation, but from Abraham on Jews were God's main object of interest in Scripture. That is not to say Gentiles were not getting saved, and there are some examples of this, but we see more about the nation of Israel. Can you and I always understand God's wisdom in things. No, we do not always understand God's ways but when we get to heaven we will understand them. Now it is for us to trust Him by faith. However, He had all of this planned before time began. (Romans 11:33) "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!"

(8) You see if the Jews and Gentiles had understood the purpose of God then Christ would have never been crucified by them. But through their foolishness and ignorance the wisdom of God is made manifest to us, that God is smarter than everyone!

(9) The same is true with us brethren and God's plan for us in the future. We cannot even imagine the wonders of heaven and eternity. If we could, I am sure we would not be living like we do today. But our little minds could not grasp it even if God did spell it all out to us. Paul said, "I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or

whether out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a one was caught up to the third heaven. And I know such a man—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows—how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter." (2 Corinthians 12:2-4) We believe Paul is speaking humbly about himself, showing he could boast if he wanted to, but he knew it was wrong. However, he is really talking about an experience he had, probably when he was left for dead after being stoned (Acts 14:19-20). In this experience he was allowed to go to heaven (Paradise), but he could not say what he saw. You see it would be beyond our comprehension! We have a little taste of what it is like in heaven from Revelation Chapters 21 and 22.

(10) The things we do know are as a result of God's Holy Spirit illuminating our minds, or helping us to understand the deep things of God. Since the Holy Spirit is God, He can reveal God and His will to us even as Christ did when He was here revealing things to His disciples. Be sure of this though, it will agree with Scripture, or else it is not God's Holy Spirit speaking.

(11) Does anyone else besides yourself really know what you are thinking? Do you think any person can really tell you what God's purpose for your life is outside of Scripture? No, God's Holy Spirit is the only One that really knows Jesus and God the Father, and He is the only one that can reveal them to us. He will always lead us according to, and in harmony with all of Scripture. He will not take a text verse and make it say what the rest of Scripture does not say. He has us compare Scripture with Scripture as we see in verse 13.

(12) Do not depend on unsaved men of the world to teach you God's word. There are so many "worldly wise men," but they cannot help you with faith, if anything they destroy peoples' faith in God. How often have we heard men and women of the world speaking about God and the Bible, but it is from a standpoint of unbelief. They want to destroy any faith we have in God and in His precious Word. They have their organized unbelief! They have a big following in the world, they teach a type of Humanism that has Man as its center. Depend on the Holy Spirit to guide you into all truth, "However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come." (John 16:13) Really you read all of, John 16:1-12, to get the background on this verse.

(13) When Paul taught you find he used the Old Testament Scriptures to back up what he said. We should do the same, but now we also have the New Testament to compare Scripture with Scripture. If someone tells you something, like me or other Bible teachers, it is wise to check with the rest of Scripture to see if what I am saying agrees with Scripture. That is why Paul commended the believers in Berea, because they did not just take his word for something, but searched the Scriptures to see if it in fact were true. "Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so." (Acts 17:10-11) If these people were commended for checking out what Paul had to say, looking into Scripture, how much more should we today when we hear someone speak!

(14) This is another key verse in this section. Do you realize how many unsaved persons are in our churches today? In some churches I would not be surprised if there aren't more unsaved people in them than Christians. In our travels around we have seen this. No wonder people do not

want to come Sunday evening to hear the Word, and fellowship with other believers. No wonder they do not want to come to a mid-week prayer service. No wonder people want to stay home and watch T.V. instead. Notice how Satan uses this when there are cleaning days at the church. It comes do to this, many in the church are not truly born again or else they are thinking like natural men of the world.

(15) If we let Scripture be our judge then people, we won't have to be. Someone has said, "Sin will keep you from the Bible, or the Bible will keep you from sin." A spiritual Christian knows God's Word and he uses it as guide for all things. "Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You." (Psalm 119:11)

(16) Christ, through the Holy Spirit, teaches us the things He wants us to know from His book the Bible. Be careful as you listen to Bible teachers and preachers, that you check out what they are saying from the Word of God yourself. Ask God to help you as you study His Word.

"If there is going to be unity in the church there will have to be real genuine spirituality."

Chapter Three:

(1) Paul was saying, one of the reasons that there is no unity in the church is because people were spiritual babies. There is nothing wrong with starting out as babies in the body or in the faith, however, after sometime has elapsed and one is still spiritually immature (carnal), it is a very sickening thing.

I was once, as a teenager in Canada, a Reader's Digest subscriptions salesperson. During this time I very seldom went into any homes, I almost always stood at the door of a home and gave my sales pitch. On one of these occasions I heard a voice coming from inside the house calling for me to come in, so I did. Then I heard the voice again saying, "I am back here." I went into the room where I heard the voice coming from, and then to my amazement, there in a crib was what I can only describe as a baby with an adult head. It was shocking for me as a teenager, but I kept my cool and went on talking to her as if nothing was different. Now it was not this person's fault that she was in this condition, I have learned since then that there are other people born with this abnormality.

However, as I thought about it, the person I saw with a baby's body and an adult head is a good illustration of a person who has been truly born again, but years have gone by and their spiritual body has not grown. Their spiritual head or knowledge about spiritual things has increased, but they have remained in "body" the same size spiritually that they were when they were saved. They have not grown in the Lord as we are instructed to do in: 2 Peter 3:18 "...but grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ..."

(2) Paul says in so many words, "I could not give you the spiritual "meat" of the Word, but have had to keep giving you the "milk" of the Word." He wanted to talk to them about deeper doctrines, but he had to keep going back to salvation, confession of sins, and the need to get along well with other Christians. A baby, of course does not have teeth or the ability to chew and digest meat. So too, a person who is immature spiritually will not appreciate the teachings about prophecy and evangelism and other deeper subjects of the Word of God. They are still "spinning

their wheels” spiritually. The Corinthians just were not getting anywhere spiritually, and so it is today with many Christians.

I have heard statistics like as high as 95 percent of Christians never have witnessed to their faith in Christ. In United States we have a 50 percent divorce rate. A lot of Christians have not read the Bible through even once, and could not name all of the Ten Commandments, showing that we are spiritually immature or carnal. (“carnal” is the Greek word “asarkikos” from sarx, flesh, signifies (a) having the nature of flesh, i.e., sensual, controlled by animal appetites, governed by human nature, instead of by the Spirit of God. (Vine’s)

(3) There were divisions in the church, and they were fighting with each other over many things. They were still in this condition even as Paul wrote this letter to them. They were going back and acting just like they did before they were saved, doing some of the same sins. They were living like unsaved people again, even though they were saved. Paul would not have spoken to them this way if they were not still saved. Have you every known Christians like this? Have you and I been in this condition before as Christians? I know I have been!

Even though I was saved when I was nine years old, when I was in Vietnam I was living like a non-Christian for the last six months I was there. I was looking at things I should never have looked at (which things still haunt me at times to this day). I was smoking and drinking things I should never been involved with. I was doing and saying things I should not have been doing and saying.

There were no church services there, but I should have been reading my Bible. I could have prayed more often with the one other Christian in my unit. I had no excuse, and I was miserable, if I had died then I knew I would go to heaven, but I would have been ashamed as I met the Lord. There have been some other times in my life like this that I am not proud of, but aren’t you glad that God forgives us when we ask for forgiveness! Remember 1 John 1:9 is still in the book. Someone has said, “Sin will keep you from the Bible, or the Bible will keep you from sin.”

One example of how the Bible can keep you from sin is seen in the true story of *Mutiny on the Bounty*. This event is an amazing testimonial to what the Bible can do. In 1888, a group of English sailors who had spent six months on a South Sea island decided to remain. They mutinied against their captain and set him adrift in an open boat. A punitive expedition from England captured 14 of the mutineers and transferred nine of them to another island, where they formed a new colony.

The Encyclopedia Britannica tells us that these people degenerated so rapidly and became so fierce that life there turned into a hell on earth. Having learned to distill whiskey from a native plant, they soon were involved in quarrels, drunken orgies, and violence. Finally all the men except Alexander Smith were dead, and he was left alone with a group of native women and half breed children. Then a wonderful thing happened. Finding a Bible in an old sea chest, Smith read it and believed it. He gathered the women and children around him and taught them the Word of God.

Twenty years later, an American ship visited the island and found a Christian community. There was no disease, no crime, no insanity, no illiteracy, and no strong drink. The moral standards of

the people were so high that no law enforcement agency was necessary. The island seemed to be a small paradise. What had brought about this astounding transformation? Just reading the Bible, believing it, and putting it into practice!!!

So we have seen in this chapter carnality can come in many different forms, in the church some of their many sins were envy (self-pride), strife (fighting, arguing), and divisions (separating themselves from other truly born again believers).

(4) When we say, “I am a Calvinist” or “I am an Arminian,” “I am a Nazarene,” “I am a Baptist,” “I am this,” and so on, we forget that we are Christians before we are anything else, or else we are carnal. We are acting just like the Christians in Corinth. They were saying, “I like Paul’s teaching, I’m going to follow him.” Another was saying, “No, I like Apollos, now he is a real preacher.” Do you hear this sort of thing in the church today still?

We are brothers and sisters in Christ first and foremost. If a person is born again we should be able to fellowship with him or her. We may not agree with them on every detail or even major issues, but we must remember we will still spend eternity with them if they are born again. There will be no signs in heaven saying Baptist go this way, Brethren in this area over here. No, we will just be saints in heaven! So we may as well get use to it now. If you have questions along this line please read the article I have written, “The Holy Catholic Church.”

(5) These Christians were following mere men as their leaders. It is all right to listen to people as they teach the Word of God, but we are not to think of them as our saviors. Christ alone has saved us, we follow Him. Paul said in one place, follow me as I follow Christ, and in other words only learn from me to follow Christ. Sure you admire and appreciate the person who led you to the Lord, but he or she was just an instrument God used to reach you. Do not make these people into more than they are, mere men. Also, people will let you down, but Christ will never let us down!

(6) God uses evangelists like Paul to plant the seed, and teachers like Apollos to water, but it is really God who does the work, we are only instruments through whom the Holy Spirit’s power passes!

(7) God has given different gifts to Christians; still God is the one who does the real work in the life. The gifts are covered in Chapters 12-14. We are like the lamp that carries the light, we should not get the credit, but the light should. Jesus is the real light of the world, John chapter 1.

(8) The evangelist and the teacher or preacher is really working together for the same goal. So do not try to separate them, they go together. Even so they will receive individual rewards, 2 Corinthians 5:10.

(9) We are helping one another as we work together in the field that God has planted (the seed is the Word of God, Matthew 13). Those who have been born again are the plants, so to speak. Also there is the picture or example of the building being the people.

(10) Paul was used of God to lay the foundation for the Church. Jesus is that Rock or Foundation (Cement), but Paul is the servant used to pour the cement as it were. Notice he did not say he was the foundation, but he helped lay it. Jesus Christ is the foundation; we must remember we will be judged for how we teach new converts in the Church, James 3:1.

(11) In this verse Paul makes it very clear who the foundation is, and that is Jesus Christ!

(12) At the Judgment Seat of Christ we as believers will be judged, this is not to find out whether we are saved or not, no this is for rewards. Look up these references for further information. (2 Corinthians 5:9-11; Rom. 2:16; 14:10, 12; Ephesians 6:8.)

(13,14) Our motives for doing things will be evaluated, if we did something for selfish pride it will be burned up, and we will not receive a reward for it. But if we did things for the right motive because of a love of Christ, and the people, then we will be rewarded for this. (Look up these references also, Matthew 5:12; 6:1-2; 10:41-42; 1 Corinthians 13, Hebrews 11:26, etc.).

(15) Some people will be saved by the “skin of their teeth,” so to speak. There are carnal Christians that will be saved and in heaven, but they will have little to show for their life after they were saved. A case in point is Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5:1-11. Here this husband and wife were more concerned about outward appearances in the Church than they were in true spirituality! How much of this do we have in the Church today. It is interesting they were humiliated not praised. Why do we do things? What are our motives? It will all “come out in the wash” as we say. “But the LORD said to Samuel, ‘Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.’” (1 Samuel 16:7)

One day when we as Christians stand before the Lord Jesus Christ, I know He will find many things to praise and reward us for because He said, “And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward.” (Matthew 10:42)

(16) When we become Christians by being born again at that moment the Holy Spirit of God enters our body. The filling (baptism) of the Holy Spirit is another subject that is covered in the Acts study. At the moment we are saved every believer has the Spirit of God dwelling in them. We are then the temple of God! This is so wonderful, God no longer has a building like the physical temple that was in Jerusalem, but God now dwells in us, Praise God! “But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.” (Romans 8:9)

(17) God’s temple is supposed to be holy at all times. When we deliberately try to destroy our bodies through drugs, alcohol, tobacco, and so on, then we can expect that God will let our lives be taken sooner than He would have normally. “If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not leading to death. There is sin leading to death. I do not say that he should pray about that. All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin not leading to death.” (1 John 5:16-17)

All of us sin and if we say we have no sin we are lying, however, as Christians we do not practice

sin. In other words when we sin we are convicted of it as being wrong and we want to get right with God by confessing it to Him. “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.” (1 John 1:8-10)

The book of 1 John goes on to talk about not sinning. “My little children (so this book is written to Christians), these things I write to you, so that you may not sin, and if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world. (1 John 2:1, 2)

The point is we do not try to sin, but one way we displease God with our lives is when we pollute His temple, our bodies. There are statistics about smoking, for example, where you will lose something like 15 minutes of our life span for each cigarette you smoke. So your life is shorten naturally, or God may take your life sooner as we saw with the 1 John 5:15,16 passage. This does not mean that everyone who dies young was in deep sin.

The important thing here is to confess our sins and forsake them! As people look at us in the Church they can be drawn closer to the Lord, or be driven away from Him. Let me close this section with two short, true stories of how God took two Christians home to heaven early because they defiled the temple of God. One was a friend of my wife’s by the name of Carol. Carol had been introduced to smoking by her father as a teenager. She was a wonderful Christian and worked as our Church secretary. She contacted cancer in her forties, and died shortly after this. Her one goal before she died was to see her daughter graduate from High School. She died several months before this could happen. I helped with her funeral which was well attended. The song used was, *The Wind Beneath My Wings*.

The next sad, true story of a Christian’s life that was taken prematurely happened in Trinidad, West Indies, when I was a missionary there with Child Evangelism Fellowship. As we were witnessing in a small village, a man received the Lord. He had been known as the town drunk. He was gloriously saved, and it was a tremendous testimony to the community. Several received the Lord as a result of his testimony. However, after a time he began to miss fellowship, and started to drink again. I and others heard that he even got drunk again. Then it happened as it would be, he was walking along the highway, he bent over to pick up a beer bottle, I was told, and he was struck by a car. (It was ironic to me that he was picking up a beer bottle when he was killed.) There was a funeral for him as well, but it was sad and hard. I believe I will see both of these people one day again in heaven, but they went “before their time” because they defiled their temple. This is serious business with God, and it should be serious business with us as well!

(18) Paul says under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, “Let no one deceive himself.” In another place the Holy Spirit says, “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. (Galatians 6:7,8) King David in the Old Testament, after he sinned, confessed his sin to the Lord, and was forgiven, but he also caused the death of many people as a result of his sin, and also he caused people to blaspheme God.

“If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become

wise.” If we follow the Lord, we will be considered fools by this world, but God’s wisdom is what I would rather have. Jim Elliott, missionary martyr said, “I would rather be on a team that looks like it is losing now, but in the end will win, than to be on a team that looks like it is winning now, but in the end will lose!

(19-20) Usually the wisdom of this world turns out to be some scheme of how they can sin, and still pretend to be righteous. The wisdom of the world ends in violence and death. Remember God said, “For the ways of man are before the eyes of the LORD, and He ponders all his paths. His own iniquities entrap the wicked man, and he is caught in the cords of his sin. He shall die for lack of instruction, and in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray.” (Proverbs 5:21-23) God sees right through the pretense, because He sees the heart.

(21, 22) Now let us not be looking to men for wisdom, because they will fail us. We can look to them for advice, but we have the Holy Spirit to guide us far better than men can. We boast in the Lord, not in men. Really everything, because of Christ, belongs to us.

(23) “And you are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s” “I am my beloved’s and (H)is desire is toward me. (Song of Solomon 7:10)

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