

I CORINTHIANS

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to I Corinthians chapter 1 as we continue our study through the Word of God and we begin this fascinating letter to the church in Corinth.

Before we begin, I want to give you some information about Corinth during this time that Paul wrote the letter and then we will talk a little about some of the problems in this church, as that is what Paul will be addressing here.

Because of its location, Corinth was a very prosperous city of some 700,000 people during this period of time. Also, about two-thirds of the people were slaves.

Besides its local population there were many travelers who came and went through this city.

Corinth was located only some four miles from the Aegean Sea in south central Greece. And Greece is divided basically into two parts.

The southern part was called the Peloponnesus, where Corinth was located. This southern part is almost an island attached to the northern part of Greece by a very narrow four-mile-wide isthmus. Thus, Northern part of Greece has been called the mainland.

On the western side was the Gulf of Corinth leading into the Ionian Sea. On the eastern side was the Saronic Gulf and the port city of Cenchreae which opened to the Aegean Sea.

Now here is the problem. Sea travel around the Peloponnesus was very time consuming and it was very dangerous! In fact, sailors, because of it being so treacherous, had the following saying. "A sailor never takes a journey around Malea [the cape at the south end of the peninsula] until he first writes his will."

There in Corinth ships would sail into the channel, and the smaller ships would then be carried over the four-mile isthmus on rollers which went directly past Corinth.

But, if the ship was too big to carry across this isthmus, they would unload the cargo and then they would carry it across this isthmus and load it on a different ship, which usually went to the Roman port city of Puteoli.

Now as crazy as that sounds, that is what they did because again, it was quicker, more economical and much, much safer than sailing 250 miles around the Peloponnesus peninsula.

That meant that much traffic ran through Corinth, going east to west but also, during this period of time, there was much land traffic that ran north to south, including to and from Athens, which was only some forty miles to the east of Corinth.

Not only was there much traffic through Corinth for commercial reasons, but it was a successful entertainment center. They held the Isthmian Games in Corinth and the Olympic Games were held in Athens.

Besides this wealth it had it, besides the entertainment that it had, Corinth was also a very religious city.

Some 2,000 feet high was this great mound called Acrocorinth, which was able to hold the entire population of Corinth in case of war and also it had a temple to the goddess of love, Aphrodite.

At night the 1,000 temple priestesses, which were nothing more than temple prostitutes, would come down into the city to offer themselves to the men in the name of the god they worshiped, in a religious act and this would help support the temple.

Not only was it wealthy, not only did it have all this entertainment, not only was it religious, but also, they prided themselves in gaining knowledge.

You see, they had a philosophical center, and like Athens, philosophers loved to gather and learn new things!

When you have a mixture like this; wealth, entertainment, vulgar religious practices and philosophy, you also have a debased, a wicked, immoral society, and that is exactly what we see here in Corinth!

In fact, their lifestyle was so bad and so well known that the term KORINTHIAZOMAI, meaning, “to act like a Corinthian” became synonymous for debauchery and prostitution.

How would you like the city you live in to be known like that? But that was the reality of Corinth!

Leon Morris describes Corinth as “Intellectually alert, materially prosperous, but morally corrupt.”

Listen to this excerpt from John Bunyan’s book, *Pilgrim’s Progress*. In this portion of the book, Christian and Faithful are heading towards the Celestial City but to get there they have to go through Vanity Fair, which reminds me of Corinth, and I am sorry to say, of our nation today.

This is what was said,

Almost five thousand years ago, pilgrims, on their way to the Celestial City, went through this town. Finally Beelzebub, Apollyon, and Legion, with their laborers, set up this fair to provide every kind of entertainment for travelers and to sell all types of merchandise all year long.

And still, at this fair is sold such merchandise as fine houses, lands, stocks and bonds, false security, gay clothing, jewelry, expensive cosmetics, gold and silver, antiques, pearls, precious stones, fame, fortunes, reputations, virtue, honor, popularity, positions, phony titles, counterfeit degrees, contests, chances, games, votes, elections, government offices, personal influences, padded reports, propaganda, falsehoods, fictitious news, deceptions, artificial personalities, schemes, tricks, comics, beauty queens, sex appeal, prostitutes, human lives, and souls of men.

Moreover, at this fair at all times are gambling, juggling, cheating, defrauding, embezzling, lying, stealing, swindling, rogues, knaves, libertines, carnivals, festivities, drinking, revelries, connivings, fools, thugs, lewd women, murders, adulteries, and all kinds of immoralities. The broad road that leads to destruction which brings the fair much trade lies through the town.

And in this town of Vanity are taverns, night clubs, roadhouses, seductive shows, popular casinos, culture societies, fashionable churches, synthetic Christians, sectarian denominational segregation, professional pastors (using mass psychology, setting themselves up as lords over God's heritage, ruling their congregations for "filthy lucre," beating and fleecing their flocks instead of feeding them or setting them a good example). There are also famous pseudo scientists, charlatan physicians, dishonorable crafty lawyers, unscrupulous politicians, clandestine bookmakers, racketeers – impostors of all kinds.

But, if anyone going to the Celestial City would miss this town of Vanity, he must of necessity go out of the world. The Prince of Peace, when here on earth, went through this town to His own country; and this same Beelzebub was then – as now – lord of the fair. He tried to sell the Prince many of his vanities. He even offered to make him manager of the fair. Because the Prince was such an influential person, Beelzebub led Him from section to section and showed Him all the various nations of the world and promised to make Him ruler over all, if He would but cheapen himself and buy some of the merchandise, and He left the town without spending a penny for any of Beelzebub's goods.

Now, as soon as Christian and Faithful entered the fair they created a sensation, not only in the fair but throughout the town.

First, their dress was so different from the people of the place that everyone gazed at them. Some said they were cranks; some called them outlandish; others said they were there to create trouble.

Second, their speech was different. Few could understand what they said, for naturally they spoke the language of Canaan, while those who kept the fair were men of this world. From one end of the fair to the other, they seemed like barbarians.

Third, these pilgrims showed no interest in their goods, and this worried the people of the fair most. Christian and Faithful did not even care to see them, and when they were asked to buy they would stop up their ears and say, "Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity," looking upwards as if they belonged to another country.

- John Bunyan (Retold by James H. Thomas), *Pilgrim's Progress*, pp. 89-91

Locked in prison for preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ, John Bunyan wrote Pilgrim's Progress, not in the twenty-first-century, but way back in the 1600's and it still rings true today! The world is trying to draw us back, to have us walk away from God, using all kinds of enticements, discouragements and-so-on.

And that was the timeframe that Paul was writing this letter, a time of moral depravity and the church was struggling in this area.

As you may remember when we went through the book of Acts, Paul established the church in Corinth during his second missionary journey in Acts chapter 18.

In Corinth Paul met fellow tent-makers and believers Aquila and Priscilla who fled Rome in 49 A. D. when Claudius issued an edict ordering the expulsion of Jews from that city.

Paul spent 1½ years in Corinth sharing the Gospel, establishing the church (Acts 18:11).

We call this epistle or letter I Corinthians, but in reality, it seems that this is the second letter that Paul wrote to the church in Corinth for in I Corinthians 5:9 we are told, **“I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people.”**

That first letter was lost and thus, we call this letter I Corinthians, but both of these letters were corrective in nature.

Now the big question for many is this, “Who wrote this letter?”

Even the most liberal scholars agree that Paul wrote this letter.

In fact, Clement of Rome called this letter back in 95 A. D. “The Epistle of the Blessed Apostle Paul.”

Also, many other church leaders attributed this letter to Paul like; Polycarp, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian as well as others.

The date of Paul's writing of this letter is somewhere between A. D. 54 to A. D. 56 and Paul wrote this letter when he was in Ephesus, on his third missionary journey, after receiving a letter and by word of mouth from Corinth telling Paul of the difficulties they were having, and Paul writes back to help correct their errors.

There are many ways you can divide this letter up, but the simplest way is as follows:

I Corinthians chapters 1-6 Paul is dealing with problems in the church, trying to correct their errors, their sin.

I Corinthians chapters 7-16 Paul is basically answering questions that the church in Corinth had and most likely was found in the letter that was sent to Paul, as well as word of mouth by those who brought the letter from Corinth.

Like I have said, I believe this letter is just as important to the church in America today as it was to the church in Corinth back then.

You see, we suffer, if I can use that word, and I believe I can in this case, from prosperity! We suffer from perverted religious activity! And we suffer from worldly philosophies that have negated what God has said in His Word to us!

The solution is to listen and learn these lessons so that we may grow.

In speaking of the church in Corinth, Moffatt hits the nail on the head when he tells us, "The church was in the world, as it had to be, but the world was in the church, as it ought not to be."

Does that ring a bell for us today? You bet it does.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones also gives to us this perspective of the church today as he says; "The whole drift toward modernism that has blighted the church of God and nearly destroyed its living Gospel may be traced to an hour when men began to turn from revelation to philosophy."

Like today, the Corinthians loved to indulge their desires of whatever they wanted. Listen to these words and you will see how it fits our nation and really, our world today. We are told,

The ideal of the Corinthian was the reckless development of the individual. The merchant who made his gain by all and every means, the man of pleasure surrendering himself to every lust, the athlete steeled to every bodily exercise and proud in his physical strength, are the true Corinthian types: in a word the man who recognized no superior and no law but his own desires.

- von Dobschutz, Cited in Parry, p. x

And you will see as we go through I Corinthians and then II Corinthians, that things were bad in the church!

We will see the carnality, the divisions, the strife that was going on and yet, they were boasting in the gifts that they had.

And what is interesting to me is that the church in Corinth, as well as any church today, will take on the characteristics of the environment around it if it doesn't plug the holes that are allowing false teaching, filth to come in!

And as you see how bad the church was, the city of Corinth was even worse, if you could imagine.

But the church should be different than the world, but, like I have said, they were taking on the characteristics of the world, just as we see happening in churches today!

With that as our introduction, let's begin reading in I Corinthians chapter 1, beginning in verse 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us this evening as we begin our journey through this very important letter to the church in Corinth.

I CORINTHIANS 1**VERSE 1**

In this verse the words “**to be**” are in italics, which tells us they were added to the text. They were put there for clarity, but I think it takes away from what Paul is saying here.

The text should read “**Paul, called an apostle of Jesus Christ through the Word of God . . .**”

Why is that even important.

Because Paul wants them to know where he stands because he has some difficult things to say to this church, some corrective action, some rebuke, and it is not going to be easy and thus, Paul is establishing that this is not from him, but it is from the Lord. In other words, God has placed him in this position as an apostle, a sent one for Christ, not man or even himself and thus, they need to listen and obey!

Then Paul mentions “**Sosthenes our brother.**” Most likely Sosthenes was the person spoken of in Acts chapter 18.

While Paul was in Corinth, the Jews brought Paul before Gallio, the proconsul of Achaia because they didn’t like what Paul was saying regarding Jesus.

Gallio heard their complaints and we are told, **“And when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, ‘If it were a matter of wrongdoing or wicked crimes, O Jews, there would be reason why I should bear with you. But if it is a question of words and names and your own law, look to it yourselves; for I do not want to be a judge of such matters.’ And he drove them from the judgment seat. Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment seat. But Gallio took no notice of these things.”** Acts 18:14-17.

Because they lost this case, the Jews were so mad that they took Sosthenes, who was the new ruler over the Synagogue and the one who probably presented this case against Paul, and they beat him up! They didn’t like to lose, I guess!

The interesting thing here is that if this is the same man, the enemy of Paul and the church, he is now saved, a friend of Paul and the church!

How beautiful it is to see the healing power of Jesus to make an enemy a brother in the Lord.

God did it with Paul, an archenemy of the church and He did it with Sosthenes, and He continues to do the same today if we would only let Him!

VERSE 2

Keep in mind that the ancient Greek word for **“church”** (ekklesiai) was a non-religious word for an “assembly” of people, typically gathered together for a specific purpose.

That is why Paul specifically says when he writes to them, **“To the church of God which is at Corinth.”**

In other words, this is not a gathering of the world to decide things, this is a gathering of God's people to hear what He has to say. That is a big difference and the church is making itself worldly, being influenced by the world instead of obeying the Lord and His Word!

Make no mistake about it, it is God's church and yet it had become the church of Corinth as they let the culture influence them instead of influencing the culture for Jesus.

It is as Morgan said, "The measure of failure of the part of the church is the measure in which she has allowed herself to be influenced by the spirit of the age . . . We are sometimes told today that what the church supremely needs is that she should catch the spirit of the age. A thousand times no. What the church supremely needs is to correct the spirit of the age." Amen to that!

And the bottom line is this. Is the church influencing the city, or is the city influencing the church? Here in Corinth, it was the city that was influencing the church and that should not be, and Paul will correct them on that, as we will see.

Now we see again these words "**to be**" that were added for clarity, but they are not there in the original writings and once again it confuses this issue that Paul is making here.

The believers in Corinth are "**called saints**" not because of what they have done, which was not too impressive as we are going to see, but because of what God has done, He has made them saints!

The Greek word for "**saint**" is HAGIOS which means "set apart one" or "holy one."

In the Old Testament the implements for Temple worship were holy, they were set apart to be used in the worship of God and thus, we too are set apart to be used in the worship of God, we are saints!

It is as Paul said in Hebrews 2:10-11, **“For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren.”**

You see, God has set us apart for His glory! We might not always look or act like Christians, but we still are Christians as was the case here with the Corinthian believers!

VERSE 3

Here we see the Siamese twins of the New Testament, *GRACE* and *PEACE!*

And they are always in this order. First, we see grace or CHARIS, which is a Greek greeting, and then peace or SHALOM which is a Hebrew greeting.

When Paul speaks of grace and peace it is always in that order, as I have said, because you will never experience the peace of God until you first experience His grace, which is found in Jesus!

It is as Jesus said in John 14:27, **“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”**

And in John 16:33 Jesus also said, **“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”**

You see, it is not a peace that is found in the world. It is not a peace because there is an absence of difficulty. But it is a peace that is found in Jesus and it is a peace through the storms of life as we rest in Him and that is something we can only receive as we surrender our lives to Jesus!

VERSES 4-9

Paul will later spend most of this letter rebuking sin and correcting error, yet he is still sincerely thankful for God's work in the Corinthian Christians.

In knowing that this letter is a letter of correction, how can Paul thank God for a church that was so rich in spiritual gifts and yet so carnal? Because Paul knew, "**being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.**" Philippians 1:6.

I don't know where you are at in your walk with the Lord this evening, but don't give up because God has not given up on you, He will complete the work He has started.

Also, we cannot blame God for our sin, our laziness, our ineffectiveness in service, because God will give us what we need, we just don't always appropriate that into our lives.

You see, it is all about the grace of God that has been given to us by Jesus Christ and not our good works. It has never been about our good works for salvation and it never will be. We are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone and the good works flow from our lives because of our relationship with Jesus!

One writer put it like this in regard to the gifts that these believers in Corinth had, “The grace of God was shown to the church in Corinth in that they lacked no spiritual gift. This tells me something very important: The flow of spiritual gifts either in a man individually or in a congregation corporately is not an indication of spirituality. It’s an indication of grace. When someone has a gift of healing, a word of prophecy, or otherwise moves in the miraculous, our tendency is to assume he must be very holy. The gifts of the Spirit, however, are not dependent upon our attaining a certain level of spirituality. They’re simply a matter of our being recipients of grace. This means ministry and spiritual gifts are not based upon how we’re doing at all—but solely upon what God wants to do in and through us.” (Source Unknown)

And did you notice in verse 7 that they are “**eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ.**” I wish more Christians would have that hunger for the Lord’s return, that joy to wait for Him to come for His bride, the church!

And then Paul tells us in verse 8 that the Lord will “**confirm you to the end**” and the Greek word means, “to make to stand, to make stable.”

In other words, Jesus will take us to glory, He will complete the work He began in us because our salvation, from beginning to end is a work of God! Believe it and apply that into your life!

VERSE 10

I found this interesting. In the first 10 verses of this letter Paul speaks of Jesus 10 times, why?

Because, before he speaks of the problem in the church at Corinth, he is giving to them the solution, he is giving to them Jesus!

It is when we get our eyes off of Jesus and onto self that we lose sight of Jesus and what He desires us to do and we become selfish, self-seeking, self-motivated, self-consumed and-so-on.

The solution again, more of Jesus and less of self, the flesh, because self needs to be crucified!

Paul opened up in a gentle way but now he is going to deal with the problems in the church in a strong way.

And the results of these problems is that in the church in Corinth there were divisions, schisms. The Greek word means to “tear” or to “rend.”

In other words, the church in Corinth were ripping each other apart, they were tearing up the body of Christ for their own selfish reasons and Paul says that should not be! Instead you should be like-minded, have the same focus, the Lord Jesus Christ.

I have seen this played out here at Calvary a few times. People want to bring in their own teaching, their own ideas that are contrary to the Word of God and they begin to cause divisions, schisms in the church.

And I had to deal with it head on or else it would have divided the body here at Calvary up.

The solution is Jesus, but, sad to say, it was their own ideas that were more important than Jesus, and that is never a good thing.

So we see that Paul spoke of divisions, and that was wrong. Then it says what they should be doing as they put on the mind of Christ, and they are to be **“joined together.”**

This Greek Word was a medical term relating to putting bones back together that were broken or fractured.

Thus, the idea here is putting back together or to make one again that which was broken or separated, relationships within the body of Christ!

You see, this tearing apart of the body is not natural in the body of Christ, at least it shouldn't be, and it is not what God desires! Thus, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, put on the mind of Christ and heal those relationships!

Now, the big question here is this, "What was the big problem in Corinth that brought about these things that were ripping the church apart?" Paul is going to tell us as we read on!

VERSES 11-13

Chloe, probably a businesswoman and also a Christian, sends news to Paul through her representatives that are traveling back and forth from Corinth to Ephesus, where Paul wrote this letter.

And they are telling Paul, maybe through a letter and word of mouth, that there is trouble in Corinth with a capital "**T**".

They allowed their differences to divide up the body of Christ, cause quarrels, contentions and they used names to back up their cause – to justify their actions, and what a sad picture that is being painted here.

By acting carnal, as the Corinthian church was, Paul tells them you are dividing Christ when we are supposed to be one in Christ!

And this Greek word for "**contentions**" is ERIS, and Eris was the goddess of strife and wrangling, interestingly enough. This is what was going on in the church.

Some sided with Paul, others with Apollos, and there was some who followed Cephas, and then there were some who said they followed Jesus! Talk about name droppers!

For me, I have seen this. I actually had someone tell me, because I did not follow the Law for salvation but believe we are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, that I was following after Paul while he, being more spiritual of course, followed Jesus!

Foolishness and isn't that exactly what we see here? Paul says of them that they are not spiritual, but carnal!

Let me say this. We may differ on some non-essentials, and that should not be a problem, like it was here in Corinth. But on essentials, I am not backing down and neither should you!

I believe that is what Paul means when he says that we are to have the same mind, the mind of Christ.

Maybe you heard the story of the old, very contentious Quaker who went from one church to another church never finding the "True" church he was looking for.

One day someone was bold enough to ask him, "Well, what church are you in now?"

He replied back, "I am in the true church at last."

"Really," said the man, "How many belong to it?"

The Old Quaker replied back, "Just my wife and myself, and I am not sure about her sometimes."

Funny, yes, but not right!

Yes, there is room for disagreements in the church, but not on foundational doctrines. We must be in agreement there. And yet, that is where the church is missing the point. They focus on the little issues, non-essential issues and throw the foundational truths away. Remember, ***"In essentials - unity; in non-essentials - liberty; in all things - charity."***

VERSES 14-17

Paul does not pull any punches here but exposes their carnality. Paul is showing them that their actions were not right. Some were saying, “I was baptized by Paul, who baptized you?” And for others, it was Apollos and-so-on.

First of all, the power of baptism is not seen in who does the baptizing but in the spiritual reality it represents and as an act of obedience to the Lord on our part.

The other issue is that they were self-seeking, self-serving, self-absorbed and they needed to die to self instead of feeding the ugly monster.

And isn't that what baptism represents, the death to the old life as you are placed under the water and as you are raised up you are a new creation in Christ!

The problem was this did not become a reality in their life even though they knew the truth. They needed to do as Paul said in Romans 12:1-2, **“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”**

And, of course, we truly need to do this on a daily basis for if we don't give our lives to God, we will see the flesh grow and get in the way of what God wants to do.

So Paul tells us that he did not baptize that many people. One of them was Crispus. And he could be the leader or ruler of the Synagogue in Corinth who got saved in Acts 18:8.

Then he speaks of Gaius, who could be the host that Paul spoke of in Romans 16:23, the place where Paul stayed when he was in Corinth and from where he wrote his letter to the Romans.

Now let me touch on this because there are some who believe that baptism is essential, it is necessary for salvation. As you read what Paul said here, I think Paul clearly shows us that it is not essential for salvation!

Yes, the Lord commands us to be baptized but not for salvation, that is a free gift of God that we receive by faith.

If baptism was necessary for salvation Paul would have traveled with a portable baptismal dunking all who came to the Lord, but he didn't do that. What was Paul's focus? Bringing to people the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which has the power to save them!

One writer put it like this,

I often have people come up to me and they say, why don't you baptize people as soon as they accept Jesus Christ? Immediately I know that I am dealing with a person of the Church of Christ, who keeps the baptismal warm. In case someone comes to Christ, they baptize them immediately because there is a belief of baptismal regeneration. That is, that they are not really saved until they are baptized. And I know that they are really not interested in the answer that I will give to them, because if you don't baptize immediately, you are wrong.

There is no way you can justify not baptizing a person immediately, in their mind. But I will usually point them to this passage of Scripture that Paul wrote to the Corinthians, where Paul actually thanks God that he didn't baptize any of them but Crispus and Gaius and the household of Stephanas. And if there are any others, he doesn't remember because he said Christ did not call me baptize but to preach the gospel. Now if baptism is necessary for regeneration, then Paul is guilty of utmost blasphemy in making such a statement.

- Source Unknown

Again, notice what Paul tells us in regard to what the Lord sent Paul to do, “**to preach the Gospel.**” The key for Paul and for us is not to preach the Word of God based upon our wisdom or the wisdom of this world but by the power and wisdom that God gives to us by His Spirit!

In Romans 1:16-17 Paul speaks of the power of the Gospel to save, not baptism. He wrote, “**For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’**” May we not forget that!

VERSE 18

The Gospel message, Jesus Christ, it seems so foolish to people. In fact, some may say, “Are you serious? We need more than just hearing about Jesus Christ and Him crucified. You need to get real. I am having problems with my marriage. I am having problems with addiction. I am having problems at work. Let’s face it, I am having problems and Jesus is the answer?”

Like it or not, that is the solution to every problem we have, ***JESUS CHRIST AND HIM CRUCIFIED!***

And yes, the death of a man on a cross to save us from our sins seems foolish. It would be like saying someone dying in an electric chair will save us! That is how it may seem and how many see it, and Paul tells us that for those who believe this way, deny what Christ has done for them, “**are perishing**” which speaks of a work in progress, that is the direction they are moving in.

Let's face it, we are all moving in one of two directions. Either towards Jesus or away from Him and the direction you are going will determine where you will spend eternity!

The wonderful news is that those who hear the Gospel message, those that believe it, there is the power of God to save them as it has saved us and we **“are being saved”** which is another work in progress, that is the direction we are moving towards.

It is speaking of our sanctification process or God making us more like Him.

Our salvation is secure in Him, I don't believe you can lose that free gift that God has given to us, for Paul tells us, **“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”** Ephesians 2:8-9.

God has the power to save us, but we must ask Him to save us. He will not go against our wishes.

VERSES 19-21

Keep in mind that the Greeks were lovers of wisdom. They were into philosophy, the wisdom of man.

Someone defined philosophy as, “A blindman in a dark room looking for a black cat that isn't there.” How true!

Paul warned us in Colossians 2:8-10, **“Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.”**

Think about this for a minute. The movers and shakers from time past have come and gone. Their philosophies have come and gone. And yet, people continue to look to man for wisdom instead of God who does not change, and His Word will continue on and will not change because it is truth. And the church is buying into this garbage and listening and accepting it over the Word of God! The wisdom of man is foolishness!

Think about this. This so-called wisdom is man centered. It is a philosophy of life that is rebellious toward the will of God, which rejects entirely the word of God, and is completely humanistic in its approach to life.

And when you look at the Gospel message, there is nothing in it to appeal to a person's pride of knowledge. It is a work of God!

We also see in these verses that Paul is quoting out of Isaiah 29:14 to show the foolishness of man's wisdom.

Assyria already captured the Northern Kingdom of Israel and was now going after the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Hezekiah was the King of the Southern Kingdom of Judah and he was a good King for the most part.

When he saw what was happening, the King tried to make a deal with the enemy, which is always a big mistake, but it is the wisdom of man. If you can't beat them, join them!

When things got to be a mess and his strategy didn't work, when the wisdom of man failed, he turned to the Lord who gave them the victory.

In II Kings 19:35 we see how the battle was won, "**And it came to pass on a certain night that the angel of the LORD went out, and killed in the camp of the Assyrians one hundred and eighty-five thousand; and when people arose early in the morning, there were the corpses - all dead.**"

Not bad for a night's work for one angel, 185,000 Assyrian soldiers wiped out!

The point here is simple. No matter how wise people are, those that love to dispute, no one can do for us what Jesus has done – He saved us!

You see, it puts to silence all the foolish arguments and foolish wisdom of man!

It is as Spurgeon said, “It is certain that a blind man is no judge of colours, a deaf man is no judge of sound, and a man who has never been quickened into spiritual life can have no judgment as to spiritual things.”

And that is what Paul tells us in I Corinthians 2:14, **“But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”**

We think we are so smart but listen carefully to this. “One day, students in one of Albert Einstein’s classes were saying they had decided that there was no God. Einstein asked them, how much of all the knowledge in the world they had among themselves collectively, as a class. The students discussed it for a while and decided they had 5% of all human knowledge among themselves. Einstein thought that their estimate was a little generous, but he replied: ‘Is it possible that God exists in the 95% that you don’t know?’”

Isn’t it amazing at the conclusions people come to with the limited knowledge they have and yet, nature itself says there is a God and you can know Him through His Word if you are willing to humble yourself before Him!

VERSES 22-25

Yes, the Jews were looking for their Messiah to come and deliver them from the Roman bondage they were in, to set up the Kingdom! Thus, they were looking for a sign showing them that this is the Messiah!

When you look at the life of Jesus, His whole life was a sign that He is the Messiah, they just refused to accept Jesus because it went against what they believed, not what the Word of God has said!

In fact, this word “**stumbled**” is a word we get the word “scandalized” from and that is interesting to me. You see, the preaching of the cross was a scandal, you might say, to the Jews because it meant that they would have to abandon all their religious works as a basis for their righteousness and receive the gift of grace!

On the other end of the spectrum we see the Greeks who sought after wisdom and the cross was just foolishness to them, it was moronic to them!

They decided what was wise and what was foolish! Instead of giving them what they wanted, God gave them what they needed, a Savior, the Messiah to pay in full the penalty for their sins and set them free from the bondage sin had them in, if they would only receive Him.

I like the way that David Guzik sums this up for us. He wrote,

Let every pulpit rightly say, “we preach Christ crucified!” A strong church once inscribed these words on an archway leading to the churchyard. Over time, two things happened: the church lost its passion for Jesus and His gospel, and ivy began to grow on the archway. The growth of the ivy, covering the message, showed the spiritual decline. Originally it said strongly, we preach Christ crucified. But as the ivy grew, one could only read we preach Christ, and the church also started preaching “Jesus the Great Man” and “Jesus the Moral Example” instead of Christ crucified. The ivy kept growing, and one could soon only read, we preach. The church also had even lost Jesus in the message, preaching religious platitudes and social graces. Finally, one could only read we, and the church also just became another social gathering place, all about we and not about God.

- David Guzik

What seems foolish to man is the way that God has provided the forgiveness of our sins, through Jesus Christ. What seems like weakness is the power of God to save us, something we could never do!

As Paul said, “**Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.**” II Corinthians 1:25.

VERSES 26-29

This is interesting to me because what we see God doing here is that He is bringing us all down or up to the same playing field. It is not that education is wrong but that the world’s wisdom, the world’s education can’t save you, it can’t bring you to Jesus!

You see, God will use us with the gifts, the abilities we have until we think that without us, God is in trouble and then you will be put on the shelf until you humble yourself before the Lord.

You may still be involved in ministry, but it is not fruitful. You see, you can never be too small for God to use you, but you can be too big!

The key, of course, is that we can't boast in what we have done but we surely can boast in all that Lord has done, He gets the glory!

Look again at what Paul said here in I Corinthians 1:29, "**that no flesh should glory in His presence.**"

Let me share this song with you and you will see what God can do in us and through us as He touches our lives. The song goes like this,

Well it was battered and scared,
And the auctioneer felt it was hardly worth his while,
To waste much time on the old violin but he held it up with a smile,
"Well it sure ain't much but its all we got left I guess we aught to sell it to,
Oh, now who'll start the bid on this old violin?
Just one more and we'll be through."

And then he cried, "one give me one dollar,
Who'll make it two only two dollars who'll make it three,
Three dollars twice now that's a good price,
Now who's gonna bid for me?
Raise up your hand now don't wait any longer the auctions about to end,
Who's got four Just one dollar more to bid on this old violin?"

Well the air was hot and the people stood around as the sun was setting low,
From the back of the crowd a gray haired man,
Came forward and picked up the bow,
He wiped the dust from the old violin then he tightened up the strings,
Then he played out a melody pure and sweet, sweeter than the Angels sing,
And then the music stopped and the auctioneer,
With a voice that was quiet and low he said now what am I bid,
For this old violin and he held it up with a bow.

And then he cried out, “one give me one thousand,
 Who’ll make it two only two thousand who’ll make it three,
 Three thousand twice you know that’s a good price,
 Common who’s gonna to bid for me?”
 And the people cried out, “what made the change we don’t understand”,
 Then the auctioneer stopped and he said with a smile,
 “It was the touch of the Master’s hand.”

You know there’s many a man with his life out of tune,
 Battered and scared with sin and he’s auctioned cheap,
 To a thankless world much like that old violin,
 Oh, but then the Master comes,
 And that old foolish crowd they never understand,
 The worth of a soul and the change that is rought,
 Just by one touch of the Masters hand.

And then he cried out, “one give me one thousand,
 Who’ll make it two only two thousand who’ll make it three,
 Three thousand twice you know that’s a good price,
 Common who’s gonna bid for me?”
 And the people cried out, “what made the change we don’t understand”,
 Then the auctioneer stopped and he said with a smile,
 “It was the touch, that’s all it was; it was the touch of the Master’s hand,
 It was the touch of the Master’s hand; oh, it was the touch of the Master's hand."
 - Touch of the Master’s Hand

VERSES 30-31

Make no mistake about it, we need the Lord’s wisdom because we have seen what our own wisdom can do in our lives, and it is not a good thing.

Remember what the Lord said in Isaiah 55:8-9, “**“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,’ says the LORD. ‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.”**”

Thus, through the work of Jesus in our lives He is imparting to us the Wisdom of God!

And if you are lacking wisdom, listen to what James tells us, **“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.”** James 1:5-8.

Also, here in I Corinthians 1:30, notice what Paul says God is communicating to us:

RIGHTEOUSNESS – We are declared “innocent” not just “not guilty” because of the finished work of Christ. Paul said in Romans 4:23-25 regarding the faith of Abraham on how he was saved by faith and not by works and how relates that to us, **“Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification.”**

We have become righteous before God because Jesus has given to us His righteousness, as Paul said in II Corinthians 5:21, **“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”**

SANCTIFICATION – By the work of Jesus in our lives He has made us holy, set apart for God to use and the moment we are saved, that sanctification process begins, and it will continue until we go to be with the Lord. And the promise is that God will complete this work He has started in us.

Paul said in II Thessalonians 2:13-17, **“But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle. Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.”**

REDEMPTION – Paul is speaking of our glorification, which is a settled fact if we have received Jesus as our Lord and Savior.

Paul, in Romans 8:30 tells us **“Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.”**

Paul speaks of our glorification in the past tense because he is that sure that what God has started, He will complete in each of us. He will bring it to pass. It is not maybe, He will bring it to pass for He already sees us as glorified in a positional sense through Jesus. Our freedom is found in Jesus!

J. Vernon McGee put this into perspective for us as he wrote,

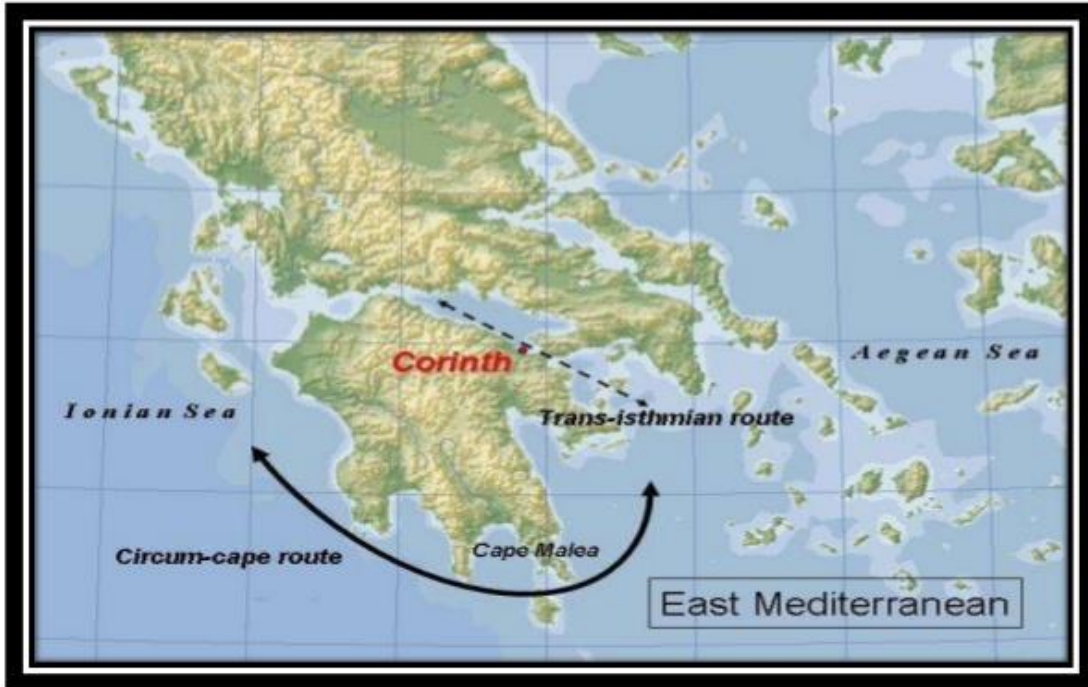
Our glory should be in the Lord. We should glory in the Lord Jesus Christ today. Let me ask you, what do you glory in? What are you boasting of today? Are you boasting of your degrees? Of your wisdom? Of your wealth? Of your power? Are you boasting today of your position and your character? My friend, you don't have a thing of which you can boast—and I know I haven't. But we can boast of Christ. He is everything. He is everything that we need.

- J. Vernon McGee, Thru the Bible Vol. V, p. 12

As I close this evening let me leave you with these words from Jeremiah 9:23-24, “**Thus says the LORD: ‘Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, Let not the mighty man glory in his might, Nor let the rich man glory in his riches; But let him who glories glory in this, That he understands and knows Me, That I am the LORD, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight,’ says the LORD.**”

Make no mistake about it, - ***IT IS ALL ABOUT THE LORD AND WHAT HE HAS DONE, NOT WHAT WE HAVE DONE!***





Corinth Isthmus

