

Daily Devotional

October 2016



As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word,
that ye may grow thereby:
If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

1 Peter 2:2-3 (KJV)

Foreword

This month we will continue our study of I Corinthians. We are moving through the material rather quickly which is why I have labeled the daily devotions *flashbacks*. To get the most from each day's study, I suggest you spend some time meditating on each reading before you move to my commentary as my comments can only focus on a point or two in the reading. See what other truths you can glean from your own delving into the Word.



The lessons in this book give us much rich material on what it means to be filled with the spirit and to live the Christian life—individually and corporately.

I am blessed we are working at this together, and let us praise God for the gift of His priceless Word.

In His grace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kevin Redig".

Kevin Redig

Bible references in this booklet are taken from the New King James Version (NKJV) or the 1986 New International Version (NIV)

I Corinthians Flashbacks

Monday, October 3: Read Galatians 5

On Friday we learned from I Corinthians 6 that every child of God is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and that this indwelling is a permanent possession. Today we want to add to our understanding by introducing the *Filling of the Holy Spirit*. Consider Ephesians 5:18:

And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit. . .

The first difference you should notice, in contrast to the indwelling of the Spirit, is that the filling of the Holy Spirit is not permanent, but conditional. A person can be *filled* with alcohol or *filled with the Spirit*, but not both. You can see a parallel idea in Galatians 5:16 and following:

...walk in the Spirit, and you shall not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

So, although every Christian is indwelt with the Spirit, not every Christian is going to be “filled with” or “walking by” the Spirit. Furthermore, when a Christian sins, the Spirit is grieved (Ephesians 4:30). And, should sin be perpetuated, the Spirit’s work is quenched in the life of that believer (I Thessalonians 5:19). That quenching will remain the case until sin is dealt with through confession.

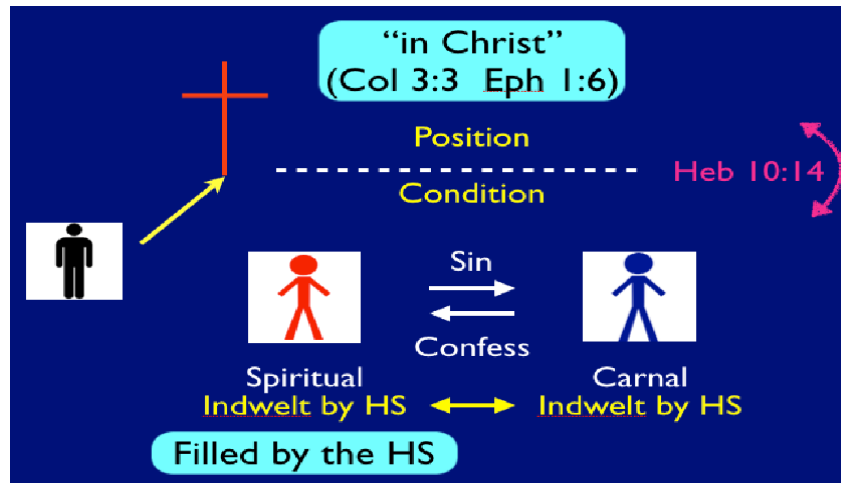
At this point, the first thing to note is the constant struggle that is going to be part of the believer’s life. The struggle is specifically between God’s call to walk in newness of life, which is enabled by the Spirit, as opposed to the pull of the flesh to turn back to the old life dominated by the sin nature. Perhaps by way of closing today’s devotional, you will find the following definition helpful:

To walk in the Spirit means to live each moment dependent on the Holy Spirit, sensitive to His voice, and obedient to Him.

I Corinthians Flashbacks

Tuesday, October 4: Read Colossians 3

We'll consider this diagram to help with today's devotional.



The top portion of the diagram illustrates the believer's position in Christ, so clearly established in the first three verses of Colossians 3. The bottom portion addresses our condition. At any moment in time, the child of God is either filled with the Spirit or carnal. When a Christian is walking in "newness of life" and influenced by both the Spirit of God and Word of God, he or she is *spiritual*. However, should the Christian sin, that filling of the Spirit is lost and the flesh begins to dominate life. He or she is now said to be carnal.

What's the solution? It is to confess our sin, which both restores us to fellowship with God and regains for us the filling of the Holy Spirit. Note that throughout our struggles with sin, we remain indwelt by the Holy Spirit. For we have been "sealed" with the Spirit and are His permanent possession. So then, what is at stake is whether we are going to live a life of walking with the Lord and accomplishing His purposes or live a life centered in the desires of self!

I Corinthians Flashbacks

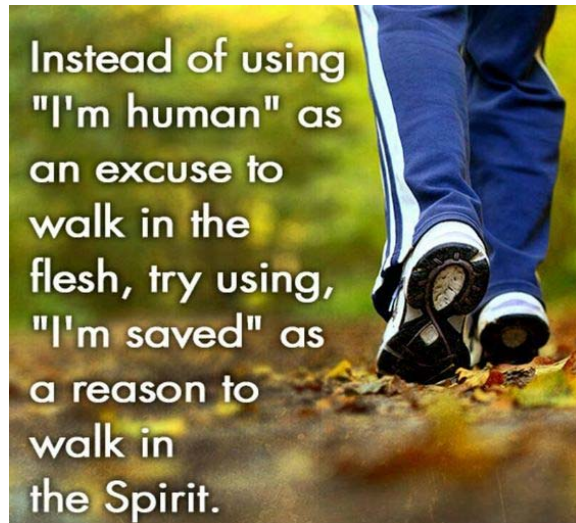
Wednesday, October 5: Read Romans 8

Every single member of the human race can be divided into one of two categories: those who have trusted Christ for their eternal salvation and those who have not. Thus, the two categories are the saved and the unsaved.

It is absolutely essential for the saved child of God to realize that every believer also can be divided into one of two categories. Let me describe those two categories in as many ways as possible: those who are spiritual and those who are carnal; those who "abide in Christ," and those who "abide not;" those who are "walking in the light," and those who "walk in darkness;" those who "walk by the Spirit," and those who "walk as men;" those who "walk in newness of life," and those who "walk after the flesh;" those who are "filled with the Spirit," and those who are not.

All of these descriptions have to do with the quality of the daily life of saved people, and are in no way a contrast between the saved and the unsaved. Did you see how clearly this issue is raised multiple times in the eighth chapter of Ro-

mans? If we care about pleasing the Lord, if we care about accomplishing anything of divine worth, and if we care about personal blessing, we must come to grips with the call to a Spirit-filled life.



Continued on the next page.

I Corinthians Flashbacks

Wednesday, October 5: Read Romans 8

(Continued)

Here is another definition of what it means to “walk by the Spirit.” You might find it helpful to meditate upon this statement:

To walk in or by the Spirit is to allow Him to direct the way in which you live your life; it is to make decisions in the light of His holiness; it is to remain in communion with Him; it is to be occupied with the person of Christ, because the Spirit’s ministry is to engage us “intimately” with the Lord Jesus. Carefully note – walking by the Spirit is not a mystical, trance-like state in which the believer enters and mysteriously lives; nor is it some kind of far out, ethereal experience as some have postulated – any such thinking along those lines is completely “cultic” in its orientation. To walk by the Spirit is to live under the direction of the Holy Spirit and to walk by faith in God’s Word. (Ekstrand)



I Corinthians Flashbacks

Thursday, October 6: Read Ephesians 5

As we spend a final day considering the ministry of the Holy Spirit, consider the following pair of verses:

Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord. . . Ephesians 5:18-19

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. Colossians 3:16

Do you see how similar these verses are? The only difference is the admonition to be “filled with the Spirit” in contrast to letting the Word of Christ “fill us.” That’s because these are two sides of the same coin. We know the “Sword of the Spirit” is the Word of God (Ephesians 6:17), and it can’t dwell richly within us unless we are also filled with the Spirit. So let me give you my own definition of what it means to walk in the Spirit, after studying this topic.

To walk (live) in the Spirit is to moment-by-moment maintain the filling of the Spirit, through the influence of both the indwelling Spirit and indwelling Word of God, that the life of Christ might be manifest in us, as we navigate life’s daily demands.

The walk of the Spirit covers every aspect of our lives. It is moment-by-moment because we must closely monitor our lives, confessing sin when it occurs. The walk of the Spirit is to have the soul influenced by both the Word of God and the Spirit of God that we might manifest the life of Christ in every aspect of our lives. This is to live a life that glorifies God and maintains the old man in the place of death where he belongs:

And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Galatians 5:24

I Corinthians Flashbacks

Friday, October 7: Read I Corinthians 7

This lengthy chapter *opens the door* to discuss a wide range of topics—most of which are beyond the scope of a daily devotional. However in Verse 34 we find a topic for today’s discussion. This verse talks about a man whose “*interests are divided.*” In the context, the verse is talking about a married man in contrast to an unmarried man. In the broader context, Paul is talking about seeking life-changes that might actually distract us from our walk with the Lord. In Verse 29 he sums this up by saying,

What I mean, brothers, is that the time is short. . .

Paul wants all of us to focus on those things that matter—things of eternity! Am I sure? Absolutely!

*. . .those who use the things of the world,
as if not engrossed by them. For this world in
its present form is passing away. I Corinthians 7:11*

Now the discussion on marriage, slavery, and the like might distract you from the main point—especially as this may not be something you are facing at the moment. However, we can make application of the basic principle against any set of life circumstances. Whether you are a college student or living in a retirement community, the Christian first should be seeking things above, storing up treasure not on this earth but in heaven. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (Matthew 6:19-21) Have you recognized the reality that there are things, even with retirement, that can be a distraction from serving the Lord? Paul is telling us to watch this carefully. Am I taking this too far? You decide.

*I am saying this for your own good, not to restrict you,
but that you may live in a right way in undivided
devotion to the Lord. I Corinthians 7:35*

I Corinthians Flashbacks

**Monday, October 10: Read John 5
(I Corinthians 8:1)**

Paul starts to address the Corinthian's question on food sacrificed to idols and then goes right to a governing principle for the Christian:

Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.

Now Paul is not saying there is anything inherently wrong with knowledge, but is rather making the point that it is not an end in and of itself. If it becomes one, it will just inflate the ego. On the other hand, love is always expressed outwards leading to a building up (and blessing) of others. So then, even a good thing like knowledge can be used inappropriately or towards a bad outcome. Consider John 5:39-40, where Jesus says:

"You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life."

It is possible to turn even the study of the Word of God into such an academic pursuit that you would miss the Lord of Glory should He be standing right in front of you. This is a caution we should take very seriously. As an example, consider our daily devotional. Are we using it to *punch our Bible-reading ticket*, or are we using it in such a way that time in the written Word might lead us closer to the Living Word? How can we know? There is a simple test: is our life being transformed? Are we being "built up" in the faith? Are we self-righteous in our increased knowledge or are we becoming more Christ-like, manifesting love for others? The latter is what we want. We want our study to ensure that the love of Christ's in us is impacting those around us!

I Corinthians Flashbacks

Tuesday, October 11: Read I Corinthians 8

So the Corinthians had questions about eating meat sacrificed to idols. Although this is hardly a problem in our day, the underlying issue is still applicable. You see some of the Corinthians thought they were more spiritual because they abstained from eating any meat sacrificed to idols. Another group, thought they were more spiritual because they comfortably exercised their spiritual freedom in eating meat—knowing that “*an idol is nothing at all.*” Paul is going to make it clear that they are both wrong in their thinking. For spirituality is not what you do! Consider Chafer’s comment on true spirituality.

A Christian is a Christian because he is rightly related to CHRIST; but "he that is spiritual" is spiritual because he is rightly related to the Spirit, in addition to his relation to CHRIST in salvation.” (LSC)

After the number of days we spent on what it means to walk by the Spirit, this should make perfect sense. It would never be eating or not eating that makes us spiritual, but rather the absence of sin and a life spent walking filled with the Spirit and guided by the Word of God. If we are not spiritual, no amount of externals can do anything to make us spiritual. If we are, we can live in this sin-tainted world and yet be untouched by it. Here is another way to look at this: of course, we want to grow in spiritual knowledge to the maximum extent, but never so that we could develop some kind of elitism complex. On the contrary—we grow that we might be better prepared to serve, and, in doing so, bring honor and glory to our Lord...

Who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant. Philippians 2:6-7

I Corinthians Flashbacks

Wednesday, October 12: Read I Corinthians 9

I Corinthians 9:19-27 is one of the most passionate and challenging passages in the Bible. Paul says,

I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. . . I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some.

Do you see Paul's passion? What are you passionate about? Is it some aspect of ministry, God's Word, or, like Paul, reaching the lost? Would you consider simply asking God to do the following:

*Lord, give me a heart like Paul's for the lost.
Help me to see the people on the street where I live,
the people with whom I recreate, and my extended
family as lost people for whom Christ died!*

Think about what it would mean if this was the heart attitude of our entire church! I can tell you one thing, we would have the best fellowship in the world. For the root meaning of the word translated fellowship is "to have in common." Our common heart for the lost would bind us together in prayer, in evangelistic activity, and in "*sharing in the blessings of the Gospel.*" (Verse 23) Notice how our fellowship is meant to be with other like-minded believers who are doing everything possible that some might be saved, and not with those we are trying to reach.

For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? II Corinthians 6:14

Keeping this principle of true-fellowship in mind will keep "*bad company*" from "*corrupting good character*" (I Corinthians 15:33) as has happened to all too many new believers. One closing thought for today, nothing in today's devotional is an admonition to *get out there* and start witnessing. Like every other aspect of the Christian Life, it is meant to be done in the power of the Spirit for God's glory.

I Corinthians Flashbacks

Thursday, October 13: Read II Corinthians 5 (I Corinthians 9:19-23)

I want to return to this powerful passage in I Corinthians 9 for further consideration.

For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more; and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; to those who are without law, as law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law; to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. Now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker of it with you.

Do you think that Paul is advocating becoming some kind of Christian chameleon? Is he urging us to become capable of fitting in everywhere, never taking a stand on anything, approving everything, and, in general, going with flow? Of course not. Nor do we, as Christians, ever want to be guilty of putting on a false front. The lost can spot a phony a mile away.

Furthermore, the people of this world usually have to pass through the disciples of Christ in order to come to Him. If they find sharp-tongued and severe disciples, they can hardly be blamed if they sigh and turn away. Or, if they find phony people who don't seem to have any real joy in their lives and live no differently than unbelievers, what is going to attract them to a relationship with the Lord.

I Corinthians Flashbacks

Thursday, October 13: Read II Corinthians 5
(I Corinthians 9:19-23) (Continued)

Tozer has a point when he says:

The low state of religion in our day is largely due to the lack of public confidence in religious people.

So what do you suppose Paul has in mind as he reveals his concern over lost people? I think he is making application of the same thing he says in II Corinthians 5:14-f:

For the love of Christ compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all. . . God reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation

When it is the love of Christ, His love for you and His love for lost mankind, that motivates you, you will never come across as a phony. Your message might be rejected. But when people know you are sharing the Gospel with them out of a deep concern, there may very well be a time when they will be willing to listen.

Ours is to faithfully “sow the seed,” it is God who brings the increase. Sow the seed for no other reason than the love of Christ compels you to do it.



I Corinthians Flashbacks

Friday, October 14: Read Philemon 1 (I Corinthians 9:24-27)

If this passage made sense to people in Paul's day, it should doubly do so today. For, although there were some benefits to athletic prowess in his day, it was nothing like the prestige, notoriety, and money available in our day for athletes who excel. And yet no matter how great the athlete, his or her time eventually passes, and his or her star fades. Paul's point is that spiritual service, particularly in terms of sharing the Gospel, leads to a crown, an eternal reward, that will last forever.

*He is no fool to give up what he cannot keep
in order to gain what he can never lose.*

This was the heart of martyred missionary Jim Elliott and should be ours as well. It has great application on the street we live just as it did in the jungles of Ecuador. Now when Paul talks about being disqualified, he is not saying that he is worried about losing his salvation, but rather losing out on the eternal reward of I Corinthians 3, and even the good things we can have in Christ in this life:

*I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so
that you will have a full understanding of every good
thing we have in Christ. Philemon 1:6*

I like the way that evangelist Mark Cahill says it:

*300 million years from now the only thing that will
matter is who is in heaven and who isn't. . . we need to
realize the value of other people in the eyes of God
. . .when we die, we get to go to heaven and we get to
bring as many people with us as we want to—that's the
mind set that drives me to share my faith!*

When he says as many people as we "want to" he is talking about the potential that is there every time we share the Gospel. We never know who is at the point of belief as the Lord draws and the Spirit convicts.

I Corinthians Flashbacks

Monday, October 17: Read I Corinthians 10

This chapter is just packed. There are three surprises contained in the first 13 verses. Today we will discuss Surprise Number One: the Exodus Generation believed in Jesus Christ and were saved! How can that be?" Look at the text in Verses 3-4, those who came out with Moses...

all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them and that rock was Christ.

But Jesus hadn't even been born at the time of the Exodus, He came more than a thousand years afterward! To fully address your concerns would be a very lengthy exercise. But consider this, the Israelites had celebrated the very first Passover just before leaving Egypt. They had taken a lamb without blemish, killed it, and used its blood to protect themselves from the Angel of Death. Furthermore, they were to do this every year from then on. Now Hebrews 10:1 says,

The Law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—and not the reality themselves. Hebrews 10:1

So if you were an Israelite at the time of the Exodus, to trust in the Passover Lamb to protect you from the destroying Angel and to later trust in the Mosaic Law to deal with sin, you are trusting in Jesus Christ in shadow form. Look at how I Corinthians 5:7 makes the connection:

Christ our Passover Lamb had been sacrificed. . .

All the Jewish feasts speak of Christ. To be sure, the degree of revelation has changed, but salvation has always been through faith (Genesis 15:6), and the object of faith has always been Jesus Christ. He is the central figure of all human history and the central character in the Biblical storyline because it is through Him that God is revealed to us (John 1:18). It is through Him we can be reconciled to our heavenly Father (John 14:6).

I Corinthians Flashbacks

**Tuesday, October 18: Read Hebrews 12
(I Corinthians 10:5)**

Surprise Number 2 is that God disciplines those He loves—and His discipline is serious business. In I Corinthians 10:4, it is clear that the Exodus generation had believed, but nonetheless in Verse 5 it is equally clear that God was not pleased with most of them. Are you following? It is possible for God to be displeased with His own saved people. His displeasure leads to something that many have difficulty explaining, simply because their theology doesn't take into account something I refer to as the *divine wood-shed*. You will find reference to this in the twelfth chapter of Hebrews:

*My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord,
nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him;
For whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges
every son whom He receives. . . Now no chastening seems
to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless,
afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness
to those who have been trained by it.*

Whom the Lord loves, He chastens. That is a pretty straightforward statement, isn't it? God is always at work shaping and conforming us to the image of His Son (Romans 8:29).

Here is the point for us to ponder: we are going to undergo "chastening" from the Lord, but to what extent or for what cause. You see the Exodus generation required such discipline that it led to their bodies being "scattered over the desert." As we shall see, this is meant to be a warning for us with the intent that we would stay far away from the need for this kind of discipline. We might be saved, but we still have every incentive in the world to make good choices!

I Corinthians Flashbacks

Wednesday, October 19: Read I Corinthians 10:1-13

And finally, Surprise Number Three: Anything an unbeliever can do, a believer can do, and often worse!

You might find this difficult to believe, but go ahead and catalog the sin you find associated with these saved Israelites. You will find idolatry, drunkenness, sexual immorality, grumbling, and testing the Lord. Now do you see any tendency by Paul to *explain away* these perpetrators as somehow never having believed, or not really being saved? Absolutely not! And here is the *take-home* point: He wants to use their failure, the very real failure of those who had believed and should have known better, as a lesson to keep us from ending up in the same condition!

These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us. . . I Corinthians 10:11

This is encapsulated by one Bible teacher this way: “We are always just five minutes away from a sin that can bring disastrous discipline into our lives.” Paul takes it from there by teaching:

*So if you think you are standing firm,
be careful that you don't fall! No temptation
has seized you except what is common to man.
And God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted
beyond what you can bear. But when you are
tempted, He will also provide a way out so that
you can stand up under it. I Corinthians 10:12-13*

So although we have the capability of committing the same sins as unbelievers, we have the enablement of God to keep us from doing so. Every believer needs to learn to appropriate what God has provided.

I Corinthians Flashbacks

Thursday, October 20: Read Leviticus 19 (Reread Verse 2)

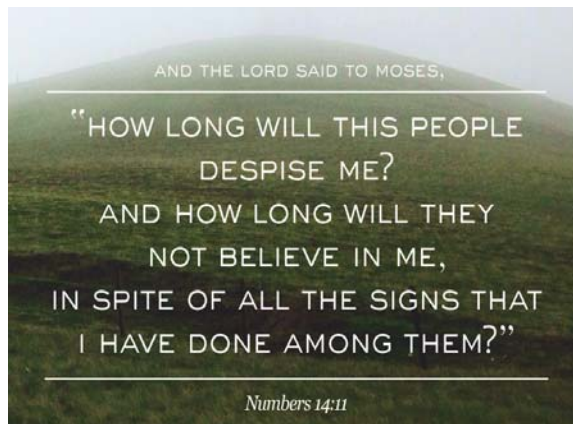
Over the past three days, we have uncovered three surprises in the tenth chapter of I Corinthians. Furthermore, we have learned that certain aspects of Israel's history and failures were written down as warnings for us (Verse 11). So here is our application for today: Heed the Warnings! Consider the following in support of this application:

- God is set apart, and far above, and He is calling His people to come to Him where He is!

*No one is holy like the Lord, for there is none like You,
nor is there any rock like our God. 1 Samuel 2:2*

*Just as He who called you is holy so be holy
in all you do. . . 1 Peter 1:15*

- God brooks no rivals. To act independently, by will or unbelief, is to show contempt for God (Numbers 14:11). He will not share His glory with another.



*I am the Lord,
that is My name; and My glory I will not give to another,
nor My praise to carved images. Isaiah 42:8*

I Corinthians Flashbacks

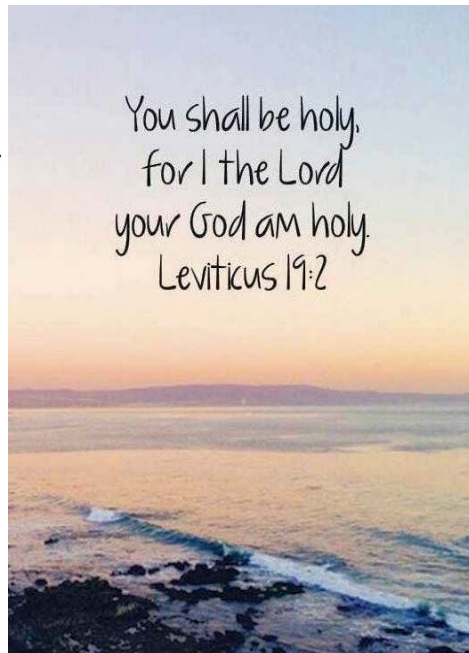
Thursday, October 20: Read Leviticus 19
(Reread Verse 2) (Continued)

- God wants a dependent people.

My righteous ones will walk by faith. Habakkuk 2:4

Now what follows below is a little satirical piece that one man wrote about the church in America.

*God—A lot of people
still like Him. . . All that
crankiness you read
about in the old
books—thank goodness
that's all gone now. .
. What I want to do,
regardless, is all right
by Him. That really is
the best kind of friend,
isn't it? Do you know
the best thing about
Him though? He
doesn't judge me. . .
ever, for anything.
Forgiving people is
His job. After all,
He's love, right?*



So what do you think? Although satirical, this description is pretty accurate with respect to the attitude we find among many Christians today. But, how does it line up with what we see contained in the Word of God and in the tenth chapter of I Corinthians?

My advice—**Heed the Warnings!**

I Corinthians Flashbacks

Friday, October 21: Read I Corinthians 11

Beginning in Verse 3, Paul is dealing with another problem in the fellowship. We are not going to go into detail, but it is certainly an issue of hair style and probably head covering as well. But the real issue is the underlying attitude, for there is clearly some lack of order, impropriety, or disrespect for authority that has occurred. So what does Paul tell them to do?

First, I want you to realize that there is a problem of decorum in the church. There is a lot of back and forth recrimination going on. Second, Paul, in a very simple and straightforward manner, is going to tell the Corinthians how to handle it. This is really an important lesson for us. Here is his two-step approach: 1) Search the Word of God and 2) Make spiritual judgments. This is exactly what Paul does. He goes back to Genesis 2 to establish the created order between man and woman and then recognizes their equality as saved individuals in accordance with the third chapter of Galatians. And then from this Scriptural base, he passes spiritual judgment in Verse 11.

Now we might have trouble identifying with the specific problem of Paul's day, but we have more than enough of our own in our day: issues associated with marriage, same-sex marriage, women's roles, abortion, climate change, and any number of other societal issues. Here is how we should handle it: Search the Word of God and then make spiritual judgments. We already know the world will ridicule us for doing so, but remember that the...

wisdom of man is foolishness to God. I Corinthians 3:19

It is much better to be on the side of truth that is also the side of the Lord Jesus (John 18:37) than it is to find favor in the eyes of the world. Remember the principles: Search the Word of God and then make Spiritual judgments.

I Corinthians Flashbacks

Monday, October 24: Read Matthew 26

Matthew 26:26-f and I Corinthians 11:23-f both discuss the establishment of the Communion remembrance. But first, in I Corinthians 11:17 we find something shocking—a complete disregard for other members of the Body while engaging in the ordinance of the Lord’s Table. How could that be? Actually, the book of I Corinthians has already given us all the foundation we need to answer this for ourselves. Carnal Christians are capable of sinning in exactly the same way as unbelievers do. Like Paul, we are not in any way excusing this behavior.

Shall I praise you for this? Certainly not!”

Rather, we are just acknowledging it as a possibility if we let the sin nature dominate our lives as Christians. That is not to say that there are not consequences:

*That is why many among you are weak and sick,
and a number of you have fallen asleep.*

This is a very sobering statement that should most certainly get our attention. Because the Corinthian believers had allowed their sin natures to go unchecked, God disciplined them through weakness, sickness, and even death (that’s what the euphemism “fallen asleep” means). This readily leads us to one point of application in the text:

*A man ought to examine himself before he eats
of the bread and drinks the cup.*

So as a minimum, this is an admonition to carefully and personally examine one’s life prior to engaging in the corporate celebration of communion. Actually, I would encourage the regular examination of one’s life, in order to identify and confess sin that might have *crept in*. Self-examination is a very healthy practice and should be a regular part of our day.

I Corinthians Flashbacks

Tuesday, October 25: Read I Corinthians 12

Paul has been answering questions raised by the Corinthians back in 7:1: *Now for the matters you wrote about*, and then again in 8:1: *Now about food sacrificed to idols*. And here we are in Chapter 12 with yet another question,

Now about spiritual gifts. . .

In each case Paul provides an answer to the question raised. However, this case is going to be a bit more challenging. Paul's answer is contained in parts of Chapters 12, 13, and 14. So in order to make sense out of this, we are going to have to start with the *big picture*. This approach means you will have to remember a few things from day to day, and slightly re-order the chapters, but it will also provide us with everything we need to avoid error in this very important area.

Big Picture View of I Corinthians 12-14—Point 1

Point one is that the Corinthians have it topsy-turvy. Is this any surprise to us? We have seen throughout the book that they have a tendency towards being carnal, and this is just another example. Let me show you what I mean. They have made an issue of speaking in tongues, and so in I Corinthians 13:1 Paul has to make it clear they have the wrong focus—it should be love. In fact their obsession with gifts is addressed in I Corinthians 14:12:

Even so you, since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, let it be for the edification of the church that you seek to excel.

Do you see they also have the wrong priority? And finally, they have wrong practice with respect to spiritual things for Paul has to correct their behavior in public gatherings:

Let all things be done decently and in order.

I Corinthians 14:40

Much more to come in the days ahead.

I Corinthians Flashbacks

Wednesday, October 26: Read I Corinthians 14

So, once again, we have seen an example of carnality among the Corinthians reinforcing the concept that it is very much possible for a group of believers to be carnal.

This time they have created a system of one-upmanship over gifts. They are asking Paul to settle the issue of which gift is best. They are also guilty of trying to measure one's spirituality by the identity of one's gift. They are, in essence saying, "I have this particular gift, and that makes me more spiritual!"

In particular, they have promoted the visible and spectacular gifts. We know this because the gift of tongues is specifically mentioned 21 times in these few chapters and nowhere else in Paul's letters. Prophecy is mentioned 20 times and only infrequently elsewhere.

Describing the Spiritual Gifts

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Administration | 13. Leadership |
| 2. Apostleship | 14. Mercy |
| 3. Discerning of Spirits | 15. Miracles |
| 4. Encouragement | 16. Missionary |
| 5. Evangelism | 17. Pastoring |
| 6. Faith | 18. Prophecy |
| 7. Giving | 19. Serving |
| 8. Healing | 20. Teaching |
| 9. Helps | 21. Tongues |
| 10. Hospitality | 22. Word of Knowledge |
| 11. Intercession | 23. Word of Wisdom |
| 12. Interpretation of Tongues | |

Continued on the next page.

I Corinthians Flashbacks

Wednesday, October 26: Read I Corinthians 14
(Continued)

You might also take note that, in their carnality, the Corinthians are not squabbling over the gifts of helps, mercies, and encouragement.

So let's continue where we left off.

Big Picture View of I Corinthians 12-14—Points 2 and 3

Point two is that we can learn from the squabbling that has been going on in Corinth, because it helps us to identify the natural tendencies of the flesh that we might avoid them! And, this is so important for us as a local fellowship. For, as you can imagine, this kind of internal one-upmanship is not going to be very attractive to lost people. We all have spiritual gifts (I Corinthians 12:7).

Point three is some pitfalls to avoid regarding those gifts:

- To place a premium on one gift over another is to have falsely elevated the gift
- To equate spirituality with giftedness is to have falsely elevated the recipient of the gift
- To focus on the gift, is to have lost sight of its purpose. Focusing on a gift is to have treated that gift as an individual matter rather than a corporate matter. Every gift is "*given for the common good.*"

You can see how applicable Paul's guidance on this whole matter is to us in our day.

I Corinthians Flashbacks

Thursday, October 27: Read I Corinthians 13

One more point to make in terms of the big picture.

Big Picture View of I Corinthians 12-14—Point 4

Point 4 is that Paul does not directly address the questions raised by the Corinthians. Rather, he lays down a very principle-centered approach to spirituality. To realize just how principle-centered it is, just consider again today's Scripture reading. You have heard I Corinthians 13 read at so many weddings that you probably have come to think it has something to do with weddings. In context, the chapter is dealing with the greatest of character qualities—one that places a premium on self-sacrifice. It is a character quality that should be sought after by the Corinthians instead of their seeking to exalt themselves by means of twisting the true purpose of spiritual gifts.



We need to take exactly the same approach that Paul is advocating. Let me give you a simple example. The first thing everyone wants to know when the topic of spiritual gifts comes up is: "What is *my* spiritual gift?" Now I am not saying there is anything wrong with wanting to recognize your spiritual gifting, but that is the first step down the wrong path. How about instead, "I am not sure what my spiritual gift is, I just serve the Lord in whatever way I can."

I can guarantee that if a Christian humbly takes this approach, his or her spiritual gift will be in operation in no time. Furthermore, when the gift is in operation, it will be coming from a humble heart. And this type of service brings honor and glory to the Lord rather than becoming something in which the Christian takes misplaced pride—something we are so prone to do.

I Corinthians Flashbacks

Friday, October 28: Read I Corinthians 12 (again)

We have taken a big-picture view of Chapters 12-14, now let's look more closely at Chapter 12. Paul previously taught about spirituality of the individual (Chapters 3, 6), now in Chapter 12 he is addressing corporate spirituality which is the first principle for us to apply in our fellowship.

But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all. . . I Corinthians 12:7

In context, the manifestations in view are the various spiritual gifts that believers receive. Although each individual has one, they are meant for the profit, or benefit, of all. Verses 27-29 further emphasize this same point and make it clear that the Body of Christ—local churches—are in view. Colossian 1:18 prompts another way of looking at this same subject:

And He is the head of the body, the Church. . .

With Jesus being the head of the Church and us receiving a spiritual gift from the Holy Spirit, does the gift belong to the individual to use as he or she sees fit? Or, are all gifts subordinate to Christ for His use in accomplishing the varied missions of the Church? Pretty easy questions to answer when asked this way. Of course, individual gifting would be subordinate to Christ as the Head of the Church. In fact, I am uncomfortable even saying *my* spiritual gift! When considered in this fashion, there is really no place for competing or spiritual one-upmanship when it comes to spiritual gifts, is there? Perish the thought that such behavior would ever be found among the saints at VCC.

Here is a final series of thoughts for you to consider: The Body of Christ is a great mystery and the spiritual gifting of each person is a part of that mystery. So we are left with a sense of awe and praise for the grace that has been poured out upon us in this age of the Church! And all God's people said, "Amen!"

I Corinthians Flashbacks

Monday, October 31: Read II Peter 1

We have been focusing upon the topic of spiritual gifts for a few days. Today I would like to contrast the subject of “giftedness” with “godliness!” The first thing that I want you to realize is that giftedness and godliness are not remotely the same thing. The following from II Peter 1:5-7 is commentary on the character goal for the Christian:

. . .add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control, perseverance, to perseverance godliness. . .

This verse is in no way a listing of spiritual gifts like that found in I Corinthians. Now, I am not saying that they are not intended to be related to each other. But I want to be very clear that receipt of a spiritual gift, even exercise of that gift, does not automatically make a person godly! Look at how Paul cautions Timothy, a clearly gifted individual, to flee the desires associated with material things:

But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. I Timothy 6:11

So the point for all of us is this: since we each have at least one spiritual gift, we need to be diligent to pursue godliness along with exercising our giftedness. Furthermore, it is my personal goal to have my giftedness subordinate to the pursuit of godliness. What does this mean for me as a preacher of the Word? It means that I desire to have my ministry rest not upon the power of how I communicate truth, but rather, to have the truth be, in part, empowered by a life well lived. Or stated another way: less of gift and more of God. It is not my intent to disparage in any way the gifts that God gives, but to recognize that ultimately we should be wanting to elevate the gift-giver by way of changed character! Think this through and make application to your own area of giftedness.

VISTOSO
Community Church



He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit... *John 15:5*

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