

1 Corinthians – Section 2

A Study in 1 Corinthians 8 weeks

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1 Corinthians – Section 2

This was originally an expository series of sermons given in the church where I was serving as Pastor. A few years later, they were edited to be used as a Bible Study. There are a few things I feel I should share with you before using this material:

First: I had no intent of sharing or publishing this material until encouraged to do so by some friends. While I did consult several commentaries as I was preparing the original sermon series, I did not make notes of the references used in the messages. There was not in the beginning, nor is there now, any intent to plagiarize. Should you see anything you feel is the original thought of another, I ask for your grace and mercy.

Second: In my notes for teaching (or preaching), I tend to spell certain words phonetically for the purpose of emphasis. When transforming these notes from sermon notes to teaching notes, I felt inclined to leave a number of these phonetic spellings. They help me to make emphasis in the lesson at particular points.

Third: In my notes for teaching (or preaching), I make little effort to conform to rules of grammar. One example is that I often use a hyphen (-) to indicate a point where I may want to pause slightly and to keep certain thoughts connected as I speak. Another example is that I will use local colloquialisms to make points in the message.

Please accept that these notes are not an academic work. But I do hope they will help the preacher or teacher to be able to more quickly prepare their own sermon or teaching.

Have you ever refrained from doing something – because of what other people might think?

It isn't a secret - and unfortunately in our current society - It isn't a surprise - Ministers make mistakes! Sometimes, ministers make big mistakes. Sometimes ministers act more in the flesh than they do in the spirit.

Just consider this for a moment. Have you ever found yourself in a situation where you just knew a minister was doing something wrong - and you felt compelled to punish them for their mistake? Have you ever known someone who was sure a certain minister was not doing right - and they felt they were the one God was expecting to punish that minister?

This message in this lesson - is not an additional answer to the problem in the church. But it does draw from several of the answers given for the problem in the church - and it was given originally to the church that was suffering under the problem of Division - and it is needed by the church in modern day America as well.

Read 1 Corinthians 4:1-5 and make notes:

This letter has been addressing the Problem of Division within the Church - with some specific answers to specific causes of Division within the church. The previous chapter ended with a mention of two apostles and one teacher of that day. This is the "us" that is mentioned in this text.

In this chapter the Holy Spirit, speaking through Paul, begins to broaden the message. And he begins by addressing those who are Ministers.

In verse 1, the phrase translated, “men ought to regard us as servants of Christ” - is so quickly read by most and we miss the significant and profound message the Holy Spirit is sharing with us. The Greek word translated “men” is "*anthropos*" (anth' -ro-pos). It refers to human beings generically and includes both male and female. There is no gender, no nationality, so social status referred to at all - simply all human beings.

Everyone should consider Paul, the other apostles, and other Christian ministers as being "servants of Christ." The word translated "servant" is not the one translated "deacon" or "manager." It is not the word for slave either. This is the Greek word "*huperetes*" (hoop-ay-ret'-ace) - which literally means "one who is a subordinate rower, one who aids another in any work."

This is not a servant who makes decisions, manages a household, or oversees others. This is a servant who on board a ship would be given a position of rowing beneath someone else. The least noticeable position of helping to move the ship through the water. This is a servant who in all other areas would be the assistant to a servant who has been given an assignment. This servant only does what they are told, and when. They don't make decisions as to what to do, or where to do it, or when to do it.

While it is talking about a "free person" as opposed to a slave - it is still referring to nothing more than the assistant - or even an apprentice. Paul, Peter, and Apollos, should be seen as nothing more than assistants. It isn't their responsibility, - nor their freedom, - to make decisions as to what to do or how to do it. Their only decision is to be an assistant and do what they are directed to do - or not to be an assistant.

A very important part of this statement is the part which declares "who's" servants they are. They are not the servants of the local church - They are not the servants of the church in that city - They are not the servants of the larger organized church government - **THEY ARE THE SERVANTS OF CHRIST!** With this statement, Paul asserted clearly that he was not the servant of the church, but was a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ!

The first thing this indicates is that Paul – is not accountable to the church - but is accountable to God. The second thing this indicates is the church should be careful in how they treat God's servant - For if you mistreat God's servant, you can expect to answer to God for it. What are you doing, Paul? I'm just helping Christ, in whatever He is doing!

While they are only assistants, they are also “those entrusted with the secret things of God.” The word translated "entrusted" is the Greek word "*oikonomos*" (oy-kon-om' -os). This refers to a slave which has been given the responsibility to manage a household, or a farm, or an estate." It was also sometimes used to refer to one who was the superintendent of a city's finances.

Someone who is "*oikonomos*" doesn't own the household or farm - they are simply managing it in accordance with the rules and guidelines that have been given by the one who does own the household or farm. Even when it refers to a city manager - the city manager doesn't own the city and doesn't make the rules - they only try to manage the affairs of the city in accordance with the rules that have been made by those who have the authority to make the rules.

There is a very important principle being declared here - and we need to be careful to take hold of it - because it will determine how much we can grasp a great deal of the Christian lifestyle. The apostles and ministers are free to decide whether they will be an assistant to Christ or not. If they choose to be an assistant to Christ - then they don't have the freedom to decide what the rules are - they don't have the freedom to decide what is acceptable and what isn't. They only follow the rules and guidelines as handed down by the One who has the authority to make the rules - Jesus Christ! All authority in Heaven and Earth - has been given to Him by the Father in Heaven. As assistant servants - the ministers don't have the authority to decide what is truth and what isn't. But as ministers, we do have the responsibility to administer the truths as provided to us by Jesus.

In verse 2 - the phrase "those who have been given a trust" - is the same Greek word "*oikonomos*" that was in verse 1. It is a slave who is responsible for managing something that belongs to the owner.

"It is required" - is the Greek word "*zeteo*" (day-teh-o') - which literally means "to demand something from someone) - this is not optional or voluntary!

All these Ministers who have been given the responsibility to manage something that belongs to the owner. Must - it is demanded of them - it is not optional. They must "prove" themselves faithful. The word translated "prove" - is the Greek word "*heurisko*" (hyoo-ris' -ko) - which means "to find by enquiry, examination, scrutiny, observation, or practice and experience."

It is not enough for a Minister to simply say "I am faithful." It is mandatory - it is required - that they be **PROVEN** to be faithful. They must be examined and observed - they must be proven faithful by practice and experience.

What is required of one who is a slave put in charge of managing something for the owner? What is the owner seeking in a slave in such a position? It isn't eloquence, it isn't even necessarily success. What the owner is seeking to find in a slave who is given the responsibility to manage something he owns - **FAITHFULNESS!**

Are they faithful to stay with what they were given to do? Instead of deciding for themselves what should be done? Are they faithful to do it the way the owner wants it done? Instead of deciding for themselves what might be a better way?

Things look real interesting for a minute when we get to verse 3. Paul has just declared that it is mandatory that a Minister be Proven Faithful - by examination, testing, and observation. Then he says "I could care less whether you or anyone judges me."

All the church people who had been listening to what he said in the previous verse could jump up and say, "But Paul, it is mandatory that you be examined and proven to be faithful." I can just hear someone standing up in the church and declaring that Paul is rejecting the rules that have been given by God - and they would probably make a motion that Paul be removed from membership or from the list of approved teachers and preachers.

Is Paul rejecting the rules given by God that a Minister be proven faithful? Listen to the literal word for word translation from the Greek: "But to me the smallest matter it is that by you I be examined, or by man's day. But neither myself do I examine me." "Of all the things that I am concerned about, this is of the least consequence of all."

Paul isn't being flip in his attitude. Paul isn't being arrogant about this toward the local church. Paul isn't refusing to be examined or judged. He is simply saying it doesn't matter to him if some person judges him - he isn't even going to bother to judge himself. He is looking to Christ Jesus to do the examining and the judging and the proving! WHY? Because that's who the boss is!

The judgment rendered by the Lord Jesus Christ is the only judgment that counts. If you are employed by company "A" - and you hear that the manager over at company "B" doesn't like the way you do your job - is that going to bother you? Not if the manager at company "A" where you are employed is satisfied with your work. As long as your employer is pleased with your work - you too could care less what someone at another company thinks of your performance.

That's what Paul is talking about here. Since you're not the boss - I'm not concerned about getting your approval. Since I'm not the boss either - I'm not even concerned about getting my own approval.

Verse 4 is also important to getting a firm grasp on the message. "My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. " Having a clear conscience does not make a person innocent! The issue isn't really about having a clear conscience. It isn't the presence or the absence of clear conscience that Paul is concerned about. There are a number of people I could point to today who don't have a guilty conscience but they are very guilty.

Paul had a clear conscience because he did what he was told to do. He wasn't responsible for the outcome or the method. He was only responsible for his obedience. After all, "It is the Lord who judges me."

Paul doesn't even say that everything he has done was right. Paul doesn't say that everything has worked well. Paul doesn't say that he has been successful in every ministry endeavor. Paul simply says, "I have been faithful to what the Lord has given me to do, that is why I have a clear conscience."

In verse 2, the Greek word "*heurisko*" was used when it referred to the proving - or the examination – of a minister. In verse 5 it says, "don't judge" before the time. It is the Greek word "*krino*" (kree' -no) - which means "to select, to choose, to approve, to determine."

The word used in verse 2 spoke of the examination process and the evaluating process. In verse 5 it is talking about the handing down of a decision or the determination of reward or punishment.

Paul didn't tell the Corinthian Believers to stop examining the Ministers! He said don't be handing down decisions on the Ministers - approving or disapproving of them. The judging of the faithfulness of a minister can only be done properly when the Lord returns.

There will be an "appointed time" for the judging of a Minister. But today is not the appointed time to judge.

One of the things that should make every Minister become nervous or become very careful is revealed in verse 5. When Jesus comes back - "He will bring to light what is hidden. . . and will expose the motives of men's hearts."

Can you imagine how some will protest that "I have done good works all these years" - And the Lord will be saying "but you were doing good works for bad reasons?"

It is so easy for us to come to the conclusion that someone is wrong to be doing a certain thing or going to a certain place. And yet we can be very wrong in the conclusion we have drawn.

1 Corinthians – 08 - Servants of Christ

So, how does all this about Ministers apply to you? The First part of the message is pretty obvious. Stop rendering judgments on God's Ministers. "Well, now, come on Pastor, that minister just doesn't have enough charisma" - "that one there doesn't have enough enthusiasm" - "And besides Pastor, I don't like the way you do a few things either."

Well, go ahead and examine - if you think you just have to - But be very careful about handing out judgments to those who belong to and answer to the Lord. If you think they are messing up, you would be a whole lot better off, just going and talking to the Lord about them instead of punishing them yourself.

The Second part of the message isn't as obvious, but it is clear: Since Christ considers every Believer to be a minister - Stop letting the judgments of other people determine what you do - Where you do it - And how you do it.

Come to grips with the fact that we are a Servant To Christ. It is Christ that will do the judging - not other people. Remember, we are only an assistant to Christ. Let Jesus make the decisions - Then make every effort to be obedient to what He says - And to follow His directions. Even if other people find fault with what, where, how, or when- If Jesus approves, then that is all that should matter.

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

Have you every met someone who was so proud of their gift and calling of God? Have you ever known someone who was always boasting of how much better their minister is than the minister others have at their church?

What makes a Believer come to have the attitude that Says, "I have arrived – spiritually?" In this lesson, we will see what causes that attitude And what the remedy is for it.

Read 1 Corinthians 4:6-13 and make notes:

The Holy Spirit speaks through Paul - and applies the things already spoken of in this letter to the Believers in Corinth. The dominant themes of this passage are - first the Pride in the Believers in Corinth, - and secondly, the weakness of the Apostles, specifically the Apostle Paul.

He doesn't waste any time and gets right to the heart of the matter. He speaks of their Pride and calls them “prideful.” The contrast is too clear to be missed - and too important for us to skip over. Their Pride has caused them to see themselves in an exalted status - They seem to believe they "have arrived." And they have a very wrong attitude toward other people even the Apostles.

In verse 6, we begin to see the real purpose of the things that have already been said in this letter. The analogies that were given using Paul and Apollos become very "purpose filled" in this text.

“These things” means - everything that has been said up to this point was for two purposes:

- 1 - that you would learn the meaning of this saying, "Don't go beyond what is written"
- 2 - that you won't take pride in one person over another.

The Believers in Corinth had been boasting in men - and this has caused them to experience strife and quarrels. It doesn't matter whether they were "puffed up" in favor of Paul against Apollos - Or "puffed up" in favor of Apollos against Paul. It Is Wrong!

In verse 7, we see the reasoning as to WHY this boasting of one person over another is wrong. When we take pride in one person over another person - this reflects a complete lack of proper perspective - which causes us to have a lack of proper gratitude. "Who makes one person different from another?" The obvious answer to this rhetorical question - It Is God who makes each of us the way He makes us.

How can I rationally exalt myself above another person since it was God who gave me whatever it is that I have? Any differences we may have in abilities or gifts are ultimately attributable to God and not to anything we have done. Just what do you have that was not given to you? If it was given to you, then how can you justify boasting in it as though it was your accomplishment or achievement?

This is a kind of self-delusion that allows us to position ourselves in a place to judge another person's servant. In today's language we might say, "Who in the world do you think you are, anyway?"

To have this kind of attitude first requires the person to be presumptuous - and secondly it causes them to be ungrateful. "Now wait a minute here preacher. I worked hard. I studied hard, I applied myself to become what I am today - surely you can't blame me for being proud." Don't you realize that other people have worked just as hard, studied just as hard, and applied themselves just as much?

Anything you or I have today is completely by the Grace of God. It may help us to keep in mind, “our best efforts are as filthy rags.”

1 Corinthians – 09 - Not Arrived

God does honor and bless hard work - But if we think it was our hard work alone that gave us what we have - then the only one that we are fooling is ourselves. If God did not bless our hard work and our diligent study - then we would only be very tired! That's all!

Every good thing in our lives is all Grace - we deserve nothing good! The person who realizes this takes a posture of gratitude - and can't be "puffed up" in regards to another person. Those who see themselves as especially gifted with the Spirit or with Wisdom - begin to judge others unfairly - totally misunderstanding God's Grace - and completely miss the mark in regards to the "humility of God." This is so beautifully expressed with Jesus being crucified on the cross for us.

"Since you have received it, how can you boast as though you did not receive it?" When Believers begin to boast in their gift - or boast in the gift of their favorite minister over others They have missed the Gospel of Grace. And you can't but wonder - how many other wonderful things in the Gospel are they missing?

The person who boast in "their gift" - or boast in their "minister's gift" - has an attitude of "possessing" the gift - instead of having "graciously being given the gift."

In verse 8, the Holy Spirit fires 3 sharp pointed questions at the Believers in Corinth. If these were musical notes, they would be staccato - short, sharp, and distinct:

"you already have all you want"

"you are already rich"

"you have become kings"

- "and you have all this without any help from us!"

It is important to remember, while the words are coming out of Paul's writing - and maybe out of Paul's mouth - these words are those of the Holy Spirit! "So, you have accomplished all this - arrived at this exalted position without the help of the Holy Spirit!" Now that you have received the Holy Spirit- you have "arrived." You don't have need of anything else now! "Isn't it wonderful, instead of waiting to reign and rule with Christ in the millennium or in the kingdom to come- You are already reigning!" Today we might say, "You've got the world by the tail don't you?"

I can almost hear Paul sighing as he says this - "Oh, how a part of me really wishes you were actually reigning right now - because that would mean that I would be reigning also." This statement sets up the next verse.

Paul states clearly in verse 9 - that he has not entered into a time of reigning- and the implication is clear - neither have you. These next statements remind us what Jesus tried to explain to His disciples before He was crucified. If they will hate the leader, abuse the leader, and try to destroy the leader, - then that is also the way they will treat the followers.

'Wake up, Believers in Corinth" - Take a good look at what the Apostles are being required to endure. How did you come to the conclusion that since you received the Holy Spirit that everything will come up smelling like roses?

Many Bible scholars believe that quite a few of the Corinthian Believers had starting questioning Paul's standing as an Apostle - because he was having to endure such attacks and hardships - "surely, if he was in a right relationship with God, like I am, - then he would be victorious and a winner at all times and in everything!"

That attitude is prevalent today. How do we come to such a conclusion when we see how Christ Jesus was treated, - and we see how the Apostles were treated? Instead of walking in a "theology of the cross" - Believers today, like those in Corinth - are walking in a "theology of glory."

Many believers are today are singing "won't it be wonderful there" - Believing that it has to be miserable here. And yet there are those who - just like the Corinthians - believe that once we receive the Holy Spirit - it has to always be wonderful here - right now.

Both of these attitudes are wrong ! The Bible will not support either of these positions as - This is the way it has to be - all the time. "Oh but Pastor, since we are believers in Christ - since we have received the Holy Spirit - the world will surely recognize how "wise, powerful, and honored" we are." And yet the Apostles were all counted as "fools for Christ" by the world.

1 Corinthians – 09 - Not Arrived

In contrast to the Corinthian Believers who considered themselves as filled, rich, ruling, so wise, powerful, and honored" - Paul and the other Apostles considered themselves to be more like the Lord Jesus - and seen as hardly more than the "scum of the earth" in the eyes of non- believers.

Today, Believers are probably much closer to the attitude of the Corinthian Believers than to the attitude of Paul. If we would be more like our Lord and Savior and stand in opposition to the status quo of this world. Sure, we would probably be seen more like the "scum of the earth" - but we would see more moves of God in the lives of those around us.

It is so easy to serve God - Be faithful to His leading - and Openly confess to being a Believer - When things are going well - We are healthy in our bodies and not in pain - All of our bills are being paid - And not having to fight any battles. But real, genuine, authentic Christians - Recognize that every good thing - gift - and blessing - is given by God as an act of Grace - and it is not our accomplishment.

Real, genuine, authentic Christians -
don't hold an attitude of superiority over other people.

Real, genuine, authentic Christians -
realize that sometimes they will be "set forth" like the apostles
and allowed to be made a spectacle.

Real, genuine, authentic Christians -
will serve regardless of the cost, or current conditions.

Are we Christians who are willing to serve, - Minister, - and be a living testimony –
Regardless?

Or do we only choose to be a Christian if everything is going our way?

Will we only serve when we get enough rest?

Will we only serve when we have all we want to eat?

Will we only serve when we have the kind of car we want?

Will we only serve when we get the kind of house we want?

Will we only serve when we have the right kind of clothes?

Will we only serve when we have enough money?

1 Corinthians – 09 - Not Arrived

Where would we be today, if the first apostles had quit when it stopped being fun?
Where would we be today if Jesus had quit when it stopped being easy?
Where will the lost people of this world be tomorrow, if we quit because it's not fun or easy?

God loves us so very very much - and He desperately wants to hug each of us and say in front of everyone - "This is my good and faithful servant - in whom I am well pleased."

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

The church in Corinth had developed problems. There were those who were "puffed up" with pride. Some were proud believing they had received special knowledge. Some were proud believing they had achieved a special level of spirituality. Others were proud and boasted of being followers of one great teacher or another.

The congregation had failed to deal with a member that was living openly in an incestuous relationship. The congregation had failed to deal properly with two members that were suing each other in the civil courts. And these are just some of the problems that had developed in the church at Corinth. The text for this lesson doesn't address any of these problems in the church at Corinth. The text for this lesson reveals how the church fell into such discord - and what allowed them to fall so much out of fellowship with each other - and out of fellowship with the Heavenly Father.

Read 1 Corinthians 4:14 and make notes:

The Holy Spirit's intent of speaking through Paul the words that are about to be shared were not to cause them to be ashamed - but to warn them. Truthfully, if they were mature Christians, they would already be ashamed of the way they had handled things. But God's way is not one of making people "ashamed" - there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus and called according to His purpose.

The purpose behind this text is to "warn" them as "dear children. The Greek word translated "warn" - has more of the meaning to "admonish or exhort" than it does of threatening someone. The purpose of what is about to be said – is for correction!

1 Corinthians – 10 - Need For Fathers

The Greek word translated "sons" - can mean "a male offspring" - but it can also mean those who receive instruction or training such as the pupil of a teacher or instructor. It is an interesting note that in none of Paul's letters - does he ever use the word "disciples" to refer to those who responded to his teaching. He always refers to them as his "children." So, the purpose of these next few words are to admonish - or to correct what they are doing wrong - and to help them see how they can do better in the future.

Read 1 Corinthians 4:15 and make notes:

The Greek word translated "guardians" - can be used for a guardian or guide, especially for boys, but it technically refers to a tutor. There seems to be no shortage of "instructors" or "tutors" - trying to teach this group of Believers in Corinth. But the problem is pulled to the forefront with this verse.

The problem at Corinth - there is a shortage of "fathers." There is a BIG Difference between a "teacher" or "tutor" - and someone being a "Father." A reminder seems to be in order. In Christ Jesus, I became a father to you through the gospel. When I was with you earlier, I became a Spiritual Father to you as you heard the gospel message and accepted Jesus as your personal Savior.

Read 1 Corinthians 4:16 and make notes:

1 Corinthians – 10 - Need For Fathers

With this image of Spiritual Father and Spiritual Children in mind – Children, imitate your Spiritual Father. Live your lives the way you saw me live my life.

Read 1 Corinthians 4:17 and make notes:

"For this reason" - so that you will be better able to imitate me - I am sending Timothy to you. Timothy is one of my spiritual children who has proven his faithfulness - to imitate me as in trying to live a life like Christ Jesus. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus.

It is by implication - but Paul seems to be saying - "since you have obviously forgotten how I lived before you" - "I'm sending someone to demonstrate for you again. " "Not just instruction for you - But this is the same thing I teach every church everywhere." Just make a mental note of the statement that Timothy is "faithful in the Lord. " We will refer back to this characteristic of him later.

Read 1 Corinthians 4:18-19 and make notes:

This verse is fairly significant for those who are the "arrogant ones." Just in case they start thinking of how they might take advantage of this Timothy that Paul is sending - Let it be known that I am coming in person as soon as the Lord makes it possible. I will not simply evaluate the words these "arrogant" people are saying - but more importantly - I will evaluate what power they have.

1 Corinthians – 10 - Need For Fathers

Paul has already admitted that he is not eloquent with words. Paul has already acknowledged that others - like Apollo - are quite eloquent with words. Paul is saying that he intends to find out if eloquent words is all they have. Do these "arrogant" people have any power to back up their eloquent words?

Read 1 Corinthians 4:20 and make notes:

It is all too easy to forget what the Kingdom of God is all about - when we are too long in the presence of those who are fluent with influential words – and are without the Power of God!

There are some who are so gifted with words that they can talk the hair right off of a cat - and make the cat happy that he has lost his hair. They can talk us into doing things that we really don't want to do - and have us saying that we are happy to be doing it.

We can become so enthralled with the "impressive" teaching skills of a charismatic teacher - that we begin to think that “great” teaching or “exciting” teaching is what it is all about. We begin to actually abandon the ministry work - and seek after another impressive teaching.

The Holy Spirit, through Paul, clearly re-states what the Kingdom of God is. The real Kingdom of God is not a matter of words - regardless of how impressive or even persuasive they are- The real Kingdom of God is one of POWER!

1 Corinthians – 10 - Need For Fathers

Read I Corinthians 4:21 and make notes:

So, how would you prefer I come to you? Do you want me to come as the disciplinarian? Or do you want me to come as the gentle father - who corrects and instructs the children in the better way?

The church today has become like the Church in Corinth. We have an abundance of instructors and teachers - but we truly have a shortage of Spiritual Fathers. Look at 1 John 2)

The church at large in America today is not so different from the church in Corinth. Too many local congregations are making the same kinds of mistakes this early church was making. There are far too many churches that have too few - or maybe no Spiritual Fathers at all.

I am going to address this issue from the standpoint of Spiritual Fathers - because this is what the text does. But it is correct to understand that this message is for women also. The church needs mature women to be Spiritual Mothers.

To help get a proper understanding of a Spiritual Father –

Read 1 John 2:13-14 and make notes:

1 Corinthians – 10 - Need For Fathers

The Greek word translated “father” in this text - is simply the word for a father or a father figure. The most that is said about the Children - is that they know who the father is. It doesn't say the Children know the "one who was from the beginning." It doesn't say the Children have an intimate knowledge of God. It doesn't say the Children know the Heavenly Father.

The Children are those who know about God. The Children are those who know nothing more than who the Spiritual Fathers are. The Children are those who are weak and ignorant in many areas. The Children are those who cannot defend themselves and need someone to watch over them. The Children are those who need someone to teach them and to instruct them. The Children are those who need someone to live an example before them.

Young Men are those who have become strong and have overcome the evil one. Young Men are those who have strength and zeal, but are lacking in maturity. Young Men are those who have allowed the Word of God to come alive within them. Young Men want to resolve every problem with their strength and energy. Young Men are those who want to wage "Spiritual Warfare" at the drop of a hat. Young Men are those who are lacking in the area of Intimate Knowledge of God. Young Men are those who certainly have grown spiritually. They have gained enough spiritual strength to be able to overcome the temptations of the evil one. But they lack spiritual maturity. Young Men are those who will correct the children - but will do so with harshness and impatience at the children's inability to "do it right.

The Fathers are those who have matured in their Christian experience. The Fathers are those who have come to know - intimately know - God. The Fathers are those who have come to know God so personally that they often think like God thinks, - they respond to attacks like God does. The Fathers are those who have such an intimate relationship with God that they trust Him in every way and are very unlikely to fear or worry. The Fathers are those who can correct the younger ones with firmness – but do it with tenderness and patience.

1 Corinthians – 10 - Need For Fathers

The love of a Father is not a thing of indulgence. The love of a Father is not a license that allows selfishness and wrong doing. The love of a Father cares about the consequences of a person's behavior. The love of a Father will exercise correction and warning to ensure the safety and health of the children in their care.

A Spiritual Father cannot sit silently by and watch as Spiritual Children put themselves in danger. A Spiritual Father will:

Show love, but also justice -

Give care; but also discipline -

Be giving; but also demanding -

Administer Acceptance; but also disapproval -

Praise; but also warn.

The call – both for the church at Corinth – and for the church today - is for more Spiritual Fathers. Without Spiritual Fathers - the family is left to be run by the immaturity of children – or at best, the zeal and energy of the Young Men. That's what allowed the church in Corinth to get into such a mess. That is what has allowed some many local churches in our nation to get into such a mess.

If we don't continually prepare and raise up more Spiritual Fathers for our local church - then one day - the wonderful family that we are enjoying - will find itself in deep trouble and many many people will be hurt - And the ministry will eventually stop.

Would you like to know how we raise up more Spiritual Fathers? The clue is found in Timothy. Do you remember the statement Paul made about Timothy being Faithful in The Lord? We can learn something about how to become a Spiritual Father by looking at Timothy. Timothy was sent to the Believers in Corinth to help them since they did not have Spiritual Fathers.

We know some things about Timothy and his faithfulness through the Scriptures:

1 Tim 2:1-2 He was faithful in prayer

2 Tim 2: 15; 3: 15-17 He was faithful in study of the Word

2 Tim 1: 7-8 He was faithful in witnessing

1 Tim 1: 18-19; 4: 14-16 He was faithful in service

1 Corinthians – 10 - Need For Fathers

This is a good outline of how one prepares to become a Spiritual Father!

Be Faithful in Prayer

Be Faithful in Study of the Word

Be Faithful in Witnessing

Be Faithful in Serving

By the time we have proven ourselves to be faithful in these areas - we will discover that we have matured spiritually to the point - that others are looking to us as a Spiritual Father (or spiritual mother).

Some local churches are blessed with some wonderful Spiritual Fathers. But they won't always be there. The local church will need others to step in and fill the gap. Even before any of the current Spiritual Fathers graduate and get to go home to be with the Heavenly Father - as the size of the congregation grows – they will need more Spiritual Fathers.

Just look at what happens when a church family does not have Spiritual Fathers. Is that what we want to see happen to our local church one day? It is God's plan that children grow and mature and - become Young Men - and Young Women - in the Faith. It is God's plan that the Young Men grow and mature - and become Spiritual Fathers. And the Young Women become Spiritual Mothers.

The request is only that we do what God is asking us to do. Begin preparing ourselves to mature in the Faith. We must not allow ourselves to remain a Spiritual Child.

If we should all choose to remain children - who will help us when we create such a mess as happened at Corinth? Even IF the Lord should be so gracious as to send a Paul to help straighten things out - consider all the hurts and the pain that was caused by the immaturity and the childish decisions.

Who will be the Spiritual Fathers? And the Spiritual Mothers?

Who will commit to the Heavenly Father to begin with God's help to:

Be Faithful in Prayer

Be Faithful in Study of the Word Be Faithful in Witnessing

Be Faithful in Serving Who?

1 Corinthians – 10 - Need For Fathers

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

In a community where I served as a Pastor many years ago – I watched as a situation developed over several years. A deacon in another church – left his wife and children – then moved in with another woman. He fathered a child with this woman with whom he was living, but not married to. He did not divorce his wife. The church where he was a deacon had a rule that a divorced person could not hold the office of a deacon.

This was a small town, this man's lifestyle – and the child – was public knowledge. That church did not ask the man to step down as a deacon. When asked why – the response was, “he has not divorced his wife.” The decision may have been influenced by the fact that this man was a major “giver” of finances to that church.

Perhaps you are one that does not believe “divorce” will cause a person to “forever” be excluded for serving in the church. Even if this is the case – isn't it interesting that a local church will find a reason to “overlook” the immoral actions of a leader? In the case of that particular church – their reason was that they did not have a written rule forbid someone who was actively committing adultery from serving as a deacon.

Chapter 5 begins a section in the letter that addresses moral problems. It is a rather sad commentary on the Church in America today, but like the Corinthian church, we are experiencing serious levels of complacency and a dangerous laxity regarding morality. There are so many incidents of immorality in the lives of believers, in fact in church leaders such as pastors, elders, deacons, etc., - that it isn't had to find examples of immorality within the congregation.

Here is the question - When immorality becomes part of the lifestyle of someone who is a part of the church, - what is the church supposed to do? Is the church supposed to pray about it and hope that God will take care of the immorality and the persons involved? Is the church supposed to take some action in an effort to get the person involved in an immoral lifestyle out of that lifestyle?

1 Corinthians – 11 - Addressing Immorality

To talk about the local church taking action in regards to church discipline is a very sensitive issue. A subject that far too many churches today avoid at all cost. In fact, in an effort to avoid dealing with the subject of church discipline, it has cost many local churches the very life of that local church. So it has been for them "at all cost." The subject of church discipline is desperately needed in the church today, especially if we are going to be able to be a strong witness for Christ Jesus.

Read 1 Corinthians 5:1-5 and make notes:

There was a shameful sin within the church membership. This shameful sin is sexual immorality. It was a "kind of" sexual immorality that does not occur among the pagans. Many of the pagan religious customs involved sexual immorality - as part of their ritual and practice. So this is an important statement.

Not only was the Corinthian sexual immorality within the congregation - but it was one of incest. A son is living with his step-mother, - or his father's wife, - and it is public knowledge. Everyone in the church and community knows about it.

It's not just that there are believers who are committing fornication or adultery - This is a shameful, shocking, despicable, and disgusting type of immorality - being lived out before the whole congregation and the community of un-believers as well.

Because of the word usage in verse one where it says "a man has" - many Bible scholars agree that this indicates this step-son and step-mother have entered into a marriage relationship – or at least it is a continuing situation.

1 Corinthians – 11 - Addressing Immorality

It is clear that this young man is a member of the Church in Corinth. It appears that he was a prominent member since apparently he is known by everyone. It is possible that he is known only by way of the notoriously scandalous sin he is so openly committing - But most agree that he must have been a prominent member of the congregation before he began this lifestyle of sexual immorality.

There have been suggestions by some that he may have been a leader in this local church, but since the letter does not call him a leader, but simply "a man" - this may be too much conjecture. What really hurts in this issue is this: While the un-believers don't live pure, holy, or clean lives - the lost people in the community would completely reject incest as an acceptable behavior. And yet here is the congregation of Believers in Jesus Christ - allowing it to go on without challenging it, without any words of correction, - and certainly without any actions toward correction.

Such a marriage as this was strictly forbidden in Leviticus 18 and in Deuteronomy 22. And there was a curse pronounced upon any who did so. Not only is this an unacceptable situation in the eyes of our Heavenly Father - this has tragically ruined the testimony and the message of hope with which the Church had been entrusted.

There was a shameful attitude within the church membership - Boasting and self-complacency. The believers of this congregation in Corinth are "PROUD." These believers are so proud of being a strong spiritual church - and so proud that they have been so greatly blessed by God.

Maybe they were thinking that since they had been so greatly blessed by God that they just couldn't see how God could punish them for anything they did. After all, for God to have blessed them the way He had they must surely be very special.

This congregation in Corinth didn't just revel in the thought that they were so spiritual - they had become conceited about being so very spiritual and blessed of God. This attitude of conceit about being a strong church - had allowed them to be transformed into a weak and dying church and they were totally unaware of the fact that they were at death's door. Instead of being Proud they should have been mourning and repenting.

1 Corinthians – 11 - Addressing Immorality

This church had a great need. They didn't need to be glorying in their so-called spiritual strength. They needed to be mourning and grieving over the deadly sin that was in their midst. They needed to be begging God and interceding for the salvation, the healing, and the restoration of this sin sick person in their congregation.

One of the messages we can get from this passage is:

God does not want us to be complacent about sin among our members.

No church anywhere will be able to completely keep sin from ever coming in among its members. There are no perfect people - and since every congregation is made up of imperfect people - sin will come in among us. But the message is clear - when sin is found to have entered our midst - we are expected by our Heavenly Father to deal with it and to make an effort to correct the situation.

A complacent, easy going attitude toward sin not only kills the life of the person involved in the sinful actions, - it will eventually kill the life of the entire congregation. It is astonishing when you stop to consider - there are many civic organizations and clubs that will expel from their membership those persons who break their rules. And the average church will have people who blatantly and openly violate the rules of Christian living - and never say a word to them about it. Doesn't that look a little bit like the pagan and worldly organizations have a higher standard and expectation of their members than the Church does?

It really shouldn't be any surprise that God expects the church to take some action when a member sins - Jesus, in Matthew 18:15-20, clearly laid out a procedure to handle a person who sins:

go to them privately - just the two of you

take another believer with you and give them another opportunity

take it before the whole congregation

But this procedure is when you discover a brother or sister in a sin. Jesus' instruction was to handle this in such a way as to keep it from becoming public knowledge. His plan only calls for it to become congregational knowledge when the person refuses after two opportunities to repent and make things right. The situation in Corinth was way past the point of someone discovering this man in a sinful situation. At Corinth, it had already become very public knowledge.

There was a need for discipline with the church membership. The offending person needed hope of restoration, - not enablement to continue in the lifestyle of sin.

Paul was physically in another area busy ministering and it was not possible for him to come in person at this particular time to deal with this issue. However, his spirit overflowing with love for this church, he wanted to remind them that he was there with them in spirit.

This was a situation that was too important to let it continue until he could come in person - so he shared with them it had already been judged and he gives them a prescribed plan of action to take even before he actually is able to come there in person. The plan is a three step process:

#1 - The offending person is to be disciplined in the name of the Lord Jesus.

It is the Lord Jesus who is being hurt most here - His name is the one being most damaged by this lifestyle. It is for the Lord that this discipline must take place. It is the Lord Jesus alone who can use such discipline to awaken a person from their sinful slumber or sinful stupor and awaken their conscience so they will repent and find reconciliation with God.

#2 - The offending person is to be disciplined by the church in a congregational meeting.

When they are assembled together in "the name of the Lord", - and the "power of the Lord is present." This shouldn't be just any meeting, but one in which they know the power of Jesus is present.

#3 - The offending person is to be disciplined through the power of the Lord Jesus Christ.

They are to be handed over to Satan. Even to the extent of their flesh being destroyed - So that their spirit can be saved.

There is a certain protection that is given to every believer who remains faithfully within fellowship to the other believers. To excommunicate a sinful believer - takes them outside of this protection. They become much more vulnerable to the "killing, stealing, and destroying" plans of Satan.

This action is not intended so much to punish them for their sinful actions – after all, that is God's domain. This plan of action is taken with the hopes that they will come to their spiritual senses - and cause them to turn back to God and seek His righteousness. This action of turning a person out of the fellowship is with the complete hope that they will repent.

This is much more than an act of excommunication that has been practiced by some church groups through history. Many times when a church group has "excommunicated someone" - they still maintain them as a member of the local church, they don't have fellowship with them - but they pray for the person's safety and success during the whole time of excommunication.

What the Holy Spirit is instructing - through Paul - is saying, "we love you enough" that if it means allowing you to be delivered over to physical sickness and disease - if it means allowing you to be delivered over to hunger and homelessness - if it means allowing you to be delivered over to isolation, fear, and unrest - that you might find spiritual repentance and reconciliation with God I may cry and hurt for you - but I will do this for your ultimate good.

The way some church groups go about it - to merely excommunicate someone is like throwing them out of the membership -but indicates nothing toward destroying the flesh. But this action is removing them from membership, - Not praying protection over them - Not praying blessings over them - But praying only that they will come to repentance.

1 Corinthians – 11 - Addressing Immorality

This disciplinary action is talking about actually taking away a level of spiritual protection and exposing this person to danger from Satan. This is what brings us back to the instruction that such discipline must be taken with the "power of the Lord Jesus Christ."

The congregation, heart broken and in an action full of love, only pronounces that the offending person is to be no longer allowed fellowship with the congregation - and not considered to be a member any longer. Which takes them outside a level of protection. Then, whatever spiritual or physical punishment or harm they should experience – is solely in the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ.

How painful it is to think that a person is in such a situation as this man in the church in Corinth! Let us take this whole text as an instruction of what to do in a similar situation to be sure. But let us take it as a warning to do what Jesus said when we find someone in a sin. Let us commit to address it while it is still small and private. Let us commit to take some action to bring the brother or sister to repentance and reconciliation - so that it never has to become the knowledge of the entire congregation - and certainly never become the knowledge of the whole community.

What do you think our local churches would be like today- if over the past 20 years, the people of the local churches had gone to a person when they found them in a sin? And then handled it according to Jesus instructions in Matthew 18? What would our families be like today - if over the past 20 years, Moms and Dads had gone to their children and addressed the actions and activities of their sinful children? What if brothers and sisters, Cousins, uncles, and aunts, Had gone to family members who were engaging in sinful actions, - not to shame them or harass them, - or even to punish them - but to encourage them to repent and get right with God? What would our families be like today?

1 Corinthians – 11 - Addressing Immorality

We tend to avoid saying anything to someone when we think they are in sin. Satan leads us to think we are being kind and gentle by not making them feel bad or feel guilty about what they are doing. But the truth is this - if we really love them, we will desire to spare them the greatest pain. It is greater pain to live outside the fellowship of the Lord Jesus Christ - than it is to have a person we love tell us we are in sin. It is much more painful to live an eternity in hell away from the presence and blessings of God - than it is to feel the guilt and conviction of having to address our sinful lifestyle. If we love one another, - we will address the sin.

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

A few years ago, many people in our nation have been upset because a prominent national leader has repeatedly committed immoral sinful actions. And it appeared that many have fought to protect this person from having to be responsible for their sinful actions. Much of the defense was centered around the high office this person held.

The defenders, in effect, declared that if the person is in a prominent enough position, - then their sin should be overlooked and they should not be held accountable. This made some Christian Believers very angry - some even enough to fight about it.

I submit to you that the church in America has done this same thing for a long time now. If the church will allow someone' s sins to be overlooked because they hold a prominent position in the community and the church - then how can we act surprised when the secular community does the same thing.

Perhaps, - if the church had been faithful over the last 30 - 50 years- and held every member to the same standard - Then - just maybe - we wouldn't have to see it take place in high government positions today in our nation. The church in America just may have to answer to God for what has been going on in our land the last few years.

Read 1 Corinthians 5:6-13 and make notes:

This text is actually a continuation of the first 5 verses. The subject of this passage is Church Discipline - and it is a subject of which the church today is in desperate need of some teaching. As we read the New Testament, it appears that just about every Spiritual Gift had been given the church in Corinth.

1 Corinthians - 12 - Expel Immorality

On the one hand, - it would seem understandable as to why they might feel like glorying in their spiritual strength and blessings. Pride is a sin in itself - but these people were busy glorying in their spiritual gifts – while at the same time - one of their members was living a lifestyle of shameful, disgusting sin.

No one was addressing it - they were all willing to overlook the sin in this particular case. Boasting was completely out of place in light of their current situation.

Paul used a rhetorical question on the Believers at Corinth - "Do you not know?" Of course they knew! It is absurd to think - they don't know what kind of affect yeast has on bread dough. In that culture, they didn't buy bread at the store - they made it themselves. They were personally aware of how the yeast works in the dough and what a short time it actually takes for the whole lump of dough to become infected with the yeast.

Usually in that day, they didn't put a package of yeast in each batch of dough - they kept back some of the fermented dough from the previous batch and used it to "infect" the new batch. If they had put two pounds of flour in the mixing bowl - they would put in approximately one-half pound of fermented flour - and allow it to infect the rest of the dough.

Flour with fermentation in it - is like a person who has sin in their life - they have the ability to infect others with their sin. But if it were actual evil or actual sin itself - the affect is almost amazing. It takes such a small amount of yeast. If we put a couple of pounds of flour into the mixing bowl - then we only add a half-ounce of yeast.
(2 pounds - compared to - ½ ounce)

These people understood the dynamics of these relationships! So why weren't they paying attention to important aspects of life that they know?

Maybe we are like the Corinthian Believers. Do we need to be reminded that "a little leaven" - a little sin - can infect the whole body? In the same way that if even a small measure of yeast is allowed to remain in the dough, - eventually all of the dough will have yeast in it. In the same way - if this man and his shameful sin - the little leaven - is overlooked and allowed to remain in the body - eventually, the whole body will be infected by immoral activity.

1 Corinthians - 12 - Expel Immorality

Where there is no restraint for sin - this is where sin will grow. The person who lives for sin - ultimately influences others to live for sin.

Is it serious, if only one small HIV virus is found in our midst? “After all Pastor, it's just one little old HIV virus.” What will happen if that one virus is left unchecked and unrestrained? Pretty soon there will be two. Soon there will be four. And so on until nothing is left that isn't infected - or maybe left alive.

“Can't we just leave this one person alone - their sin is bad, but it's just one person and they are important to us - can't we just overlook this one person?”

Verse 7 gives us a reason why the church should purge sin from it's midst: Believers are new creatures.

We already are the "new batch of bread dough" - without any yeast or fermented parts within us - and it is by the Grace of God that this is so.

Attention is brought to a Jewish household at Passover. The house is literally swept clean of any trace of yeast. Great pains are taken by the members of the household to make sure all yeast is removed from the house.

As new creatures - we are without yeast - without sin. Wouldn't it be nice to stay that way. When we become Believers in Christ Jesus, - the old sins and the old man have been swept out of the house - we are not only a new creature, we are a new creature without sin. We are bread dough without yeast!

Many of us run outside our new dwelling place and grab up some yeast - the old sin - and then we run back into our new dwelling. When we do this - we contaminate our new home – our New Body.

As a new creature, - free of sin, - God would like us to stay that way. Christ, our Passover Lamb has been sacrificed for us - and His blood has been applied to the door post of our dwelling place.

1 Corinthians - 12 - Expel Immorality

In the first Passover, anyone who went outside the dwelling place that had been covered by the blood - would not be protected from the death angel. They were only protected from the death angel as long as they stayed inside the dwelling.

During Passover, after the house had been thoroughly cleaned of all yeast - If someone got up and went outside and picked up some yeast and came back in, - this person would be put outside, - the house would again be cleaned. This would be necessary to protect the whole family - for if they were allowed to stay, the whole family was in danger. So is the whole church family that allows one to stay that is engaging in a sinful lifestyle. This text says they should keep the feast – but they must do so with cleanness.

What is the Christian equivalent to the Jewish Passover Celebration? For the Jewish Passover, there is a 7 day period of celebration of God's forgiveness and deliverance where the Jews are forbidden to eat anything with leaven in it.

On the basis of Jesus' being crucified on the cross for us- Christians are to keep an ongoing feast of the Celebration of God's forgiveness by living a Holy Life. This analogy is supported by the instruction in verse 11 - that tells us that we are "not even to eat with them."

The instruction of the Holy Spirit in this passage - isn't concerned with the literal table and what physical food may be upon it. The concern is the overall lifestyle and behavior of those who have been washed in the Blood of the Lamb.

"Malice" speaks of hard feelings between people - the church IS NOT Clean as long as there is "malice" in the house. "Wickedness" is the Greek word "*ponerias*" which means "taking pleasure in sin." The church IS NOT Clean as long as we are "taking pleasure in our sin."

The first two ways in which we can observe this feast with cleanness had to do with negative aspects - Keep out "malice" and "wickedness." The next two ways in which we can observe the feast with cleanness has to do with positive aspects - Keep in "sincerity" and "truth'.'

1 Corinthians - 12 - Expel Immorality

"Sincerity" is a Greek word which speaks of something so pure and clear that when the sun shines through it there is no evidence of imperfection or flaw. The church IS NOT Clean as long as we are speaking words that not sincere. How common it has become for the church to speak words that are true, but we are not sincere when we say them.

Surely it was really clear to the Corinthian Believers at this point - to pass along the Teachings of Christ Jesus - and to boast of their Spiritual blessings - and to allow this sinful lifestyle to remain in the congregation - was not "sincerity" and "truth."

If the church today teaches and proclaims - that we should do what is right, - and we overlook it when one of our members lives a lifestyle that is not right - then we are not being sincere. And we are not living the Truth. The church needs to discipline itself and do what is right.

In our current society - we seem to have a great multitude of people who want to modify "ethics" to fit their lifestyle desires. And where is the Church's voice being heard concerning this "situation ethics?"

While we need to do so in Love - this generation needs to hear clearly and distinctly the message that Christ has died for us - not iust to give us a ticket and permission to go to heaven some day - Christ has not just saved us from hell and torment in the future - But He has saved us with the full expectation that we are to be "re-created" into His image - so that by our daily lives we can express the Character of God to the lost and dying people of this world.

There really is a "here and now" purpose to our Salvation in Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit, speaking through the Apostle Paul, identifies 4 specific sins that must be kept out of the church: "the immoral, greedy, swindlers, idolaters."

Sexual immorality includes all sinful sex, such as: "adultery, pre-marital, homosexual, and any other form of sexual perversion."

Greedy is a problem of never being satisfied - never having enough. And it applies to just about every aspect of our life.

1 Corinthians - 12 - Expel Immorality

Swindlers are those who cheat others in any way, which includes: thieves, hijackers, bait and switch, misleading advertising, and so on. They steal our time, peace, rest, etc.

Idolaters are those who give something or someone a more important place in their life than God. These are not to be allowed to remain in the lifestyle of the believers.

Obviously there were people back then just like there are today - who take things so literal at times as to miss the message. Look at Verse 10. This doesn't mean we can't go out and meet unbelievers, or do business with unbelievers. How in the world would we fulfill the commission given to the Church - if we withdrew from every person who lived in sin?

The notable thing about the commission Jesus gave the church - was for the Church to "GO into all the world." He did not commission the church to make it so inviting that the lost would come to us.

Verse 11 explains that this whole instruction had to do with those people who claim to be a believer - but live like an unbeliever on a regular basis. Those who claim to be a "brother" or claim to be a "sister." And it is interesting to note in this verse - where it is clarified that this is talking about those who claim to be a Christian - it adds two other sinful lifestyles that must not be allowed to continue in fellowship; "slanderers" and "drunkards."

If you think about it - it makes sense that these two would not be mentioned until it was made clear that it is the Church that is being addressed and not the world. Among pagans – or unbelievers- it is just natural and to be expected that they will slander others. And it is just as natural that there will be many "drunkards" among the non-believers. But it **MUST NOT** be so among Christians!

This instruction must not be separated from the instruction to try to get the Brother or Sister to repent - to seek restoration and reconciliation. This instruction must not be ignored when they refuse to give up the sinful lifestyle. Literally, - the health and life of the whole church is at stake.

1 Corinthians - 12 - Expel Immorality

In some church groups - if they excommunicate a person - this means they aren't allowed to partake of communion with the rest of the church. But the rest of the church continues to share regular meals with them and share social events with them. The instruction is "don't EVEN eat with them."

If it was the original intent to only exclude them from the Lord's Table of Communion - then the "not even eat" instruction would not be necessary. So, this means don't socialize with them - don't share times of fellowship with them.

The concluding comments in V12 and VI3 are interesting:

First: Don't judge the sinners- a time for that judgment is coming - and God will be that Judge.

Second: We must expel the brother or sister who is determined to continue a lifestyle of sin.

This concluding statement is basically the way this section of the letter began. The community of Believers must act responsibly - and boasting is not acting responsibly.

Are Christians to be passing judgment on the sinners? The expected answer is NO! Are Christians to be judging those inside the Church? The expected answer is YES!

Something the Lord brought to my mind as I studied this text and began to lament on how much the Church has failed Him in this area. God pointed out that this failure to hold the standard didn't begin in my generation - it was here in the Church's infancy. We are not the first generation to fail to uphold God's standard and to proclaim it to the world. But now that we are aware of where we have failed - what will we do? We certainly don't have to remain here.

I did not sense a condemning or harsh tone in the way God brought this to my attention - and as He spoke to me concerning this. I felt a level of disappointment for sure. But I felt even more a tone of encouragement that not only can we do better - but He will help us do better - If only we are willing. Are We Willing?

1 Corinthians - 12 - Expel Immorality

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

Even when everyone tries to do the right thing - sometimes people get hurt, offended, or sometimes just get a bad deal from another person who is a Christian Believer. I don't have any facts or data to back up the statement - but I read recently where it was said - we Americans are the most litigious society on the face of the earth. And that this generation is the most litigious generation of all times. That means we are filing more lawsuits against one another than anyone else.

The closing part of the previous chapter stated we who are part of the church "are not" to be judging those who are outside the church - but we are to judge those inside the church . And this was set forth in the same text where we are instructed to put outside the church those who insist on living a lifestyle of sin.

Read Corinthians 6:1-8 and make notes:

In this chapter we are given some instructions concerning matters of just everyday living such as when one member of the church will be offended by another member of the church. Or one member will have a grievance with another member of the church.

As we read this first letter to the Corinthians, it would appear that just about everything in the church was upside down - or maybe inside out. They had been so busy judging those who were outside the church - that they were completely ignoring the grievous sins of those inside the church. And when one member of the church had an offense with another member of the church, - they would take the matter to those who were outside the church to have it judged - or to settle the issue.

1 Corinthians - 13 - Christians Suing Christians

The party of the first part (person number one) - had in some way defrauded or cheated the party of the second part (person number two). Person number two, - who had been cheated sued Person number one in the civil court. He was taking his grievance against his Christian brother before a civil magistrate in search of justice.

In those days and in that culture, it was customary for the civil magistrate to be located pretty much in the center, or in the heart, of the main market place or area. This made it easy for persons who had been cheated in the market place to get to the court - But it also made every grievance brought before the civil magistrate very public.

In general, this was a good thing when it came to a business person cheating their customers - other potential customers would know that this business person cheats and they could choose to take their business to another person and avoid the bad deal. But when one Christian person took another Christian person before the civil magistrate, this meant that every unbeliever in the market area was likely to know the discord, the deception, and the lack of brotherhood that had made it's way into the church. "Why would I want to be part of the church, I can be cheated and sued by people here in the market place without becoming a Christian?"

This situation doesn't defeat the two Christians involved in the lawsuit - it is evidence that they are already defeated. This situation doesn't defeat the church - this situation is evidence that the church is already defeated.

Believers who sue one another in the civil courts fail God - and they fail God miserably. Paul is apparently rather indignant over the whole situation. It's like he can't say too much about the sad situation they have created;

In verses 1 & 6 he expresses horror

In verses 2, 5, 6, & 7 he uses rhetorical questions

In verse 5 he uses sarcasm

In verse 1, the thing to which Paul responded with horror is still pretty much a recurring phenomenon in our society today - isn't it. As soon as someone does us wrong - we are so quick to seek adjudication before the civil courts. How often do you hear of a Christian who has been wronged by another Christian - bringing the situation before their Church to have it settled?

1 Corinthians - 13 - Christians Suing Christians

Why don't we do this? Isn't it justice and fairness that we want? Or do we want all the financial compensation we can possibly get regardless of whether that is what is fair and right. Maybe we just want the offender to suffer a little for what they did to us? How is it that we "dare" to seek judgments from the ungodly - who will perish instead of the godly who will live forever?

For the Apostle Paul, the reality of the future is as certain as the present itself. And this reality of the future, - conditions everything the Church is and does in the present. Wake up Believers, we are going to judge the world. Since this is the case - and since we have Christ Jesus living within us and leading us - are we not qualified to judge at least some of the cases now?

Paul makes an issue of the fact that the local church in Corinth failed to function as a proper place for "Christ like" judgments to take place. Then he makes an issue over the small - almost insignificant, - nature of the suit. This gives a good reason to question the motive of the person who is filing the suit. Maybe the person doing the suing is after the wrong thing.

Wake up Believers and give this thing another consideration. We Christians are going to judge the angels. This is no doubt referring to the fallen angels who chose to follow after Satan. If we are not only going to one day judge the world, - but we are going to be allowed to judge the fallen angels - surely we are able to make judgment in the matters between the lives of Christian Believers!

The original Greek in verse 4 has given some trouble to those who wish to interpret it. It can be interpreted to mean we should appoint as judges "even those who are of little account" in the church. And it can be interpreted to be questioning how could we possibly consider asking non Christians to judge our issues when they are of "no account" at all - even of less account than the newest, least knowledgeable Christian?

1 Corinthians - 13 - Christians Suing Christians

I personally intend to allow the Bible Scholars go right on arguing that one as long as they want to. I still believe the Bible is written exactly the way God wanted it to be written. In cases like this one, - not so that it will be confusing or an issue over which we can argue - but this is one of those cases where God had it written in the specific language where it in fact means both of these. And God intended for us to make use of this text in both interpretations.

Even the least knowledgeable, youngest Christian is better qualified to judge the issues between Christians than an unbeliever. We should be of an attitude that I would rather have a new believer than a non believer. Why? - Hebrews 10: 1 5-16. The standards of Christians are very different from the standards of the World.

Earlier, in chapter 4, Paul had stated that his intent was not to shame the Corinthian Believers but to warn them. Here in verse 5, he clearly says his intent is to shame them. The whole situation had already shamed them, he wanted them to wake up and realize what they had done to themselves.

To the group of believers who were so sure that they had received superior wisdom - Paul tosses out a very sharp pointed question just dripping with sarcasm: "Is it possible that there is nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute between believers?"

In verse 6, "in front of unbelievers." The Church in Corinth is airing it's dirty laundry in public so that all can see. Consider this for a moment - the fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. A Christian who is being led by the Holy Spirit will have some, if not all, of these fruits evident in their life. When one Christian takes another Christian before the civil magistrate - what fruits are being presented to the unbelievers who are watching?

We today are much like the Christians in Corinth. The Corinthian believers were acting as though they had no concept of who they were in Christ Jesus. They were acting just like they had lost all perspective of the Christian Community and the coming age. In light of the soon to come New Heaven and New Earth - every one of these earthly disputes are very trivial matters - And it almost seems absurd that we would be suing one another over any of it.

The absurdity of the whole thing really comes to light - when we consider that in the coming age - we Christians will be judging the very world before whom we are now taking all of our trivial matters - and asking them to pass judgment on them. This whole process loudly proclaims a lie as to who we are in Christ Jesus.

And since it is being done in the presence of unbelievers - the very thing that is intended to be presented as God's alternative to their sinful lifestyle is all but trashed - and their hope is dashed - All because of the lie we are allowing to be lived out before them.

#1 - We need to understand who we are in Christ Jesus.

We need to try to remember that God is preparing us to participate in the judgment of this world and fallen angels. We need to be careful that our priorities don't become warped by placing too much value on the things of this world. We need to be careful in taking legal action in the pursuit of "rights" and the "pursuit of property", especially property of this world.

#2 - This text is dealing with matters as between two Christian Believers.

It doesn't address the Christian who has been wronged by a non-believer. There are other New Testament text which help govern this situation, but let it be said in this message - for a Christian to take even a non-Christian to civil court should be a last resort. We should give some consideration as the Fruit we display in our lives.

#3 - Every Christian Believer has the potential to have the "mind of Christ."

Every Christian Believer has the promise of having the Holy Spirit to explain things to us and to guide us. Rise up and stop being a part of the lie - we are capable of giving "good judgments" about most things. The more time we commune with Christ, the easier these "good judgments" will come. The more control of our life we give to the Holy Spirit, the easier it will be to give "good counsel."

1 Corinthians - 13 - Christians Suing Christians

Believer - rise up and walk as though you are a Child of God. Walk as though you have the Holy Spirit to help you with decisions. Walk as though you are being prepared by God to render "good judgments" to the world and to fallen angels.

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

There appears to be two great extremes -that have held Christians back from accomplishing the work of the Church. And - have kept Christians from walking in the Victory that God intends for us to enjoy. One extreme is those believe that they have reached such a relationship with God - that they can do certain things that would be sin for others - but it isn't sin for them? The other extreme is those who believe they are saved but because of the severity of their sins before they were saved - that they can never fully be forgiven. And certainly never could be used of God in His ministry to others.

When someone who believes the first extreme - gets into church leadership - they lead new believers into sin. When someone who believes the second extreme gets into church leadership - they keep others out of ministry.

Read 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 and make notes:

Verse 9&10 tie together with chapter 5 – and the first part of chapter 6 - "Don't you know that the wicked WILL NOT inherit the kingdom of God?" The wicked are those who will be judged by the Saints.

Part of the predetermined sentence for the wicked is that they "will not" inherit God's kingdom. If you are determined to be guilty of being wicked - the prescribed sentence is "no inheritance in the kingdom of God.

This text is a Warning! - A warning to the Believers. If the person claiming to be a Believer - persist in living a life just like the wicked person - then this person IS NOT going to inherit the kingdom of God. If you live the lifestyle of the wicked - then there is no church membership - no religious affiliation, no profession, no amount of good works - that can save you from being kept out of inheriting the kingdom of God.

1 Corinthians – 14 – Warning & Reminder

Too many people today who are members of the church - are practicing religion - instead of practicing Holy Lifestyles. There are too many people today who go ahead and do things they know are wrong - thinking God will overlook it because He loves them - Or because they show so much kindness - Or participate in enough religious activities - Or do enough good works.

This text doesn't have any qualifiers - that say those who live a wicked lifestyle will not inherit the kingdom of God - Except those who _____ (you fill in the blank). It says the wicked Will Not Inherit.

This is one of those text where people begin to take sides and spend so much time debating and trying to convince the other side they are wrong - that they frequently miss the more important message. Those who believe that we can get saved and then lose our salvation - use this text to point out what will happen when we lose our salvation - and begin to live again as a wicked person. Those who believe that we can never lose our salvation - point to this verse and say that if a person who claims to be a Believer continues to live a wicked lifestyle, - then they were never a believer and as such will not inherit the kingdom of God.

I certainly do have an opinion and a belief about which of these is true - whether you can lose your salvation or not. But that isn't the message in this lesson, - so let's not allow ourselves to get stuck in that debate. Let's seek the message God has for us right now.

Just for this lesson, - let's accept that there are probably some people who are on each side of this lose or can't lose your salvation issue. Let's agree to leave the other person where they are, just for this lesson. Let's make sure we hear the Warning being sounded in this text.

Regardless of whether we believe this person has lost their salvation - or whether this person was never really saved at all - The Warning is that if we live a wicked lifestyle - We WILL NOT inherit the kingdom of God. If we insist on living a wicked lifestyle - and refuse to give it up - Then be assured that a major part of the sentence for such a decision on our part is that we Will Not inherit the kingdom of God.

1 Corinthians – 14 – Warning & Reminder

I do believe there is some importance in whether you believe you can lose your salvation or not. But do you see the importance of hearing and understanding this warning - Regardless of which side of that issue we are on? Those on both sides of the lose your salvation issue need to hear and understand and respond to this Warning!

There are consequences for our actions. There Is A Penalty For A Wicked Lifestyle! Whether we believe we are saved or not!

A Wicked lifestyle will prevent us from inheriting the kingdom of God.

There is another tie to the previous chapter. The "wicked" are again defined - the six sins from chapter 5 are listed again, but there are also 4 more added. "Sexually immoral, idolaters, greedy, drunkards, slanderers, and swindlers" have been identified before. Here is added "adulterers, male prostitutes, homosexual offenders, and thieves."

The word "adulterers" means exactly what it says and we don't need to belabor it. An "adulterer" is a married person who has sexual relations with someone other than their marriage partner.

"Thieves" doesn't require explanation either. People who continue to take things that do not belong to them, are living a wicked lifestyle - and these people Are Not going to Inherit the Kingdom of God.

Let's pause here for just a moment – and restate something that has been said before. Just because someone does something one time, doesn't make them to be that particular thing.

My wife and I built one house. We planned it, we designed it, we were the general contractor for a portion of it, and we did all the actual work on the rest of it. One time we did this. Did we build "a house?" - Yes! Are either of us or both us "Home Builders?" - No! Neither of us are a "builder. It is not the lifestyle we live. We don't build houses!

1 Corinthians – 14 – Warning & Reminder

Just because a person stole something one time. Even if they got caught, paid a penalty, served time in jail. That one time, does not make them a "thief." The person who continues to steal - who lives the lifestyle of a thief - is a thief .

The person who one time committed "adultery" - is not an adulterer. The person who continues a lifestyle of committing adultery is an adulterer.

What if a person had stolen on several occasions in the past. They had lived the lifestyle of a thief - but they quit that lifestyle - and haven't participated or practiced that lifestyle for several years now - Are they still a thief?

Is it that once you are a thief - you are always a thief? Is it that once you tell a lie, you are a liar - and will always be a liar? Is it that once you kill someone, you are a murderer - and will always be a murderer? In the mind of some people – the answer to these questions is “YES!” But, thanks to God's grace – this is not the Truth!

This principle applies to every one of these definitions of the "wicked" persons. Many of us have been taught to say, "I'm just a sinner - saved by grace." At face value, this sounds so humble. But this is a lie! If we are Saved - then we are no longer a Sinner! The person who lives the lifestyle of sin- is a Sinner. The person who did sin in the past, even a great deal of sin, in the past, - But who no longer lives that life of sin – IS NOT A SINNER!

If we are Saved - then we are A Saint! A Saint who sins occasionally - But we Are Not A Sinner!

Have you considered this little "lie" was started by Satan to make us sound humble but to actually keep us from the reality of who we are in Christ Jesus! Sinners Are Not going to Heaven. The Redeemed are going to Heaven. Which are You?

Now, let's get back to the text and these other words which do need to be discussed: "Male prostitutes" and "homosexual offenders" need a little of our attention. They don't need attention from the standpoint that people don't understand what the words mean. They need attention because of the way people try to justify these lifestyles.

1 Corinthians – 14 – Warning & Reminder

When the Roman empire defeated the Greek empire, - one of the damaging things the Roman empire acquired - was the practice of male homosexuality. Many of the Greek high ranking soldiers had routinely hired young males to travel with them and be a mistress to them. Some historians believe this lifestyle on the part of the Greek army played a significant part in the downfall of a once great empire. The practice spread into the now Greco-Roman empire.

There was another problem that was more unique to the Christian Believers in that area. Do you remember that many of these Believers in Corinth had been convinced that they had somehow received very special knowledge, insight, and wisdom? Many of them believed they were at some superior spiritual plane than all the other Believers?

There was a teaching that was beginning to spread - which taught that once you reached a certain spiritual level as a Christian, - that nothing you did with or to your physical body would matter - because you are now in a spiritual plane rather than the physical. This was allowing some of the Christian Believers to think that since they had achieved this higher level of Christianity - it really didn't matter that their bodies might engage in homosexual activities – and this had become a means of making extra money. This lifestyle would certainly be wrong if they were not saved - and even if they were saved but not at this high spiritual level. Thus, the warning to the Corinthian Believers is needed.

After the warning - or reminder - that those who live wicked lifestyles will not inherit the kingdom of God - the Holy Spirit, through the Apostle Paul, - wanted the Corinthian Believers - and those today - to realize - these actions are wicked – period. That there isn't a level of spiritual growth where this ceases to be wicked.

1 Corinthians – 14 – Warning & Reminder

Let's take a little inventory here:

There are some -

who in the past committed sexual immorality -

who have committed idolatry -

who have committed adultery -

who have committed homosexual sins -

who have stolen -

who have been greedy -

who have been drunkards, with one substance or many

who have been a slanderer -

who have been a swindler -

And if we were still living that same lifestyle - then we could be certain - that we would not inherit the kingdom of God.

Verse 11 begins the "Good News" concerning this. "That is what some of you WERE! Praise the Living God - that is not what we are today! That's a past tense statement. That is what I once was - But glory to God - I am not that today! We have been Washed - we have been Sanctified - we have been Justified. We have been "washed" and all the filth of our previous lifestyle is cleansed from us.

Being Washed is an important Biblical principle and doctrine for the Christian.

James 4:8 pleads with sinners to cleanse themselves by drawing near God and His Word.

1 John 1: 7 says the blood of Christ Jesus cleanses us from all sin.

John 15:3 Jesus said, "You are already clean because of the Word I have spoken to you."

Hebrews 9: 14 says it is the blood of Christ that will cleanse our consciences.

Revelation 1: 5 declares that it was Jesus who washed the sins away from the Believer with His own blood.

In Ephesians 5:25-26 Husbands are instructed to cleanse their wives by washing them with the Word of God.

And it isn't Just that we have been "washed" and had the filth of our previous lifestyle cleansed from us - What's more - We have been "sanctified." This means that we have been "made holy" and have been "set apart for holy purposes."

1 Corinthians – 14 – Warning & Reminder

Our flesh cries out "how could someone who has done the things that I have done ever be used for Holy Purposes?" "If you just knew what I have done, then you would know that I have defiled myself forever." I have to confess, that my flesh just might agree with your flesh - I find some sins just plain disgusting - And wonder how God could ever use someone who has done that. But I have also wondered how God could possibly choose to use someone who has failed Him as many times as I have. Not because I commit the ugliest of sins - but because I fail Him so often.

My flesh, and your flesh, doesn't know everything - and our flesh doesn't understand everything. God's Word says we have not only been washed and cleansed from our sinful lifestyle - but we have been "sanctified" which means we have been set apart for holy usage. I don't confess to understand how God can do this. But I do believe it because it's in His Word. And I accept it because He says so.

Jesus prayed in what many call His High Priestly prayer John 17:17, "Sanctify them by the truth; Your Word is truth." 2 Timothy 2:21 says "If a man cleanses himself ... he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work."

We have not just been "washed" - and just been sanctified – we have been "Justified." Being "justified" is some of the most glorious truth we can get hold of as a Believer. If God had stopped at "washed and sanctified" - then many would say that I was washed alright, - and I have been set apart for holy purposes - but I am a Saint who is guilty of sin - I am a Holy Person who is guilty of sin. Please don't miss this - to be "justified" means that we have been made innocent - We have become as though we were never guilty of that sin in the first place. That's what being "justified" means. God knows we come to Him as an imperfect being. God knows that we are way short of His Glory. But He takes our Faith in Him - and counts it as righteousness.

When we can finally grasp this principle, it will change our life – it will change the way we pray!

1 Corinthians – 14 – Warning & Reminder

The filth of our old lifestyle has been washed from us. We have been made Holy and designated to be used for Holy purposes from here on out. And we have been made as innocent as if we had never ever committed that sin in the first place - Not even one time. And all of this - has been done in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. And it has been done in the Power of the Holy Spirit. It hasn't occurred because of our works or accomplishments. It hasn't occurred because of the things we Don't Do. It is by Grace that we have been Saved - And that Grace was extended to us through Faith.

Believers, stop being deceived about wickedness being acceptable. Believers, stop deceiving others into thinking wickedness is acceptable. Believers, stop making a false confession about who you are.

A true confession of a Christian:

“I was a sinner”

“I am saved by Grace”

“I have been cleansed from my sins” "

“I have been set apart for God's purposes”

“I have been made as innocent - as if I had never sinned”

“I am useful to the Kingdom of God.”

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

My generation will probably always be remembered in history as the generation of the "sexual revolution." My generation coined phrases like "make love not war" - And "free love." It's more than 40 years after such slogans began being thrown around - and many of my generation now have tremendous regrets - concerning the "sexual revolution" of our generation.

Maybe that's a major reason the message in this lesson is so important for us as church to hear. Many believers skip over this text. There are those who feel this section is a repeat of what has already been stated because sexual immorality in the previous list includes adultery. And there are others who feel this section doesn't seem to fit in with this text.

The Believers in Corinth were first told to remove an incestuous man from the local church. This was a case they had failed to "judge properly. " Then they were told there was another situation where they had failed to judge properly – it was the case of the two believers who were suing one another in the civil courts. Then they are warned to turn away from a number of sinful lifestyles and activities which included sexual immorality .

Read 1 Corinthians 6:12-14 and make notes:

Apparently, the Holy Spirit feels that enough "has not been said" concerning the issue of sexual immorality. Two words that seem to dominate this current passage are the words "sexual immorality" and "body."

Two passages that seem to highlight the problem area : "the body is not meant for sexual immorality" (v13) - and "he who engages in sexual immorality sins against his own body" (v18). This text should not be just skipped over because the subject of sexual immorality has already been covered. In this text the concern is not with sexual immorality in general but with sexual immorality where it involves one who has united themselves with Christ Jesus.

1 Corinthians - 15 - Honor God With Our Body

Some in the Christian community were going to prostitutes and they were arguing for their "right" to be able to do this. Their attitude was something like this; Since they were of such a high place in the spiritual realm and relationship with Jesus Christ - then it did not matter what they did with their physical body. This section of the text that so many want to skip over is an important address to this line of thinking.

The real issue is not one of ethical behavior – or of moral attitude. The real issue is one of the gospel itself. This erroneous belief among the Corinthian believers has given them a false and damaging view of "freedom in Christ."

Verses 12-14 argues directly against the false idea that it is okay for Believers to engage in sexual immorality. Verse 12 points out the distortion of their Christian freedom. Verses 13-14 point out the distortion of their understanding of their human body. "The body is FOR the Lord, and the Lord is FOR the body."

Just like in the two previous sections on this subject, - the Holy Spirit, through Paul comes out arguing. The picture is one of the bell ringing and one boxer comes quickly toward his opponent already throwing punches - "he comes out fighting."

In this text, it is interesting that the Holy Spirit doesn't attack their sinful behavior - but He attacks their distorted theology which says this immoral behavior is "okay." The Corinthian believers had made their slogan - "everything is permissible for me. "

This is one of the many "half-truths" Satan has managed to slip into the Christian community. The truth is that "in Christ all things are permissible. " But when you leave out the "in Christ" then it is no longer true.

Do you remember in the O. T. when David took his soldiers into the temple and ate the bread that had been set aside for Only The Priest? Because David was being led by God, it was permissible for him to do something that was not permissible for others. Regardless of how hungry he had become, if he were not being led of God, this would not have been permissible.

1 Corinthians - 15 - Honor God With Our Body

When we are "in Christ Jesus" and being led by God. Would God ever lead us to do something that is immoral? NO! We might very well be allowed to do some things while being "in Christ" that we would NOT be allowed to do when we are not "in Christ. " But this would never be immoral actions!

The real question is not one of "rights. " The real question is not whether an action is "lawful", "right", "permissible" - or even "all right." The question is whether this action is good and does it benefit anyone.

For the world it might immediately be interpreted to ask whether it is of benefit "to me." But for the Christian, the whole of the N.T. teaches us to ask whether it is of benefit to "those around me."

Paul makes an significant statement. While I am experiencing freedom in regards to all things, "I will not be mastered by any THING. " It was true in that day just like it is today. The majority of people who are arguing for the "right" - or that they have the "freedom" to do certain things - and to participate in certain immoral lifestyles - in actuality have become "a slave" to that lifestyle. They do not have freedom where it is concerned at all. Rather than having authority over it, they have become a slave to it.

Some believe V13-14 make an abrupt change from V12. I believe this is just a clarification of what has been stated concerning authority, rights, and freedom. Food is made for the stomach, a part of the body. The stomach, a part of the body, is made for food. God is going to destroy both food and the stomach.

God is going to do away with a particular part of the body, - but God IS NOT going to do away with the Body. The Body IS NOT made for sexual immorality. The purpose of the Body IS for the Lord. And the Lord Is for the Body. God, who has raised Christ from the dead - Will raise up our Body also .

That part of my body that takes in, digest, and takes nutrition from the things of this world will be taken from my body. For I will no longer digest or take nutrition from anything of this world. I will digest things of God and take my nutrition directly from Him.

1 Corinthians - 15 - Honor God With Our Body

God IS going to Raise Up my body. How then, should I treat my body? Knowing that God is going to Raise Up this body, how then should I take care of it?

There are those who like to take the principle that God is going to destroy the stomach and say that all physical appetites are pretty much the same. They feel the physical appetite for sex is not different from the appetite for food. This conclusion is "dead wrong. "

The Body IS NOT destined for destruction. The resurrection of Christ's body is our evidence that the Body is destined to be raised up. And we have the promise of God that He will do the same for our Body. It is a serious error in philosophy and theology to talk about sex as an appetite. The appetite of the stomach causes us to receive nutrition when that appetite is fed.

There is no nutrition received, or given, when sex is engaged. Sex is about relationship. Our relationship with God is destined to continue and increase and to become even more intimate after our bodies are raised up.

Good philosophy and good theology will NOT equate our food activities with sexual activities. We Christians need to make sure that we understand this and that we are able to explain it to others around us. Satan is working feverishly in continuing to tell the world and as many Believers as he can that sex just doesn't matter.

Read 1 Corinthians 6:15-17 and make notes:

1 Corinthians - 15 - Honor God With Our Body

These verses argue against prostitution. We need to understand that prostitution is a distortion of intercourse as designed by God. And when it involves a Christian then it is also a distortion of the Conversion experience. For two people to "become one flesh" - and to be "joined to the Lord so as to become one with him in spirit" - are both mutually exclusive relationships. There isn't any place for third parties in either relationship. If indeed you are a "born again" person, then you are a member of the Body of Christ. If you have become "one with Christ," do you dare to take the "body of Christ" and join it with a prostitute?

Some years ago, a woman began to have some health problems. She went to the doctor and after a series of test - she was given the name of a disease that she had. Since she had never heard of this disease, she asked the doctor "what is it" and "how did I get it." The doctor explained to her the nature of the disease and said to her that this disease is only found among women who have lived the life of a prostitute. Through her tears she explained to the doctor that she was a virgin when she married and that she had never been unfaithful to her husband. She wasn't aware of any infidelity on her husband's part either.

The husband was called in and the doctor explained the disease to him. He confessed to having involved himself with several prostitutes. Now it seemed, - because of this unacceptable union on his part, that he had not only defiled his clean and wholesome partner, but he had destroyed her hopes of good health for the remainder of her life. If this man had ever been asked, "Would you like for your wife to unite herself with a prostitute?" - I'm sure he would have answered, "Never! - or maybe even "God forbid. "

Do we as Christians ever stop to think what kind of defilement we may be bringing to the Body of Christ after we "unite ourselves" with someone other than Christ or something other than Christ? Would we like to take a part of the Body of Christ and make it part of the body of a prostitute? The KJV says, "God forbid!" the NIV says, "Never!"

While this passage does address the physical union, the whole passage is concerned with our relationships and spiritual unions. When we unite ourselves with Christ, we become one with Him in Spirit. Do we dare become one "in spirit" with anyone or anything else?

1 Corinthians - 15 - Honor God With Our Body

Read 1 Corinthians 6:18-20 and make notes:

These verses just come right out and "forbids" sexual immorality among believers. On a theological basis, it is a "sin against their bodies. " And as believers, we do not belong to ourselves but we belong to God because of His "divine purchase." This may well be one of the most important theological passages in the whole New Testament concerning the human body.

This passage should forever lay to rest the dualistic attitude that has been erroneously called "Christian" - which calls for the body to be rejected, subdued, or indulged - because it is of no significance, and neither is it a hindrance to those who are of "real salvation" - because that is only a matter of the soul. Consider this logic for a moment. Sexual immorality is a sin against a person's own body more so than against the body of the other person. Our body is not our own, but it is the Lord's. Our body is FOR the Lord. When we commit sexual sins, we sin against something that belongs to the Lord, something that is meant FOR the Lord.

Surely, we can understand why the simple and plain instruction "Flee From Sexual Immorality." Don't just move away from it. Get away from it as quickly as you can. Get help to get away from it if you need help. To "Flee from" it means that we shouldn't waste any time getting ourselves away from sexual immorality.

Our last "do you not know" of this passage. Surely, you do know that your Body is "a temple" of the Holy Spirit. In chapter 3 we are collectively called "God's Temple."

1 Corinthians - 15 - Honor God With Our Body

God, the Holy Spirit, is within every Believer. This body of ours, was purchased by God at a great price. He has chosen to make this body of ours "a temple" for Himself. Therefore, let us honor God with our body. Our goal cannot be to totally rid ourselves of this body, so that we can finally become some spiritual being. Our goal cannot be to totally deny every aspect of our body so that we can become such a spiritual Christian. Our attitude cannot be that it just doesn't matter what happens to our body or what we do with it. We must not fall into the lie which says, "we're getting a new one anyway." Our Goal MUST BE to Honor God with this body!

Did you notice that this passage doesn't say that God is going to destroy our ears? Should we be practicing and training our ears what kinds of things to listen to? Did you notice that this passage doesn't say that God is going to destroy our mouth?" Should we be practicing and training our mouth, what kinds of things to say? Not our hands, nor our feet? Should we be practicing and training our hands what kinds of things to do? Should we be practicing and training our feet what kinds of places to go?

And the analogy can go on in regards to all parts of this body. Let us Honor God with Our Body!

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group: