



Christian Living



CHRISTIAN LIVING

Many Christians are confronted with problems in their individual lives that could be helped by studying the Apostle Paul's advice to the Corinthians on practical Christian living. The Church at Corinth was sadly lacking in character development, and it is in this sense that the Corinthian brethren were called "babes" and "carnal" (1 Cor. 3:1). They were deficient in Christian common sense and the practical application of Scripture in their lives. In the first epistle, the sermon on love is the pivotal chapter (1 Corinthians 13). Paul admitted in 1 Corinthians 1:5,6 that the brethren possessed a considerable amount of knowledge, for he said, "In every thing ye are enriched by him [Jesus], in all utterance, and in all knowledge; Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you." They clearly had an intellectual understanding of doctrine and the ability to express and expound truth, but they needed development in other areas.

The Corinthians were Greeks, and the problem with the Greeks as a people in Paul's day was that they sought wisdom. (With the Jews, the stumbling block was the doctrine of the Cross

and the vicarious sacrifice of Christ.) The Greek nation was steeped in the philosophy of Aristotle, Plato, and Socrates, and it excelled in oratory, Demosthenes being an example. Thus the wisdom of men and of systematized theology was very attractive to the Greeks as a race, but the Apostle Paul did not wish to cater to this development. In fact, he purposely came not with enticing words and a display of worldly wisdom (1 Cor. 2:4). He asked, "Where is the wise? ... hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" (1 Cor. 1:20). Among God's people, "not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called" (1 Cor. 1:26). The world by wisdom does not know God, and no flesh can glory in the presence of God (1 Cor. 1:21,29).

Knowledge not properly acted upon tends to puff up, whereas love edifies, builds up (1 Cor. 8:1). On the subject of knowledge and understanding, Paul pursued a different method in his first epistle to the Corinthians than he did subsequently in the Book of Hebrews. Here he was not downgrading knowledge, for he said in this same epistle, "Howbeit we speak wisdom" to those who are perfect, comparing spiritual things with spiritual things (1 Cor. 2:6,13). Love seeks wisdom. In other words, both are needed: love and wisdom.

This first epistle to the Corinthians is based primarily on reports Paul received through direct correspondence from some of the brethren there in Corinth. In explaining the problems and in giving answers and solutions, he had to treat certain very sensitive issues, some of which we will consider.

The house of Chloe informed Paul about divisions that existed in the Church at Corinth. While some were saying, "I am of Paul," others were saying, "I [am] of Apollos," "I [am] of Cephas [Peter]," or "I [am] of Christ" (1 Cor. 1:11,12). This spirit was wrong and divisive. Those in the class who had a missionary zeal and who were emotionally inclined probably favored Paul's preaching. Although the Scriptures do commend Apollos as a man full of faith, the Greeks held him in high esteem because of his oratorical abilities (Acts 18:24,25). Those with a Jewish background tended to prefer the Apostle Peter's message and leadership. Of course there is nothing wrong with the apostles Paul and Peter or with Apollos or with Christ, for all four are spoken of favorably in Scripture. The error was in saying, "I am *of* Paul" instead of "I am *with* Paul." What was wrong with the expression "I am of Christ"? The implication was that only those particular individuals were of Christ and the others were not.

Instead of this independent spirit on the part of a few, the entire Church should have said, "We are of Christ." The criticism of the Corinthians was that they held themselves aloof, whereas their attitude should have been, "Of him [God] are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Cor. 1:30).

Even Christ is second to God the Father. It is true that Paul, Apollos, and Peter were guided by divine providence, but they were merely ministers under Christ, who is under God (1 Cor. 11:3). Although Christians are not to put their faith in man or in man's leadership, they should recognize those whom God sends. Paul, who discouraged any from following him in an improper or inordinate sense, wished the brethren to recognize that while he started various ecclesias in his gospel work and evangelism, Apollos came along later as a "waterer." Paul's words are significant: "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one" (1 Cor. 3:6-8). In other words, Paul put Apollos on the same level as himself. This generosity of spirit is commendable and very becoming, for it shows

the character and humility of Paul. Although he was an apostle and Apollos was not, both were constructive servants to the Church. Paul was, as it were, a father, and Apollos was a builder, yet Paul told Christians to take heed how they build on Christ, the foundation (1 Cor. 3:9,10).

The lesson is that *God* gives the increase. Paul spoke very plainly and specifically referred to himself so that the brethren would put their faith not in man but *in God*. If individuals could look above their problems and difficulties and see that their leadership is of God, the realization or perspective would put all on a communal basis with a proper relationship of each in the family of God. However, a spirit of pride and self-complacency crept into the Church, so that the brethren judged even the Apostle Paul, the very one who had brought the gospel to them. But Paul wrote, "All things are yours; Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours" (1 Cor. 3:21,22). If we, as Christians, can grasp the thought of God's providence in our lives and of our relationship to each other in reaching our goal, then life and even death, that is, the present and the future, are in our hands. "Ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's" (1 Cor. 3:23).

Another situation in Corinth that required action is stated in 1 Corinthians 5:1, "It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you," namely, "that one should have his father's wife." And those in the Church, instead of mourning, were "puffed up" in their false concept of love, glorying not to their good (1 Cor. 5:2). Christians know of the mercy of God and of His goodness, but the danger is in not realizing that God's love is a *principled* love. When the incident took place back there of one having his father's wife in intimacy, the Corinthian Church, instead of recognizing the sin and shunning it, had such love and compassion that they precipitously exercised benevolence on the part of this individual and kept him within their midst. Their open-mindedness and charity were damaging to their characters and spiritual welfare. As Paul said, "Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven [sin] leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven.... For even Christ our pass-over is sacrificed for us" (1 Cor. 5:6,7). He wrote to them "not to keep company" with "any man that is called a brother" if that one was "a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner" (1 Cor. 5:11). With such an individual, they were not even to eat. And they were "to deliver such an

one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, [so] that the [his] spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” (1 Cor. 5:5). Thus the Apostle Paul advised the Church to “put away” (that is, disfellowship) the wicked person lest the standard of the group be lowered and the individual’s repentance and recovery be hindered (1 Cor. 5:13).

It is true that Jesus is able to save to the uttermost those who come to him, but in cases of gross immorality, the sinner must be made aware of the enormity of his crime (Heb. 7:25). Fortunately, the individual in Corinth was later recovered—but *after* having been separated from the Church and experiencing a period of isolation on the advice of the apostle (2 Cor. 2:6-8). Had the Corinthians not followed Paul’s counsel, the individual may never have come to his senses and repented.

Another problem confronting the brethren in Corinth was their going before secular law courts, before the *unconsecrated*, with brother accusing brother. Sarcastically, Paul reminded the Corinthians that those who are to be the future judges and priests of the earth should be able to judge problems within their midst. Was it not unbecoming to go before the civil law courts in

connection with problems that could be solved in a better way?

Hear what Paul said:

“Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?”

“Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?”

“Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?”

“If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church.”

“I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren?”

“But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers.” (1 Cor. 6:1-6)

Promiscuous behavior was also a problem with some of the Corinthian brethren. Legalized prostitution was practiced in the area, and in fact, Corinth was considered the “sin city” of that age. The Corinthian brethren who had difficulty forsaking their

former practices justified their liberties with distorted reasoning, as follows. Since God created the human body to be attracted by the opposite gender, and since this desire is so strongly implanted by nature in the human organism, the desire requires satisfaction to the same degree that the stomach needs food (1 Cor. 6:9-13a). Moreover, the Corinthians used a familiar proverb to justify their conduct: “Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats.” However, the apostle counseled that God would destroy “both it and them”; that is, God would destroy *both the body and the soul* of this class in “second death” (Rev. 2:11). The Corinthians thought they could escape contamination by reasoning and justifying their course, but Paul countered their argument.

“... Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body.

“And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power.

“Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid.

“What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh.

“But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.

“Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.

“What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost [Spirit] which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

“For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.” (1 Cor. 6:13b-20)

Paul was saying, “Is it not true that he who is joined to a harlot is one and the same with the harlot?” In examining the Genesis account, the Corinthians evidently reasoned that since Adam and Eve were one, then a physical embrace with the ensuing entwining of bodies was justified. Using Genesis 2:24, “they [two] shall be[come] one flesh [body],” they falsely reasoned that a physical embrace with a harlot was justified by Scripture and that thus the two naturally became one body. But Paul refuted their reasoning by showing the true lesson, namely, that the Christian is joined to the Lord and is, therefore, one spirit with the Lord. There is one spiritual body or temple, and Christians have been bought with a price. Their association and

fellowship, while very intimate, are on a *higher* level. Immorality, specifically fornication, is not to be condoned or justified by the Corinthian line of reasoning.

For some Christians who were conscientious and wanted to live in conformity with God's Word, a question implied and directed to the Apostle Paul was, in substance, Can the consecrated Christian marry and have sexual relations? His answer was, "It would be good for a man to remain single and not to touch a woman in the intimate sense. Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let them marry" (1 Cor. 7:1,2 paraphrase). In other words, Paul recommended that if possible, Christians should contain themselves and remain single, yet it would be better to marry than to burn with desire (1 Cor. 7:9).

It is well to note that the original implied question was not, "Can married couples have children?" The apostle did not say that conjugal love is only permissible with childbearing intent in mind. No, this question is left open. Traditionally, the Roman Catholic Church has frowned on the use of any preventive device, citing an Old Testament incident where an individual named Onan employed a common primitive method of contraception

(Gen. 38:8-10). Church officials pointedly call attention to the expressed displeasure and wrath of the Lord on this occasion. However, they usually fail to mention and to note that Onan deceived Tamar and refused to follow a custom which later became part of the Mosaic Law and was thus obligatory for a Jew (Deut. 25:5-10). The custom required a natural brother to raise up seed on behalf of his deceased brother if the previous marital union was childless. This law was given lest the dead man's posterity cease. What constituted the sin of Onan were both the deception practiced and the refusal to perform his fraternal duty.

In the past, Roman Catholics have viewed any interference with the natural procreative process, called *coitus interruptus*, as an act of murder and wanton destruction of life. However, the cessation of *potential* life and that of life itself are two quite different things. The Scriptures declare that life does not begin, or man does not become a living soul, until oxygen or the breath of life enters the lungs (Gen. 2:7). Protestants in general oppose the orthodox papal view, but they offer no rebuttal to the two main Catholic arguments. For this reason, we have momentarily digressed to offer an explanation. Protestants usually base their view on a solely humanitarian standard, and rarely indeed do

they cite the apostle's answer to the Corinthians. Let it be understood that our reasoning in no way justifies abortion as a means of planning parenthood. The only exceptions for abortion are the circumstances of rape, incest, or jeopardy of the life of the mother.

Returning to 1 Corinthians, we read, "Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband" (1 Cor. 7:3). After marriage, neither partner is to be unreasonable or to act arbitrarily or become frigid as respects the other until the mood strikes, but lest Satan gain a foothold, each should yield himself or herself to the other except for sickness or prayer or fasting for some particular reason (1 Cor. 7:4,5). If one should deprive the other of legitimate rights, such a fraudulent marriage would tend to direct the individual concerned to look elsewhere for satisfaction. This "due benevolence" should also dictate somewhat controlled emotions so that a depraved, inordinate form of passion is not pursued into unnatural, perverted procedures to create new sensations. Each is to treat the other with respect, tenderness, and nobility and not behave as if the marriage license is a blank endorsement for intemperate and excessive conduct. This, we believe, is what the apostle was referring to when he spoke about the marriage bed

being “undefiled” (Heb. 13:4). Paul did not mean that conjugal love is prohibited but that moderation and control are to be exercised so that the baser passions do not become uninhibited.

The apostle noted that there are times when a mutual need exists by both parties, but the need does not always occur at the same time. However, in all fairness, when childbearing is specifically in mind, physical intimacy should be by mutual consent. Moreover, since children are the natural product of marriage, a clear understanding of each other’s intent should be thoroughly known before the contract is entered into, because for either one to deprive the other of having a child would be cruel indeed.

In view of the foregoing remarks pertaining to marriage, we conclude that parenthood planning is Scripturally permissible. In addition, the apostle laid down a general rule to be followed: “As the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk” (1 Cor. 7:17). If one is single at the time of consecration, the general advice is to remain single. If one is married, the advice is to remain married. Even with an unequally yoked marriage, let the unbelieving partner, that is, the unconsecrated one, initiate any action for separation (1 Cor. 7:12-16).

Paul touched upon other practical issues such as slavery, which was a burning controversy among Christians in the early Church. His counsel was not to agitate this issue. He did not advise that the Christian master should release and give full liberty to the Christian slave. Rather, his advice was that the Christian master should be a good master and the Christian slave should be a good slave. However, the slave was told, "If thou mayest be made free, use it rather"; that is, if the door of opportunity for freedom should open, it would be quite right to exercise that prerogative (1 Cor. 7:21).

Christians are admonished not to become deeply involved in social issues and thus be distracted into avenues of action that are away from the Christian living advised in God's Word. The primary activity in the Christian life should be witnessing for Christ. In God's due time, the Bible hope and promises for the betterment of mankind and for the solution of all the various issues, however important they might be, will be fulfilled.

Along another line, the apostle advised that as the body is one, having many members, so also is Christ. Many Christians, because they are not employed or recognized in a particular

avenue of service, wonder if they are being used (or even called) of the Lord. Paul's reasoning was as follows:

“If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

“And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

“If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?

“And if they were all one member, where were the body?” (1 Cor. 12:15-17,19)

Paul reasoned that we should each recognize our individual talents and not feel we are excluded from the body. Nor should we regard others in such an unfavorable light. Another criticism was, “The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you” (1 Cor. 12:21). The reason Paul gave is that God does not want any schism in the body. Each particular member has his or her own function, and all of the members working together in harmony make one body. Now we can see why Paul said in regard to the pivotal chapter, “Yet show I unto you a more excellent way” —he

showed the way of charity, of love, for one another in the body (1 Cor. 12:31).

“Charity [love] suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,

“Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;

“Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;

“Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.” (1 Cor. 13:4-7)

Charity never fails, whereas prophecies may fail, tongues may cease, and knowledge may vanish. Accordingly, Paul instructed the Christian to put away these “childish things,” for “now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity” (1 Cor. 13:8,11,13).

Frank Shallieu

The Keys of Revelation



**END TIME
PROPHECIES
REVEALED**

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