

Introduction

(Note: Throughout this series, we refer to 'charismatics' or 'true charismatics'. The latter are defined as those who deliberately teach a full Arminian philosophy and 'extra-Biblical' revelation held to be equal to scripture. We distinguish charismatics and 'old style' Pentecostals, although there is now little difference between them. All paraphrased interpretations are based on the meanings given in scripture, from the Greek)

PREAMBLE

First Corinthians is very much in use by Protestant churches today. Even Roman Catholics use it. The link between the two is charismaticism, a theoretical, extra-Biblical, theological system of thought. Both charismatic and Roman Catholic churches use the Epistle as a justification for their practices and beliefs. It is strange, because Paul wrote the Epistle to Christians who were *misbehaving*

! Somewhere along the way, then, people have misconstrued the letter (which is what an 'epistle' is). Note that 'charismaticism' has infected almost all churches with its biblical imprecision, or in many cases, its deceptions and errors. I advise local churches to check the very language they use, and even single words, because words really matter. Are yours biblical, or insinuated by charismaticism?

In First Corinthians are various instructions on how we ought to behave physically and spiritually. We find the spiritual gifts referred to - but the Biblical account is far superior to, and different from, anything taught by charismatics (Roman Catholics included). In chapter one, Paul begins by reminding the Corinthians who he was, and where he obtained his authority from. He rebuked them for having divisions before he tells them what God thinks of the meagre ideas of men!

The divisions spoken of here are **not the same** as the divisions found in the twentieth century, between charismatics and non-charismatics. The Corinthians knew true salvation, but their old ways kept creeping back into their lives (what many today call 'backsliding'). Thus, Paul was still

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able to refer to them as his beloved brethren. He shows us that 'backsliding' is not necessarily a sign of non-salvation.

Today, however, people are being falsely 'saved' through modern charismatic teaching, and **not by Jesus Christ**

. They are being 'saved'

to the charismatic cause

and not to the Body of Christ. There lies the basic difference - a chasm that cannot be crossed.

All of this is seen in the first chapter of First Corinthians. Throughout the whole Epistle we are reminded, time and again, that what counts is

scripture

,

not

what men teach. This is a timely counter to what is happening almost 2000 years after Christ's death.

One word keeps arising in my thoughts and preaching. It is the word **'Irrelevant!'** A great deal of modern preaching and teaching is 'irrelevant'. Why?

Because it is not Bible-based

. Today, preachers make Biblical words and phrases mean whatever they wish them to mean, though this personalised approach is not allowed by scripture itself. Interpretation must always arise from the text itself, not from our personalised ideas (2 Peter 1:20). We will look at this in later chapters.

For example, a comparison of what charismatics say about the spiritual gifts, and the interpretations they give to them, is nothing like what scripture actually says. This is appalling, and it cannot continue without opposition. In writing this series, as always, I hope to portray true doctrine to the faithful people of God. The First Book of Corinthians is a priority, simply because of the pressing needs of today.

Another word I am famed for using is **"Interesting!"**. Thus, I suggest that the student of Biblical writ should also examine the Book of Isaiah - it is

most

interesting, for it could have been written in our own time. In Isaiah you will find the

spirit

(idea) of charismaticism attacked without mercy by our Holy, Almighty God. So, Isaiah complements Corinthians in the most dynamic and fascinating way.

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As you read this study, remember: we want to see what **scripture** says, not what men say (and that includes anything I say). Very often, what they say is very similar to what scripture says, but with a twist. Such twists can go unnoticed, but they are ruinous. But, many Christians are very liberal, by not challenging these small deviations from truth. At times we shall examine words or phrases in detail, where this is necessary. Learn and understand, and be as amazed and delighted as I am at the breadth and beauty of God's word!

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

It is always a good idea to look at a Bible book against its natural setting in history, because it helps to show that the Bible was written in real time, for real people, in real places. When we forget all this, scripture becomes 'dry as dust', and we fail to see how it applies to us in our own time. The Bible really does speak to us. What, then, can we say about the Corinthians?

Well, the Corinthians were, in the main, very rich and spoilt. They had huge wealth and spent it on anything they wanted, both immoral and moral. Being built on an isthmus of land joining the major portion of the Roman province of Achaia (Greece) with the smaller portion at the southern end, almost an island, Corinth was a major centre of commerce and ideas, just 40 miles west of Athens. This large city was built on a main artery between Rome and the East, so it was used by the Roman army and traders alike. They preferred the dusty main road, to the relative dangers of the open sea.

Corinth was known for its massive rock formation - called the Acrocorinthium - rising 2000 feet out of the sea. It was so big at the top that a whole town was built upon it. There were two harbours, east and west, Cenchraea and Lechaem. Such was the importance of Corinth, it had ship tramways with wooden rails - smaller ships were hauled across land rather than be subjected to the dangerous waters around Greece. Nero attempted to cut a channel through the rock and failed, but the modern canal follows his exact route. Estimates of the number of inhabitants of Corinth range from 100,000 to three-quarters of a million. Today this huge symbol of ancient riches and power is reduced to a poor, insignificant village called Gortho.

Because of its vital geographic position, its inhabitants became very rich and powerful. Alongside the riches arose a sizeable slave population, plus numbers of freed slaves, who themselves had the opportunity to become rich. Because of its cosmopolitan nature, Corinth attracted the thinkers of the day, as well as many pagan congregations. All of this meant that Corinth was virtually *amoral*, for the people did whatever they wished, openly and as a way of

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life, just like today in the modern West. And some beliefs nurtured the idea that immorality was natural and good. Again, this is repeated in modern times.

The very name '*Corinth*' means '*satiated*', and it certainly lived up to its name! Indeed, two well-known phrases at the time sum up what foreigners thought of the Corinthians: a man who used **"*Corinthian words*"** was one who pretended to know more than he actually did in the realm of philosophy and literature; and **"*to Corinthianise*"** was a very polite Greek way of telling someone to '*go to the devil!*'

The city was destroyed by the Roman, Mummius Achaicus, in 146 BC. But, such was its potential, it was rebuilt as a Roman colony in about 46 BC. By the time of Paul, Corinth was thriving as robustly as ever. The temple of Venus was famous throughout the known world - it was massive. And old Corinth's temple of Aphrodite had at least 1000 'sacred' prostitutes.

Stalls were crammed along the walls of the temples, selling artefacts: small copies of the statues of gods and goddesses, in gold, silver, copper, clay... small shrines to take home to the children and wife... copies of pagan scrolls... and in the midst of all this institutionalised debauchery was a Jewish synagogue. Not that it helped Paul much, for like their counterparts in other areas, the Corinthian Jews tried to run him out of town as a troublemaker and an heretic, once they saw him gaining converts (most of whom were Greeks).

It was therefore quite an irony that after he was barred from the synagogue, Paul chose to preach right next door, in the house of Justus! Do not think that Paul must have been thick-skinned, either; it is recorded that he was afraid to go there. But, like other faithful men of God, he did what he had to do. He lived with Aquila and Priscilla for 18 months: they had been forced out of Rome by the Emperor Claudius. However, like Paul, they were tentmakers, so they were able to live by their craft.

Can you imagine what Paul must have experienced as he first entered this city (approximately in the mid fifties AD)? It was full of paganism and sexual immorality, publicly flaunted and quite natural to the people. They had more money than they knew what to do with, and their morals were worse than anything we see around us today. On top of that, Paul's own kinsmen, the Jews, hated him and wanted him to be destroyed, **and** he had to contend with the foremost philosophies of the day! Paul must have been some man!!

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Despite all the obstacles, Paul preached. He was scared - he admits to that - but he spoke out anyway. He spoke under the constant threat of imprisonment, beatings and death... where are such faithful preachers today? Yet he faithfully preached to the Jews. He also preached to gentiles, as the texts suggest. Most of the names mentioned are Latin, indicating that many of his converts must have been Romans/Greeks.

Now we know something of the background to Paul's preaching in Corinth, let us examine chapter one. The first few verses are charged with meaning, and they set the scene for the wise student of scripture. (Paul appears to have written a letter to the Corinthians *prior* to this one. He also appears to have written one *between* this one and the second. Both no longer exist).

Verse 1

1.

"Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthanes our brother,"

As you read these words, remember that they are the *English equivalents, transliterations*. What appears to be just an ordinary introduction is far more than that, as we shall now see, for Paul is here introducing himself and referring to his authority. It is fascinating material!

"Paul"

His name, which is Latin (he was both Jew and Roman), means 'small' or 'little'. This is why some think he was a small man. There is no actual evidence that he was small in size, although names in those days tended to be reflective of a person's characteristics.

"called"

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That is, he was selected by God and appointed to office. It is linked with the idea of 'elect'. Thus, Paul immediately positions himself before the Corinthians as one sent by God. He was not self-appointed as are today's so-called 'apostles', but he was **chosen by God** to perform appointed tasks.

"apostle"

An 'apostle' is one who is a delegate or a messenger, sent with specific orders. Paul has already indicated Who sent him - and later he tells us that his 'orders' are to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Note that there were more than 12 'apostles' in total. (see Article on 'Apostles'), but only 12 original Apostles.

"through"

Or, 'by'. This small word refers to the channel of an act. Paul says he is an apostle sent 'by' *"the will of God"*.

Because 'by' is the channel of an act, this means that

God

enabled him, not himself. This is very important to establish, and it later arises in connection with the various spiritual gifts. Today, many teachers, preachers and leaders ordain *themselves*

to do works for God, and demand or claim gifts. This is unscriptural.

It is common charismatic belief that anyone can do anything they wish within the churches. Anyone at anytime can 'try' pastorship; at another time they can 'try' teaching, healing, and so on. As the word 'by' tells us - **God's will** is the source of the act, not men. *(In another text we see that Christians are used as 'conduits' - Greek - by God. So, even then, we are not containers, but just 'pipes of passage' who have no authority or power of our own, just as a water pipe merely carries water and does not produce it!).*

"the will"

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What is the will of God? It means God's wishes or purposes. That is, His commands, precepts, choice, desire, pleasure; what He has in mind. How do we know the will of God in our lives? This is an oft-heard plea, but the answer is very simple. The will of God *generally* is found in scripture.

Thus, when you read scripture you will know the general will of God for *all* men. We can regard the *specific* will of God - what He wishes us to do on an individual level - as being 'fine tuning'. That is, God bases His will for our *personal* lives on what He says *generally*, in His word. When we are consistent in these things, faithful in the smaller things, He will give us more.

Everything we need to know about His will is found in scripture. God speaks to us through our thoughts and meditations on His word, and sometimes by others or by circumstances. But, all of these **MUST** be rooted in His word. The problem today amongst Christians (and those who consider themselves to be Christians), is that what they do and say is rooted **NOT** in scripture, but in extra-Biblical 'revelations', or in their personal wishes and desires (personalised interpretation).

The fact that they are *extra* to scripture tells us they are false. ***God does not (and cannot) act outside of His own declared word.***

The *more* we know of God's word (*knowledge* of what He says) the *more* we will come to realise His will in our lives (*understanding* what He says). This is the *complete opposite* of much modern teaching, which tells us to ignore scripture and to rely only on our experiences, in 'love'. Or, as so many ordinary Christians do – they interpret badly so that scripture is made to fit their particular view of life.

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"and Sosthenes our brother"

He was a Jew, his name meaning '*Saviour of his nation*'. He suffered beating and capture, just like Paul. Sosthenes was a 'brother', or fellow Believer, 'united by affection'... 'brother' being almost another word for 'love'. 'Brother' also means '*an associate in office*'

. Thus, Paul is

possibly

referring to him as an apostle - a word used to describe any great preacher, as we shall later see.

Verse 2

1.

"Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both their's and our's."

Note that Paul speaks to the 'church at Corinth'. He does not talk to the 'denomination' or to THE Church as a whole. Time and again in scripture, names of churches are simply **references to their geographical position**.

Even though Corinth was a big place, Paul wrote to

only one

'church'.

I live in a city which is about the same size as Corinth was. But, sadly, through partisan spirits and pride, the local (city-wide) church is just as divided as was the church at Corinth! Each is fierce to contain its own 'members' within its own confines! To go from one congregation of Believers to another is taken to be an insult, and pastors tend to be jealous to retain those they think are 'theirs'. It is seen as going from one local church to another (so-called 'spiritual gypsies'). But, it is not. It is simply going from one *section* of the *same* local church to *another* section! It is the

same

local church, not a different one.

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I remember saying to one irate Christian who wished to see me removed from 'her' church: "*Sorry, but I am your brother in Christ, whether you like it or not! One day we shall meet in heaven, whether you like it or not!*"

I told her that we both belonged to the same Church of Christ, as well as to the same local congregation of Believers, even if I attended a different 'church'. She did not like that!

"sanctified in Christ Jesus"

This means dedicated to God, or, purified in the Messiah; separated from one's past by Christ; 'saints' living by a holy principle. Implicit in this is obedience to God's word. As Christ said, 'if you love Me, you will do what I say'.

Christians often speak of 'sanctified music', 'sanctified ministry', etc., but there is no evidence of them being separated from the world, or even of being founded in Christ. This is because what is done is done outside of obedience to Christ's words. Note that our purification is effected 'in Christ' and not by our own efforts. This is consistent with our salvation, which has nothing at all to do with our own efforts, but is 'in Christ' and predestinated. Anything else is 'of works'.

"called to be saints"

This means 'invited' to salvation in the kingdom. It bears the idea of being invited to a grand feast or banquet. Lest some think this gives us freedom to 'choose Christ', it *also* means to be called out loud, by name. That is, elected by God. (Note, 'elect' or 'predestinated' are

not

the same as 'foreknown'). And to be elected by God means He

chooses

us out of others.

We do not choose Him

.

In other words, our 'invitation' to the 'banquet' of salvation is based entirely on God's prior selection or choice of guests and cannot be rejected, because it is by command of the King of

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kings. He knows each one who will be saved, by name, for He chose them, and so the invitation is only to those who are already chosen. This is seen to be a small thing in the eyes of Arminians - but how can total repudiation of God's precept be a minor deviation? Teaching either agrees with scripture, or it does not. There can be no middle ground based on personalised interpretation.

"saints"

What is a 'saint'? The word means *'holy thing'*. We are, then, *God's 'holy things'*. The word 'thing' is sometimes used in scripture to mean people; it is not a derogatory term. The rest of the verse continues (paraphrased):

"Along with everyone else, everywhere, who have called to the Messiah, Jesus our Master, for salvation. He is both their Saviour and ours."

Thus, there is a common bond between all Believers, regardless of mistakes, errors and even deliberate sins. Much as we might like to force retribution on those in error, it is not our concern, but is God's prerogative. On the other hand, we are called upon to judge others and to rebuke, exhort, etc. The two go hand in hand - but not in personal anger or hatred toward the wrongdoer, or if we are ourselves guilty of the same sins and do not repent.

As Christ is *'theirs and ours'* we have *no right* or mandate to exercise personal anger or vengeance. Beside, we each have our *own* pockets of sin (sometimes open and sometimes hidden), so we dare not exact punishment for personal reasons, for fear of having the same treatment ourselves, from God!

Sometimes, rebuke is used as a form of punishment. This is itself an error, for it tries to negate the need for *legitimate* discipline within the churches. Rebuke usually (but not always) means the use of hard words, especially when the one being rebuked has ignored previous warnings. The reason behind using hard words is *not* to force the wrongdoer to do whatever the rebuker says, but to bring the wrongdoer to a sense of sin, by use of the hard words. (Note that 'hard' does not mean 'harsh').

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Nor do hard words necessarily mean the use of personal anger. Once the hard words are given from a hard heart, or by one wishing personal vengeance, they become sinful manifestations of hatred. It is a mistake, then, to always think that hard words used in rebuke come from a hard heart, or from one who hates. Very often, hard words are avoided until they *must* be spoken - and even then the rebuker feels them strike through his own heart and mind like a knife, for he knows his own sinfulness before God. Nevertheless, this is what we

have to do

, at times.

Verse 3

1.

"Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ."

We commonly use words like 'grace' and 'peace' - but do we know what they really mean? Like the words 'salvation', 'faith', 'prayer', 'worship', etc., they are words used freely, but without any real knowledge or understanding.

"Grace"

The 'grace' here is the Greek ***charis***, which is obviously linked with the gifts. Grace is that which comes from God giving us joy, pleasure, delight, sweetness, charm, loveliness, and even grace of speech. It is also good-will, loving kindness, favour; that which keeps and strengthens and increases our faith and knowledge; 'grace' is that which urges us to practice Christian virtues; to thrive. It is a spiritual condition governed by God and is the proof of grace within us. It can also mean something like 'hello' - a simple greeting.

So, which meaning applies here? Paul does not wish them to lack in any spiritual gift, so he is wishing God's joy, etc., on the Corinthians, and the strengthening of their faith. Really, *every* meaning can apply in this instance, without fear of misinterpretation! True grace cannot be manufactured, but must arise from a spirit laden with the love of Christ.

"peace"

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Today, we do not use 'peace' as it ought to be used. Peace is not that false lull between people who try not to raise the dust. It is not the ignoring of error, so that we can get along with each other. It is deeper and more vital than that. 'Peace' is *harmony* between people. Scripture tells us that 'unity' is possible **only on**

the basis of truth of doctrine

- which is why Paul later urges the Corinthians to share the same beliefs. When there is harmony based on truth, the second set of meanings apply to 'peace': security, safety, prosperity (not necessarily financial wealth - mainly spiritual wealth) and

the 'Messiah's peace'

, or salvation.

When we have salvation we also have tranquillity, for we no longer fear God as the Judge of our souls. 'Peace' can also refer to our final heavenly state. Given the reason for Paul's letter to the Corinthians - strife between them - it is likely, then, that the interpretation of 'peace' is mainly concerned with harmony based on truth.

Both grace and harmony come from God, or ***theos*** (*i.e. the one true God, or the things of God. It can also mean Jesus Christ; whatever resembles God; God's representatives, or even magistrates and judges*) . We cannot, then,

'work-up' harmony by human effort (as is often attempted by various evangelical groups, or by foolish governments using law to 'join' people together) of 'unity'. True peace and true unity come only from God, via what He teaches and directly from His will, when we obey.

"Lord Jesus Christ"

'Lord', ***kurios*** (used frequently), means supreme master to whom all belongs; the possessor and disposer of something; the owner; one who controls people; king. It is also a title of honour and respect; God the Messiah.

'Jesus', ***iesous***, is *Joshua* or *Jehoshua*. It is a family name of Judah, and means '*Jehovah is salvation*' or '

son of God'

. Joshua or Jehoshua is rooted in

Jehovah

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, meaning 'the existing one' (a name full of majesty, and is akin to the magnificent name 'I AM'), and in *Yasha*, meaning to save or to deliver.

'Christ', ***Xristos***, means anointed, or son of God. So, the grace and peace Paul wishes upon the people comes from the one true God and from the Messiah (also God, the Existing One). The reference to being the 'Existing One' is a reference to God's self-existence, a proof of His uncreated absoluteness.

Verse 4

1.

I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ;

Paraphrase:

"I am grateful to my true God for you all the time, for the favours He gives you through Jesus the Messiah."

Verse 5

1.

That in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge;

Paraphrase:

"That in all manner of things He makes you spiritually rich - in all kinds of moral concepts and doctrine, and in all kinds of intelligent understanding of the Christian faith."

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It should be noted that the 'understanding' in this text means **advanced knowledge**, moral wisdom and right living. At times Paul bemoans the fact that Christians prefer to suckle on milk, rather than proceed to the adult food of meat. Many Christians never go beyond simple choruses, Gospel 'stories' and badly over-simplified popular 'theology' that is usually meaningless and contradictory. They then wonder how they can be deceived by false teachers... or by their own self-indulgence, bad theology, or indifference.

In saying this, Paul precedes his letter with a summary of what he is going to discuss. Although he is going to rebuke them, he prays that God will give them everything they need to live a solidly-doctrinal Christian life*, based on a deepening understanding of God's word. Note that it is **God** Who enriches us, *not* fellow men, or apostles, or great preachers, or even our own study of His word. Men can only point to the gift, they cannot make it or give it.

(Those who rebuke other genuine believers out of their own anger are not acting correctly; all rebuke must offer love and a desire to see the rebuked-one returned to God's true fold. This assumes, of course, that the rebuked one is saved. It is all part of real discipline – a process few churches use, though it is necessary).*

Verse 6, 7

1.

Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you:

2.

So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ:

Paraphrase:

"Just as (or, 'to the degree that') the witness of the Messiah was established (or, 'made firm') in you" (i.e. based in Christ), "Therefore you do not lack in any holy gift, as you patiently look for the revelation of Jesus Christ not known to you before."

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The words '*come behind*' means that nothing prevents running the race. It is important to understand what 'gift' means in this text. The word is **charisma**, and it has a number of possible meanings. They include:

a favour received without merit

(salvation comes into this category);

divine grace; faith, knowledge, holiness, virtue; pardon and salvation given by the merits of Christ and obtained by faith

(faith being itself a gift).

It can also mean, in a *few cases, extraordinary powers for service to the Church* (note well - NOT for one's own use or petty requirements, but for the whole Church), *given by God through the Holy Spirit.*

The word is rooted in the meaning,

'a favour from someone'

. Such gifts really are obviously extraordinary and not merely claimed.

Thus, the 'gifts' cannot be 'ordered down' by men, nor demanded in any sense. They are given by God in His own time and for His own purposes. They are NOT for one's personal use, whether public or private, but are given **solely** for the good of the whole Church of God. The '*revelation not known before*'

is NOT extra-Biblical. It simply means that the Corinthians did not previously know salvation, but now they do. Also note that gifts are given in 'measure' – their scope, strength and content depends on what God wishes to give. The

type

of gifts are also controlled by God. hence, some may be used to heal, some to speak wisdom, and so on. And, importantly, only some had the gift of tongues – a very rare gift found today for obvious reasons (easily available modern translation techniques).

Verse 8

1.

Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Paraphrase:

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"This same Christ shall keep on establishing you firmly until you have reached the goal (i.e. the purposes God has set out for you); so that you cannot be accused or charged when Christ judges men."

The term 'keep on establishing' is very similar to 'working out your own salvation' and it ties in with the previous idea of running a race to its end: the 'revelation' spoken of in the previous verse. It is this continuous striving (based on God's word) that prevents us being accused of laxity or falsity.

Verse 9

1.

God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

Paraphrase:

"The One, True God is worthy of trust. By Him you were called (elected) by name into the communion and intimate relationship of His beloved Son, our Master Jesus Christ."

We cannot get away from it: God elects or chooses those whom He wishes to be saved! He calls us by name, emphasising the fact that if God has chosen us by name (before the world began, as other texts tell us), we cannot ever choose Him. (See Article on Election). This is an irreducible fact of logic, no matter what Arminianism or any other cult wishes to cast at it.

Verse 10

1.

Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

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Paraphrase:

"Moreover, fellow believers, I beg you by all that our Master stands for, that you should all agree and teach the same thing, so that there shall not be schisms/dissensions amongst you. But, rather, that you should be strengthened and fitted together, complete, in the same understanding and reasoning and in the same resolve/intention/knowledge."

The original verse begins with the word 'Now'. This is a 'continuative', meaning that what is being said is based on what precedes it. Thus, we can legitimately interpret the word 'now'

as

'moreover'

or

'because of this'

. Paul is saying:

'because God is faithful and He wants you to have every good gift, I beg you to....'!

He is, then, urging the Corinthians to bend the knee to Almighty God, because of His promises. He promises all good things to those who obey.

Why interpret the words *"by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ"* as *'by all that our Master stands for'*?

Well, the word 'lord' means 'master' or owner. Also, whenever we read in scripture of the 'name' of someone being honoured, it refers to:

W

ho

the person is,

what

he teaches, his

personality

, his

demands

, etc. That is,

everything

the person stands for, or is known for.

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Sadly, many modern Christians think that to 'praise the name of Jesus' means to chant His name over and over! This is NOT what is meant by His 'name'! The modern vacuous interpretation is not found in scripture, and is therefore not legitimate. It leads to the same idea of the superstitious Hindu practise of repeating a mantra in order to invoke a god or demon.

Paul calls on the Corinthians to teach and believe the same things - not word for word, like little children, but in reasoned fashion. He is saying that the Church should have uniform beliefs, because in holding such uniform beliefs there will be no arguments. The instruction has a far deeper meaning, however. The beliefs we must hold as the same must be founded on what God actually tells us, through His word. ***We may only interpret words as they are interpreted in scripture, and in their own contexts.***

The trend today is to interpret according to various theories, or even feelings, which usually ignore or reject the *actual* interpretations given in scripture. These interpretations are not valid for they are external to scripture, and alter the meaning and aim of what God says. This is not to be tolerated. Such interpretations are useless and of no value. They are not just 'opinion', they are in *active opposition* to God's word and must be rejected. When interpreting texts, then, we may only use meanings as given in scripture. Anything else is illegitimate and a denial of God's word. Therefore, such statements as "I think..." or "I feel..." are illicit and meaningless. (See articles on 'Interpretation').

Believing and teaching the same things is not the same as repeating a formula, word for word! It means that we must know and understand the core elements of teachings. Thus, we may instruct others in our own words (a proof of our understanding), so long as the core meaning remains intact. In modern days, men prefer their own ideas and tend to put a slight 'twist' in meanings. This is not acceptable. Scripture is precise and there is only ONE interpretation, even though the expression of it can be varied.

When Paul refers to schisms or dissensions, the words bear the meaning of tearing or hacking something apart - actions that are very painful and destructive. They also reflect actions that disturb a state of rest. As Believers we ought to be in a state of rest, because our faith and beliefs are in Christ, Who has obtained the state of rest on our behalf. Thus, we may rest *in Him* for what

He

has done. This instruction by Paul should never be taken to mean that Christians are barred from contending earnestly for the faith, or from opposing error.

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The words *"in the same judgement"* have been interpreted as *'the same resolve (or, intention, or knowledge)'*. A very similar requirement is made of Christians who pray together (see Article A-001) - that they be of 'one mind' - but how many Christians are of one mind? That is, whose intentions and aims are exactly the same? Very few, if any! Indeed, our preconceived ideas about 'prayer meetings' lead us to pray in ways that are not acceptable to God.

Verse 11

1.

For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you.

Paraphrase:

"Because it has been shown to me/made evident, about you, my brethren, by those Chloe's family, that there is wrangling and strife amongst you."

It was customary to name slaves or servants after gods or goddesses. The name 'Chloe' (meaning 'green herb') is one such name, given to the pagan goddess, Demeter. Thus, it is likely that Chloe was a freedwoman who had become wealthy.

The 'contentions' amongst the Corinthians were sometimes petty, but 'strife' means 'hot arguments' - bitter striving resulting in division. There can be no harmony in such an environment. Sadly, many of the churches we come into contact with today are filled with this kind of contention. Few recognise that secret dissatisfaction and disillusionment is also 'contention'. And how many pastors realise their congregations are divided secretly, because he will not allow queries or doubts?

Nevertheless, superficial 'unity' is maintained for cosmetic purposes. Far better to know the truth than to build up resentment and suspicion! Notice that Paul is not afraid to name names. There is nothing wrong with telling people where information comes from, or with naming wrongdoers, when the situation calls for it.

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Verse 12

1.

Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.

(note use of paraphrasing in this and following verses)

Paraphrase:

"I tell you this - every one of you says 'I exist of Paul', 'I exist of Apollos', 'I exist of Peter' and 'I exist of Christ'."

This was one of the points of contention. There were party factions, and groups had their own preferred idol (like modern churches). *"I am of Paul" (etc.)* is the same as saying *'I exist by reason of Paul's teaching'*

or

'my salvation is of Paul'

or

'I owe my allegiance to Paul'.

Each thought a mere man was the cause of his salvation; only a small number gave their allegiance to Jesus Christ.

This is very common in the churches, even now, as thousands make idols of high-profile figures and pastors. Roman Catholics, too, have numerous saints whom they adore, as well as the pope. However, as one communist fellow I knew said some years ago: *"Protestants have their own popes!"* And he was right.

Paul is making a vital point here, that men are not saved by other men. Preachers are merely bringers of a message; they have no saving power of their own. Salvation is 'of the Lord', not of

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preachers... even if they claim to come with signs and wonders!

Verse 13

1.

Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?

Paraphrase:

"(But) Is the Messiah divided into different parties? Was Paul put to death for you? Were you baptised in Paul's name?"

So, *"is Christ divided?"* asks Paul. He is making a sideways reference to the one-ness of Christ's 'Body' (the Church). That is, one body but many parts. The parts (that is, all Believers) are not random independent parts, but they all fit together (as Paul stated in verse 10) to make one body, with Christ the Head. Mainly, he is saying that Christ is One Lord, so we cannot claim only this or that part of Him, but the whole.

Rhetorical questions are then asked by Paul (Paul is known for making rhetorical statements): did I die for you? Am I the one who can baptise you in my own name? He does not expect an answer to his questions, because he is really making two statements of fact, that *Christ* died for men, not him (or Apollos, or Peter), and we are baptised in *Christ's name*, not the name of men, or the 'church'.

Verses 14-16

1.

I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius;

2.

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Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name.

3.

And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other.

Paraphrase:

"I am grateful to God that I did not baptise any of you, except for Crispus and Gaius - just in case any of you should claim I baptised in my own authority! (Oh yes - I also baptised the household of Stephanus, but I don't recollect baptising any one else)."

Paul sighs with relief, that he did not baptise too many souls! He is saying this to emphasise the fact that he did not come to baptise people into separate factions, and that he was happy for that reason. He did not want people to side with him, just because he had baptised them. He just wanted them all to be loyal to Christ Himself.

Crispus ('curled') was ruler of the Jewish synagogue. Gaius ('lord') was Paul's host. His very name suggests that he was high-born and rich. The household (that is the whole, or at least most, of the family *plus* servants) of Stephanus (meaning 'crowned' - probably another indication of a wealthy man) was the very first to be saved and baptised in Greece.

Verse 17

1.

For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.

Paraphrase:

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"The Messiah didn't send me to baptise, but to bring the good tidings of salvation, not with the wisdom of men/learning/skilled talk, just in case Christ's death should be made devoid of its force and meaning."

The words "*preach the Gospel*" are one word in the Greek (**euaggelizo**). The word is rooted in the word **angelos** ('angel' (Gk. **aggelos**)).
The word **euaggelizo** (evangelist),
and the word **aggelos** (angel/preacher).

The word 'angel' can apply to spiritual beings as well as to preachers. That is, anyone who brings a message, including a pastor or even an angel from Heaven.

The words "*should be made of none effect*" are one word in the Greek (**kenoo**). It means to be made devoid of force, or empty of meaning; or made to appear hollow or false; or 'without a gift' (that is, there is no spiritual wealth, virtually saying that there is no spiritual use or understanding); or one who boasts faith but has no fruit; or labours that result in nothing.

Paul is telling the Corinthians something that all preachers and pastors ought to listen to. That is, when God calls a man to an office, it is not a prompt to do *everything* within the Church! It is a fact, in most local churches, that the pastor fills every office - pastor, evangelist, teacher - you name it and the pastor does it. Yet, the pastor's major task is to shepherd the flock. This involves teaching, but it does not mean he must be a full-time teacher. Indeed, the pastor may not be spiritually equipped to be all those things anyway!

A pastor must learn to accept that the local church is NOT his property! He is NOT a manager who must exert his personal power over men and women. He is just one person, with one office. Possibly, the same man may be given several offices at a particular time, but that does not mean he must function in them all at all times.

The normal position is that God calls and gifts one man to one office, or several that are closely

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linked. That is why Paul says he was called to preach (evangelise) rather than to baptise. We are not minimising baptism if we say that the actual act of baptising someone is almost a menial task – perhaps even a deacon's task. Baptism conducted by a pastor confers no spiritual benefit that I know of, and I know of no command or teaching that demands pastoral baptism.

For Paul, his main task was to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ, that men may be saved. He was called and gifted to the office of evangelist. He was not concerned with baptising people himself, probably because baptism is subsequent to salvation and not necessary for it. Thus, someone else could baptise the saved.

Important though baptism is, it is not the private domain of pastors, or of any other office-bearer (I do not use the term 'officer' - see Article on pastors). But, today, pastors think they *must* head every function and do every job. This is an historical mistake, not a necessity. How many tasks are done by pastors, when they should or could be done by deacons, or others? How much time and effort is wasted by pastors on tasks God has not called them to perform?

How many evangelists think they are pastors, when they are not? How many pastors think they are evangelists, when they are not called? How many church 'services', led by pastors, are given over to 'evangelism', when a local church is the meeting place of Christians, not unbelievers? We could go on and on, comparing traditional errors with Biblical standards, for there are many errors!

Paul did not speak from his own acknowledged learning and status, though he had considerable levels of both. He was more than capable of debating men of philosophical background, but he did not use such word-games to entice people to salvation; something very common in our day. He did not engineer his arguments and manipulate listeners with psychological or semantic wizardry - again very common today, especially amongst charismatics.

It is observable that many charismatics are *not aware* they are manipulating people, because they have *learned* how to do what they do from others and think it is normal to use tactics and strategies. That makes their work gamesmanship, and not gospel preaching. It is why music is used to 'good' effect; it is why various, ever-changing 'methods' are used to draw people into the churches.

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Paul rejects all of that, and simply tells people what God has told him! He had not just basic, but **advanced** knowledge of God's word. He had even been taught personally by Jesus Christ. But, he did not use these things like a formula; every preaching situation was different, and so, each time, Paul preached differently, although the message was always the same.

He did this because to employ human means is to make the gospel (*the 'Cross of Christ'*) appear to be nonsense. In the late twentieth century, the world looked on charismatic antics as theatrical rubbish, and so the gospel was 'made of none effect' in its mind. We should not think that charismatic error actually prevents people from being saved, for God elects those who will be saved. Rather, charismatic tactics make the Gospel seem to be worthless and light, of no use to men.

In their efforts to 'get people interested in the church', charismatic leaders have missed the point. Their zeal seems admirable, but when they use human techniques and tricks, they negate the Gospel of Jesus Christ and make it appear to be without value. I say 'appear' because nothing and nobody can *actually* make the Gospel worthless. Only the messenger makes it *appear* to be worthless. The *message itself* is vital and is life to doomed men, women and children.

Even so, the fact that Paul mentions it, is sufficient to tell us that to preach humanly, using human devices, is error, and must not be contemplated. It does not matter if *millions* join local churches through human techniques. If they have not been saved by grace, then they are not saved at all, and are not a part of the Church of Jesus Christ.

Many modern preachers think they **must** employ human means, because people do not seem 'interested' in the Gospel. They fail to understand that people are not 'interested' **because they are sinners!** What is missing from churches is NOT new and exciting methods of evangelism. What is missing is true preaching!

Scripture tells us that in the end times fewer and fewer 'gentiles' will be saved, but then the **Jew s** will be saved in large numbers. There will never again be a mass revival, but there *will*

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be mass apostasy (the charismatic movement itself is an example).

It is not up to men

to provide people with titillation, light-shows, clowns, theatres, rock music and ways that try to join popular culture with the Gospel, in order to 'bring them into the Church'. Only God can draw men to Himself, through the Holy Spirit, via the message of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the Cross.

No other 'method' is valid or useful.

Indeed, any other 'method' is sinful.

And even when the Gospel is preached faithfully, the effect on listeners is coupled with God's elective will. Those who have not been elected will not respond... and we are told in scripture that the numbers who respond will be very, very small - a 'remnant'! So, to 'bring them in' means to preach the simple Gospel of the Cross and to leave the results to God.

This also means that the numbers who respond are ***limited by God's will***; revivals (if they rarely occur) are the result of God's plan coming to fruition,

not

of human prayer or activity. The present ceaseless drive to 'evangelise the whole world' so that Christ will then come, is strictly human-Arminian, for it says that men can bring Christ back by their own efforts, albeit for a 'good cause'.

But, an absurdity is contained in its claim. We may evangelise the entire world today - but *the very next second*

after a man is evangelised, his wife can give birth, and so we have thousands of new, unevangelised peoples arriving. And this goes on every day! Evangelism must continue all the time. There is no 'final push' or an extra-special event that will bring back Jesus. He will come when He is ready, at the very time He appointed with the Father before Creation. Nothing we do,

absolutely nothing

, can hasten the day of Christ's return.

Verses 18-20

1.

For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

2.

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For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.

3.

Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?

Paraphrase:

"The doctrine of the crucifixion of Christ is 'godless' and not obvious, to those who are lost/dead. But to us who are saved from punishment of our sins, it is the mighty miraculous work of God! It has been recorded: 'I will render useless (or, kill) the understanding of men based on their experience and skill. And I will do away with (or, make ineffective) the limited understanding/perception of the intelligent (or, learned)'. Where is the learned speaker, or philosopher, or theologian? Where is the man learned in the law of Moses, the interpreter of the law? Where is the learned sophist (i.e. arguer, one who holds endless discussions) of this life? Hasn't God made the learning of this life to look stupid, flat, tasteless and godless?"

The "preaching of the Cross" means preaching about Christ's sacrifice as the only way to God. To those who are dead in their sins, such preaching is laughable and even godless. Many who disregard God say that God would not require a sacrifice, especially not of His Son, because such would be 'barbaric'. They refuse the only way to God, and substitute a falsity.

A world leader of charismatic false preaching, Rodney Howard Browne, said in December 1995, that preaching and Bible teaching would no longer be necessary for salvation. Instead, he substituted 'power' (something misunderstood by charismatic leaders anyway). In his scheme of things, healing and tongues were a priority. (2016 note: this kind of wicked teaching has been shown many times since, normalising what is evil).

Thus, these verses apply to him and to all who substitute their own 'methods' for the truth. They are 'sophists' who argue all the time from the foundation of their own minds and sinful hearts. But, as the text tells us, God demands to know who these people are! **'Who do they think they**

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are?' He asks. In other words, they are as nothing, for they preach heresy and lies. God will make what they say sound stupid. Their words will be empty of power and use. What they say is tasteless and godless.

We wonder how so many Christians can allow such false preaching to flourish with but a mild rebuke, when God says that what they say is 'stupid' and 'godless'! To preach godless messages is to preach from hell, and to be led by Satan. Scripture does not know of any middle ground; we are either for God or against Him. Something is either of God, or of Satan. Even human errors are of Satan.

Whilst we timidly creep around nice ways to state our opposition, God says that He will kill or destroy the false preaching and understanding of godless preachers! Why should we, as Believers, try not to upset false prophets and preachers, when, *every moment* they utter their profane speeches, *someone* is being deluded and misled! There is no way we can justify our silence or our 'nice words'.

But, far, far worse, is the fact that we thereby neglect the first duty of all men: to praise and honour God. This is a spiritual crime against God. Let us not be found guilty of it. The men who utter godless preaching claim a greater (extra-Biblical) revelation, but **God** says their understanding is warped and limited. Therefore, they cannot ever preach Truth or teach doctrine. Nor can their words lead to the salvation of men.

"The preaching" referred to in verse 18 carries the meaning of words given by a 'living voice' (of God). This contrasts with the words of men, which are dead and worthless. Preaching is the ordained way God has given us to reach fallen souls. We must not, and need not, devise clever ways to replace or 'spice-up' preaching. Nor may we prop-up our failed hearts by mixing Truth with today's 'culture'. The Gospel is timeless and worthy, and needs no props or human intervention.

We must not try to escape forming a judgement about false preachers. They are either heavily deluded or they are unsaved. Either way, they must be opposed and exposed, often in the strongest of terms. Pandering to convention and to niceness simply will not do.

Verse 21-25

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1.

For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

2.

For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom:

3.

But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness;

4.

But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

5.

Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

Paraphrase:

"Since, then, the world does not come to know God by its own learning, and this by God's doing, He chose, by His pleasure, to rescue from destruction, those that trusted in Him for their salvation, through the 'godlessness' of the messages given by His heralds (i.e. preachers). Because the Jews crave for a miracle, a sign, or a wonder. And the Greeks (i.e. gentiles - all who are not Jews) think they can search and find learning (i.e. of God) by meditation and thought. But we proclaim the crucified Messiah! To the Jews, this is offensive. To the gentiles, it is godlessness.

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But to those who are elect, whether Jew or gentile, the Messiah is the strength/miracle of God, and the Gospel is the supreme intelligence of God. Because the 'godlessness' of God is more learned than the learning of sinful men, and His 'infirmity' is mightier and more excellent than the greatest strength of sinful men!"

These are powerful words indeed! In verse 21 the word for 'preaching' is **kerugma**, which refers to the *preachers* of the word. In verse 18, **logos** is used, which refers more to the *method* of preaching used by God. In verse 23 yet another word is used for 'preach' - **kerusso**, meaning a herald who declares his message openly, in a formal way, with seriousness and an authority that **must** be listened to and obeyed!

Compare modern preaching with this, and the difference is stark. Clowns, flag-waving, jokes and thudding rock music have taken the place of true preaching. Preaching has become a comedy show, complete with 'holy laughter' and falling in the aisles. How different from what God requires and does!

From this text we can see that we are NOT called to argue our case or debate it: we are called to proclaim the message as true, seeking no discussion as to its verity, and allowing no place for opinion. The Gospel must never be insinuated or suggested. ***The Gospel is God telling people what He demands***

That modern Christians find this 'too harsh' is irrelevant.

In private witnessing, we may approach people with gentle resolve and can guide them with sensitive heart. But, the public preaching of the Gospel is in power and in might; it is the declaration without compromise of God's only way to Himself, through Christ Jesus and His sacrifice.

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This declaration comes from "God" or ***theos***, meaning (in this context) the supreme deity. He created us and He can command us to obey in any fashion He wishes. He asks for no discussion or debate about it, for He is the Potter Who makes or breaks His pots as He pleases. Those today who call Him 'Dad' or 'Daddy' are not just irreverent, they completely lack fear and understanding of the greatness and 'otherness' of Almighty God, Whose will is supreme and beyond question.

Notice the black sarcasm of God here; as He speaks of His own 'weakness' and 'foolishness' and the 'strength' of foolish men, who think that their minds and ways are greater than the ways of the One Who created them. The word '*men*' in verse 25 includes the notion of weakness and the proneness to sin. Basically, then, God is laughing at men as they vaunt their own feeble minds above the things of God.

Verses 26-29

1.

For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called:

2.

But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;

3.

And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are:

4.

That no flesh should glory in his presence.

"Brethren, you can see for yourselves, by your own salvation, that not many worldly thinkers, and not many powerful men, and not many of the higher classes are saved. Rather, God has separated, and given His favours to, the 'godless' things of this world, to disgrace/shame the

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deceived (i.e. those whose 'hope is in their own dreams'), who rely on their own learning. And He has separated and favoured the feeble things of this world to disgrace the powerful.

And He has chosen the low born (i.e. those considered to be least), and the despised (i.e. those least esteemed and treated with contempt). Yes, those who are nothing, (in order) to destroy the supposed strength of the mighty, so that no sinful man shall glory in himself in the sight of God."

The proof of the fallaciousness of worldly men is found in the salvation experience of true Believers. They know, from their own repentance and rescue by God, that the worldly preachers are wrong. They also know from observation that worldly men place their trust in their own thoughts, oratory skills, riches and power.

Low-born people are not caught in these traps; they have no learning, riches or power, so they can focus on what God says. They find no difficulty in accepting the pure word of God, whereas the 'clever' people of this world try to get through the eye of a needle complete with a camel loaded with their own imaginations! Then they wonder why they cannot squeeze their way through. This is why so many constantly need assurance or cannot understand scripture. (Note: Paul is not here despising learning or intelligence, only their misuse and abuse).

The word '*chosen*' in verse 27, interpreted as 'separated', means 'elected'. God elected or separated to Himself, people who were considered to be least worthy by
other men

. God says that these will receive His favours (mainly referring to salvation), and the worldly men will receive nothing, such is their appalling arrogance and pride.

In doing this, God 'disgraces' or 'shames' them. He is showing them they have no humility, only pride. They reject God's way in favour of their own thoughts. Preachers invent new, clever ways to preach, thinking that we must be 'relevant' and 'within the present culture' and 'exciting'. God, however, says otherwise.

The whole emphasis is on the fact that God does what He wishes, and whatever He does is glorious, no matter what godless men think. They *will* be 'confounded'.

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Verses 30,31

1.

But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:

2.

That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

"But you are made great in Jesus the Messiah, Who is our knowledge and understanding, truth, and everything necessary for godly living. And He makes us acceptable to God and gives us purification of heart and life, and deliverance. Just as it is recorded - Whoever boasts, let him boast in the Lord!"

Christians? They are greater than the best of this world! But note: they are not great by their own efforts or in their own selves; they are *made* great **in Jesus Christ**. We have no power or greatness of our own, and so we cannot boast of anything we do or say.

Even if this writing of mine was greater than that of scripture (which it cannot be), I could not claim one iota of praise for it, for whatever I do is of God, and whatever abilities I may have are of God, and whatever spiritual gifts I have are of God. Thus it is correct to say that I am nothing, but He is all. **He** is our knowledge and understanding. It is **He** Who enables us to live godly lives.

How many today fondly think that by attending many meetings and by praying publicly, and by doing this or that, they have something to boast about, or that it praises the Lord and enhances their spiritual lives? Sadly, too many! It is Christ Who gives us everything necessary to live our lives. We are not accepted by God on our own merits, or because we 'accepted Christ'. No, we are accepted only because God sees Christ and not us. He sees the sacrifice of His own Son, and not our human attempts at goodness.

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Our salvation is in Christ, not in us. It is **He** Who enables us to be purified daily and to live as we ought. This has been *written* or 'recorded' in scripture (Old Testament) by the prophets - that the only thing we can properly boast of, is our foolishness and pride! As Believers we owe our lives and our salvation to Him.

May we all learn the valuable lessons of this text. Amen.

2016 note: This series was written when charismatic error was at its zenith, removing Christians from genuine churches, or replacing those churches with their pernicious lies and deception. Since that time charismaticism has become mainstream, just as paganism took over in ancient Israel and Judah. The end will be the same – destruction by God. Until that time all believers **MUST** condemn charismaticism outright. Do not give any leeway nor offer sympathy and sustenance. You do not get rid of a tiger by feeding it!

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