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PAUL, THE PASTOR
(His Corinthian Ministry)

A Thesis Presented to
The Faculty of Concordia Seminary
Department of Practical Theology

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Bachelor of Divinity

by
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Approved by:

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PAUL, THE PASTOR

(His Corinthian Ministry)

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Foreword

"Paul departed from Athens," (Acts 18, 1).

Thus closed one of the most discouraging episodes in the great career of the Apostle to the Gentiles. He had preached one of the mightiest sermons of his ministry, but the men of Athens were unmoved and unaffected. On Mars Hill he had brought true wisdom to some of the wisest of the wise, but to those Greeks it was foolishness. In a simple, plain, and logical manner he had revealed to these philosophers "The Unknown God," but they wished to remain in spiritual darkness. "We will hear thee again of this matter," (Acts 17, 32), was their reply. God was visiting these Athenians through one of the greatest missionaries of all time, but they had no room for the Gospel of Christ -- no time for the message of Paul, for their soul's salvation.

He then left the city of Athens. His ministry in this city of culture had seemingly been a complete failure. The future looked rather dark and dismal. Finally he turned his way southward, ready to begin the next phase of his missionary endeavors -- his ministry at Corinth.

Introduction

"O ye Corinthians!"¹

Great and glorious was the early history of Corinth. Fame and power came to it after the days of the Peloponnesian War.² When Athens and Sparta declined, Corinth came into the foreground and placed itself at the head of the Achaean League.³ From 335 - 197 B.C., the Macedonians held the citadel, but in 196 B.C., it was declared independent by the Romans.⁴

Soon, however, Corinth lost its independence. Due to a rebellion against the Roman Empire, the city was completely destroyed by the Roman consul Mummius, in 146 B.C.

The destruction of this city by Mummius, about the same time that Carthage was destroyed by Scipio, was so complete, that, like its previous wealth, it passed into a proverb. Its works of skill and

1. II Cor. 6, 11.

2. W.J. Conybeare and J.S. Howson, The Life and Epistles of Saint Paul, p. 359. "when the Greeks turned fratricidal arms against each other," especially Corinth and Athens.

3. Ibid., p. 373, fn 8. Ancient Achaia "nearly coincides with that of the modern kingdom of Greece." The major cities had banded themselves together, Corinth being the leader.

4. H.D.M. Spence and Joseph S. Exell, eds., The Fulfill Commentary - I Corinthians, p. 1. After the battle of Cynoccephalae, by Flaminius.

luxury were destroyed or carried away . . . The very place of the city from which these works were taken remained desolate for many years, . . . and Corinth ceased even to be a resting-place of travelers between the East and the West.⁵

The city lay in ruins for about one hundred years, but in 44 B.C. a new city was to arise out of the ashes of the old. Julius Caesar recognized the beauty and importance of the site. He therefore peopled it with a colony of veterans and freedmen, who once more built upon the old ruins and foundation a great and glorious city.

The colony experienced various changes of government under the different emperors. At first, it was a proconsulate. During the reign of Tiberius, Corinth was under the direction of the personal procurator of the emperor. But when Claudius⁶ was at the head of the Roman Empire, Corinth was again looked upon as an "unarmed province"⁷ and was governed by a proconsul.

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5. Conybeare and Howson, *op. cit.*, p. 362.
6. It is one of the decrees of this emperor which expelled many of the Jews from Rome, (among whom could have been Priscilla and Aquila). William N. Taylor, Paul, The Missionary, p. 280. "This decree, incidentally mentioned by Luke, is referred to by the Roman historian Suetonius, who says, 'The Jews, who were in constant tumult, Chrestus being their leader, he (Claudius) banished from Rome.' (This passage is quoted and commented on by Plumptre in Ellicott's New Testament for English Readers, vol. 11., p. 120.) Most scholars believe that 'Chrestus' in that passage is a corruption for 'Christus'."
7. Conybeare and Howson, *op. cit.*, p. 363.

It is one of these proconsuls which especially interests the student of the life of Paul. During his missionary activities in this city, we are told, a new proconsul came to Corinth, namely Gallio. Recent discoveries have shed much light upon this person, notably the so-called "Gallio Inscription."⁸ From this inscription we learn that Gallio took up his office at Corinth in 52 A.D., which, in turn, helps us to establish the approximate date of Paul's visit to Corinth. His original name was Annaeus Novatus,⁹ and he was the brother of the famous philosopher Seneca. He seemingly was quite popular and well liked by the Corinthians, and as to his personal traits and character, his brother Seneca spoke very highly of them.¹⁰

If we could have accompanied Paul on his journey from Athens to Corinth, our attention would have been drawn, first of all, to a huge mountain of rock which rose high into the air to an elevation of two thousand feet.¹¹ This was the Acrocorinth,

8. Joseph Holzner, Paul of Tarsus, p. 265. "His (Gallio's) name and his office are clearly established by a letter of the Emperor Claudius, written sometime between April and August of 52, to the city of Delphi, and is one of the most important documents for the history of the New Testament." (The letter is also quoted in the above mentioned work.)

9. Conybeare and Howson, op. cit., p. 363.

10. Ibid., p. 364.

11. Ibid., p. 358.

the remains of the great citadel which once guarded the Isthmus. From its heights one could view the entire city and its surrounding country. You could see Cenchræa in the East, and Lecheum in the West. Those were the two great seaports of Corinth. Connecting these two harbors was the "Diolkos," which as the name implies was the land-channel, over which ships could be dragged across the Isthmus. It was constantly used by seamen and voyagers, because it saved sailing around the dreaded Cape of Malea.

Between these two ports, in a most favorable location, was the city of Corinth.¹² It could no longer boast of being a great military power. That was a thing of the past. The Isthmus, which had been the point of conflict in so many wars, now had been neutralized by the Roman provincial form of government. The great wall which had been stretched across the narrow strip of land connecting the Peloponnesus to the mainland now lay in ruins. The seaports were no longer the great naval stations for war galleys. All were memories of a past and glorious history.

12. B.W. Robinson, The Life of Paul, p. 136. Corinth, at the time of Paul, was a city with a population "of about two hundred thousand freemen and perhaps as many slaves."

But, Corinth was, at the time of Paul, a great city in another respect. Though it had lost its importance as a great military fortress, the city was a great commercial center. It was called "the bridge of the sea,"¹³ and spoken of as the "gate of the Peloponnesus,"¹⁴ It was the crossroad of the commercial world of that time. Whether from the north or the south, from the east or the west, trade and commerce most likely would have passed over that little Isthmus in Greece and be handled by the merchants of Corinth.

Naturally, this had an effect upon the culture and civilization of Corinth. As Paul walked along the streets of the city, he must have seen the renowned Stadium and Theatre where those famous Corinthian games were celebrated, to which he has such frequent reference in his writings. He beheld the richly decorated temples and the highly ornamented statues which were dedicated to the sensuous religion of the Corinthians. Surely, the grandeur and beauty of these marvelous structures would make one stop in awe and amazement.

 13. by Pindar. Conybeare and Howson, op. cit., p. 358.

14. by Xenophon. Ibid.

But, such grandeur and beauty were only outward and superficial. As one looked at the people who lived in the city, an altogether different picture presented itself. Because of its great commerce and huge wealth, people from all over the world were attracted to it. There were adventurous Greeks and pleasure-seeking Romans. There were commercial Phoenicians and money-mad Jews. There were ex-soldiers and sailors, philosophers and tradespeople, merchants and hucksters, freedmen and slaves. The city was a melting pot of nationalities, and, due to this fact, Corinth was infamously known for its immorality and sensuousness.

Imagine Liverpool and Brighton, without a touch of Christian influence, rolled into one, and you have Corinth. They were traders, mark you, not manufacturers -- money-getters, not creators; engaged not in 'producing' (which requires invention and implies education and culture), but in transferring articles from one place to another (which requires little education and less culture). Here money-grabbing is not elevating, refining, or morally bracing. They were pleasure-mad too -- that was their reaction from toil. Drunkenness and debauchery -- temples dedicated to it, priestesses devoted to license. When your life-work is on a low moral plane, your recreation is certain to be on a lower one still.¹⁵

This Vanity Fair can be compared to modern Paris

15. H.R. Havelis, Christ and Christianity, p. 122f.

(in its worst aspects). Sensuality, drunkenness, and extortion were common sins of daily occurrence.¹⁶

Here, in this city of lewdness and immorality, of gross dishonesty and crying sins, the Apostle Paul preached the message of Christ Crucified. He rarely stayed in any city as long as he did in Corinth. Christ was the Savior even of publicans and sinners, hence even this stronghold of iniquity and vice was to be conquered with the Gospel of Christ.

Paul did not work in vain. God blessed his labors. Not only was a congregation established in Corinth, but a number of churches were founded throughout the whole region of Achaia, (II Cor. 1, 1). He became extremely fond of these congregations and greatly loved the converts which he had gained there -- Sosthenes, the synagogue official (Acts 18, 17); Crispus, Gaius, and Stephanas, who were among those privileged and honored to be baptized by the Apostle, (I Cor. 1, 14. 15.); Priscilla and Aquila, who were so devoted to the great missionary (Acts 18, 18); Phoebe, who delivered Paul's letter to the Ro-

 16. John Th. Mueller, The Church at Corinth, p. 15. "So vile was the debauchery perpetuated in the city that the verb 'korinthiszesthei,' or to do a thing in 'Corinthian style,' became a synonym for the most vicious immorality."

mans, (Rom. 16, 1). These, together with the many others who in the midst of a licentious town rose to the higher levels of a life influenced by Christ, were the first historic and immortal fruits of Achaia.

But a congregation in the city of Corinth was bound to have its problems and perplexities. Due to their background and their surroundings, these weak Christians would be like reeds shaken in the wind. They had to be protected and nurtured in order that their faith might grow strong and firm.

With these facts in mind, we can see the great concern which Paul had for these Corinthian Christians. When they came to him with their misunderstandings and questions, Paul, as a faithful pastor, immediately set himself to the task of answering their questions and solving their problems. For these reasons he wrote what are now called First and Second Corinthians.

They are the letters of a pastor to his congregation. They give the guiding principles and the answers to many of the questions and problems which vex also the Christian Church of the Twentieth Century. Through these letters especially Paul still serves as a pastor to the Church of today.

Chapter One

"Ambassadors for Christ!"¹

Paul's Position concerning the Office of the Ministry.

The office of the ministry has been instituted by none other than God Himself. It was not devised by human wisdom, nor is its institution called for merely in the interest of good order. But God Himself has set up this office in the Church. The great Apostle realized that the call into the ministry was divine. He saw that the authority of his holy office rested on God Himself. He thus calls himself "an apostle of Jesus Christ," (I Cor. 1, 1; II Cor. 1, 1). The Lord Himself had called him into this office. He was a "chosen vessel" unto the Lord, to bear the name of Christ before the Gentiles, (Acts 9, 15).

As a result of this divine call, Paul was an "ambassador for Christ," (II Cor. 5, 20). In the entire performance of his pastoral office, he was acting not in his own stead, but was the representative of Christ. He was a "worker together," a ser-

1. II Cor. 5, 20.

vant of Christ, carrying out the orders and commands of his Lord and Savior, (II Cor. 6, 1; I Cor. 3, 9).

As the same time, Paul realized that he was not the lord and ruler over the congregation. The pastor is a manager in the church of God. His only real concern is the salvation of sin-lost souls, (II Cor. 11, 2f.). Continually he must think of, and be concerned about, the spiritual welfare of those who are entrusted to his care.

He had been called by God and acted in His stead, but still Paul knew that he was the servant of his congregation. He said, "Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand," (II Cor. 1, 24). He saw the correct relationship of the pastor to his congregation. He told his people, "Therefore let no man glory in men. For 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; and ye are Christ's and Christ is God's," (I Cor. 3, 21 - 23), and also, "all things are for your sakes," (II Cor. 4, 15). The sovereignty of the congregation never must be usurped. To do so is to act contrary to the will and the word of God.

Such must be the position of every true pastor of the Gospel of Christ. He, too, is an apostle of Christ. The call which the pastor receives from a congregation is the means which God now uses to make for Himself chosen vessels which are to spread the Good News of salvation. The same call then also makes the pastor the servant of his congregation. If he keeps these facts in mind, then the pastor is, like Paul, a true ambassador for Christ.

"Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful," (I Cor. 4, 2). Here, we have the essential and most important qualification of the pastor of the church. He must be found faithful. Pastors are stewards -- stewards of the mysteries of God, (I Cor. 2, 7; 15, 51). "The thing sought in such stewards is 'that one be found trustworthy or reliable'".²

There also will be a day of reckoning. This fact must never escape the mind of the pastor. Paul warns all pastors that, as a steward must give an account of his stewardship, so also will the ministers of Christ be held accountable. "Every man's work shall be made manifest; for the day

2. R.C.H. Lenski, Interpretation of I and II Corinthians, p. 164.

shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward," (I Cor. 3, 13, 14.).

The Lord does not demand that the pastor be the most learned or the most accomplished man in the world, . . . but that he be 'faithful' in the use of the talents and the time and the opportunities which the Lord has given.³

What an example of such faithfulness is found in the Apostle Paul!

In order that the ministry of a pastor might be effective, it must also be blameless. Paul warns all pastors not to give offense and cause their deeds to hinder the work of their office. How Paul guarded against this very thing! He suffered hardships rather than permit his conduct to be the cause for stumbling. He even refused to accept any salary from the Corinthians, (II Cor. 11, 8), in order to make sure that no one would take offense. Here is, truly, a great sermon which Paul preaches to all pastors. "When the ministry is blamed, . . . men's hearts are closed to its appeal, and the cause of the Gospel and of Christ suffers."⁴

3. John H.C. Fritz, Pastoral Theology, p. 19.

4. Lenski, op. cit., p. 1063.

Still, in all of his work, Paul showed great and true humility, (II Cor. 10, 12 - 14). He magnified his office, (II Cor. 4, 5), but always humbled himself. All that he accomplished was "according to the grace of God which was in him," (I Cor. 3, 10). With his example of word and deed, Paul reminds all pastors that they are "ministers of Christ," (I Cor. 4, 1), that is, they are "under-rowers" in the ship of the Church. They must never think that they can take the place of its one and only Captain, Jesus Christ.

Another of the great qualifications of a pastor, which Paul exemplified, is enduring patience. How often he could have felt that he was wasting his time! When he preached in the synagogue, the Jews rebelled against him. When he had left his members, after he had instructed them, they fell into so many of those errors against which he had warned them. But still, because of his great love and affection for God, for the Gospel, and for these Corinthians, he persisted. Difficult problems continually arose, but with endurance and patience Paul helped them solve their difficulties. "The pastor dare not expect that he can always reap as soon as he has sown. He must give the word time to grow and to ripen."⁵

5. Fritz, op. cit., p. 19.

Still, in dealing with his people Paul showed great tact. Think of all the faults for which Paul had to chide the people at Corinth. Yet, he could pen the words, "Out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you," (II Cor. 2, 4). He always approached his members as Christians, as children of God, as "saints," (I Cor. 1, 2), as the "church of God," (II Cor. 2, 1). He never spoke down at the people; but always pleaded with them, (II Cor. 10, 1). His whole approach to all of the problems of First and Second Corinthians can serve all pastors as a great lesson in tact.

The purpose of the office of the ministry is to preach the Gospel of Christ. Paul was "determined not to know anything . . . save Jesus Christ, and him crucified," (I Cor. 2, 2). The central thought of every sermon which he preached was the cross of Jesus. To make known this message must be the theme in the ministry of every true ambassador for Christ. He must realize that the all-important factor of the ministry is not the man which is in it, but rather the message which is preached. If he wishes to be a true minister, then he must preach "Christ's Gospel," (II Cor. 2, 12). If he

is going to glory in his apostleship, then "let him glory in the Lord," (I Cor. 1, 31).

But this Gospel has a much greater significance. This message of Christ Crucified is the only means that can save the sinner from eternal damnation. For "it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe," (I Cor. 1, 21; I Cor. 15, 1f.). Here are the blueprints which give to the lost sinner the plan of his salvation. Here are the means, the only means, whereby the power of God can come into his heart and bring to him that spiritual wisdom, which is foolishness to the world. Here is salvation for sinful mankind, (II Cor. 5, 18ff.).

Realizing this, then, every pastor must see to it that he preaches all and only this Gospel. With Paul, he will be determined "to preach the Gospel of Christ: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect," (I Cor. 1, 17). The pastor is not to be a philosopher, humanitarian, or social reformer. Christ is more than "the great miracle-working Prophet of God, the moral Reformer, the Revealer of new truth, the Lawgiver of a new spiritual kingdom, or the Example of a divinely perfect life."⁶ The pastor

6. Spence and Exell, op. cit., p. 44.

is the ambassador for Christ and must preach Christ as the personal redeemer of all men.

But Paul was also a very wise teacher. He knew that the pastor, even when he preaches the Gospel in all of its truth and purity, can still make it of none effect, if he fails to observe the principle of preaching 'first things first.' He must be able to apply the Word of God rightly. He must be able to know which curing word must be given to his people.

There are two things of supreme importance in the work of a doctor or physician: one, understanding the malady, and the other, providing the remedy. If that be true, surely Paul was a great doctor of the soul. How he understood the malady of human life and history, and, thank God, how he understood the great remedy that has been provided.⁷

How well Paul's word of advice can be followed: "I have fed you with milk, and not with meat; for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able!" (1 Cor. 3, 20). Weak people cannot be expected to eat strong food, nor can new converts be expected to have a full and mature understanding of all the truths of God's Word. The pastor must give his people the right food at the right time, so that none will receive spiritual

7. G. Campbell Morgan, The Corinthian Letters of St. Paul, p. 52.

indigestion. Then he, too, is a true physician of the soul.

Another principle which every pastor must follow, if he wishes to minister effectively, is that he must present the message of the Gospel in all simplicity. Paul came "not with enticing words of wisdom," (I Cor. 2, 4), but in simplicity and godly sincerity, (II Cor. 1, 12). Rhetoric and oratory can never convert a soul! The personality of the pastor must always remain in the background, so that the person of Christ may be seen by all. Clear, simple, and plain preaching of the Gospel is the most effective, (II Cor. 11, 6. 7.). Then it is easily understood by all and the pastor is thus fulfilling his task of bringing the Gospel to everyone.

In all things Paul was mindful of this fact that he was a minister for Christ. To be an apostle of God was a high privilege, but it was also a great responsibility. So must the pastor of today always keep in mind, that in the many tasks which he must perform in his office, and in the serious obligations which are required of him in the ministry, he must do all things as a faithful vessel of the Lord. If he can say with Paul, "For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God; but as of sincerity,

but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ," (II Cor. 2, 17), then he is a true ambassador for Christ.

Paul's Exhortation concerning
the
Unity of the Church.

The existence of factions was one of the earliest problems which afflicted the Christian church. They stressed the unimportant and forgot the really important matters. However, as Paul had laid the foundation at Corinth as a wise master builder, so now he exhibits the same wisdom and prudence in applying the message of God's Word to this fault of the church. He pleads with them, "I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ," (I Cor. 1, 10). The Apostle applies God's Word as a truly evangelical pastor must do.

Paul considered such a factional spirit as a terrible sin. Though evangelical in his whole approach to this matter, yet he speaks very sternly and firmly to his people, (I Cor. 1, 10ff; II Cor. 6, 1-6ff). The true head and only foundation of the church is Christ (I Cor. 3, 11). Therefore, the sin of factions is a sin against Christ himself.

Chapter Two

"Is Christ Divided?"¹

Paul's Exhortation concerning the Unity of the Church.

The existence of factions was one of the serious problems which afflicted the Corinthian church. They stressed the unimportant and forgot the really important matters. However, as Paul had laid the foundation at Corinth as a wise master builder, so now he exhibits the same wisdom and prudence in applying the message of God's Word to this fault of the church. He pleads with them, "I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ," (I Cor. 1, 10). The Apostle applies God's Word as a truly evangelical pastor must do.

Paul considered such a factious spirit as a terrible sin. Though evangelical in his whole approach to this matter, yet he speaks very sternly and firmly to his people, (I Cor. 1, 12ff; II Cor. 6, 14ff). The true head and only foundation of the church is Christ (I Cor. 3, 11). Therefore, the sin of factions is a sin against Christ Him-

1. I Cor. 1, 13.

self. For in doing so, the authority and work of Christ is set aside. For that reason,

Paul preaches Christ, the one Lord, the one Redeemer, the one Fountainhead of grace in order that he may correct the first and great trouble in the Corinthian congregation. How well he applies the Gospel, the glad tidings of peace and reconciliation with God through the mediation of the crucified Redeemer, to restore the Corinthians to unity and brotherly love!²

Such a condition is also a violation of the Gospel of Christ. Paul goes to the very root of the matter, (I Cor. 1, 17ff). The reason why there are such factions in the church is that the natural man is offended by the simple preaching of the Cross. He feels that it is inadequate. Pride makes him despise the Gospel of Christ. But Paul shows us how to bridge these factions -- how to heal these wounds. He advises us to declare this Gospel in all pureness and simplicity. The only cure for factions and divisions in the church is the simple, yet powerful, message of the One Christ Crucified. Nothing will strengthen the unity of the church more than a firm and unfaltering declaration of this message.

Not union without unity in faith,
not the resolve to agree to disagree,
not syncretism in its various forms, not

2. Mueller, op. cit., p. 57.

external cooperation with indifference to the doctrinal differences existing, not, in short, any wisdom of man; only the wisdom of God, the Gospel of Christ.³

In causing disunity in the church, the Corinthians also lost sight of the grace which God had bestowed upon them. They had been lavishly enriched in knowledge and had been blessed beyond description by the goodness of Christ. The truth that they had been brought into Christ's fold solely and alone through the grace of God they had, however, forgotten. They had disregarded God who had rescued them out of their hopeless state and instead exalted themselves and became proud. But if Christians will be utterly humble, then they will place themselves under the hand of God and will give all glory to Him for their conversion and sanctification. Then divisions and factions simply cannot exist.

Divisions in the church also disregard the Christian ministry. True preachers are servants of God, instruments in His hands; not self-called leaders, nor authors of their own particular favorite system of teachings. They are all of equal rank, (I Cor. 3, 8. 9.). All are called by the same Holy Ghost, teach the same truth, and stand in the

3. Ibid., p. 59.

same relationship. Christian ministers are never party leaders, (I Cor. 1, 5. 6.). These are all points of which the Corinthians had lost sight. They had to learn that they must consider and heed the ministry, and not the minister as a person. Then, true unity will be enjoyed.

From beginning to end Paul used God's Word to correct the evil in the Church at Corinth. With their factious spirit and attitude of pride they had disregarded their Lord and Savior, His gracious Gospel, and His manifold blessings. But in each instance the Gospel of Christ proved itself as the power of God which created in the Corinthians a new heart and renewed a right spirit within them. Paul's appeal for Christian unity was not in vain. Truly, a lesson of inestimable value which Paul here teaches to the church of today.

concerning the resurrection, in order that this

1. I Cor. 15, 20.
2. Borgen, 2d. ed., p. 182.
3. Ibid., p. 184. There were three views held by the Corinthian teachers and philosophers: Epicureanism, Stoicism, and Platonism. There were three distinct schools of philosophy, and they all held certain views on this subject of resurrection. The position of the Epicurean was that of blank materialism. He denied any existence at all beyond death. The position of the Stoic was that at death the soul was merged in Deity, and at the loss of personality. Third, there was Platonism, which insisted upon the immortality of the soul, but absolutely denied the idea of bodily resurrection.

Chapter Three

"O Death, Where is thy Sting?
O Grave, Where is thy Victory?"¹

Paul's Teaching concerning
the
Doctrine of the Resurrection.

The glory of our Christianity is that it never views life as being complete in this world. It always has its eyes lifted to the morning and gazes out upon the eternities, recognizing that we belong to eternity as well as to time.²

It was necessary that the Apostle dwell upon the subject of the resurrection, for the Corinthian church existed in an atmosphere which was permeated with false teachings and philosophies concerning eternity and the life in the hereafter.³ Even to these Corinthian 'babes' he fed this 'meat' concerning the resurrection, in order that this

1. I Cor. 15, 55.

2. Morgan, *op. cit.*, p. 182.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 188. "There were three views held by the Corinthian teachers and philosophers: Epicureanism, Stoicism, and Platonism. There were three distinct schools of philosophy, and they all held certain views on this subject of resurrection. The position of the Epicurean was that of blank materialism. He denied any existence at all beyond death. The position of the Stoic was that at death the soul was merged in Deity, and so the loss of personality. Third, there was Platonism, which insisted upon the immortality of the soul, but absolutely denied the idea of bodily resurrection."

doctrine might also be to them the rock and anchorage of their faith.

Paul declares that the very essence and heart of all Gospel preaching is the death and resurrection of Christ. "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures: and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures," (I Cor. 15, 3. 4.). If the pastor is to be a true preacher of the Word, then he must also proclaim that Christ died and rose again. He dare not omit it, for then he preaches, not according to the Scriptures, but according to his own philosophy. How, then, can anyone deny this doctrine, when it is so clearly taught in the Holy Scriptures?

But, since this doctrine is so basic and fundamental, Paul gives additional proof for the certainty of Christ's resurrection. He lists the numerous witnesses which saw our Savior after His resurrection, before He ascended into heaven. "He was seen of Cephas, then of the Twelve: after that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; . . . after that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles," (I Cor. 15, 5 - 7). Hundreds could testify to this proven historical fact, that Christ

rose from the dead. What additional proof was necessary?

Still Paul continues, "And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me, was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I but the grace of God which was with me," (I Cor. 15, 8 - 10). The resurrection of Christ is proven by the amazing transformation which took place in the life of Paul. This was a miracle! He went to Damascus as the great persecutor of the church, but, because of the appearance of the resurrected Lord, he came back from that city as the great missionary for Christ. Look at the life of Paul! Can you then say that Christ did not prove Himself the victor over death?

In contrast, Paul also gives negative proofs to bring out with even more clarity the certainty of Christ's resurrection. "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain," (I Cor. 15, 14). To deny the resurrection of Christ is to invalidate the whole Gospel of Christ. Then, the Word is void and empty. Then, there is no value in it, no meaning in it, no truth in it.

Moreover, any preacher of righteousness, who declares a gospel without the resurrection of Christ, is a false witness. "Yea," Paul says, "we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up," (I Cor. 15, 15). Such an ambassador for Christ lies about God. He declares that God raised Christ from the dead, and if He was not raised, then He has spoken an untruth. God forbid that such a condemnation be spoken against any minister of the true Gospel of Christ.

Finally, "if Christ be not risen, your faith is vain: ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished." (I Cor. 15, 17. 18.). The resurrection of Christ is the seal and the approval of the entire redemptive work of our Savior. Without the resurrection from the dead, Christ could not be the redeemer of the world. If He is not our Savior, then faith in Him is useless and void, then we have not been saved from sin, death, and the devil. We are still lost and condemned sinners. Then there is no hope for life and salvation, then those who have preceded us in death have perished eternally, and our only hope is that we shall follow them to the place of everlasting separation from God. Truly, if this

is our lot and our only hope, then "we are of all men most miserable," (I Cor. 15, 19).

"But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept." (I Cor. 15, 20). What a plain, clear, definite, and glorious affirmation! Christ has been raised from the dead. The apostles did preach the truth of God's Word. Our faith is not in vain. We are not in our sins. "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection from the dead," (I Cor. 15, 21).

Humanity is organically united. The death of its organic head involves necessarily the death of the entire race. God brings redemption to the race according to the same order, according to which the race lost spiritual life. Give the race another head, truly organically united with it; and the life that expels death and overcomes corruption in the head, will do the same in the members.⁴

Thus Christ has become the "first-fruits of them that slept." Just as surely "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive," (I Cor. 15, 22).

Concerning the nature and the time of the resurrection from the dead, Paul definitely states that it will take place on the Last Day. With

4. Henry Eyster Jacobs, The Lutheran Commentary (Romans - Galatians), p. 128.

Judgment Day time ends. "Then cometh the end," (I Cor. 15, 24). In the twinkling of an eye all believers are brought before the Judgment Seat of Christ. The souls of the departed are once again united with the body, which has been brought from the grave and has been changed into a glorified body, (I Cor. 15, 35ff). "It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body," (I Cor. 15, 42 - 44). Those who are living on the Last Day will be transformed immediately and directly from this corruptible body to one which is incorruptible, (I Cor. 15, 51). Thus Paul answers for all Christians the great question, "How are the dead raised, and with what bodies shall they come forth?" (I Cor. 15, 35). Death is merely a sleep, a portal through which we gain entrance into an eternity of bliss and happiness before the glorious Lamb of God.

How grand and how sublime is this doctrine! What comfort and assurance is derived from the teaching of the resurrection! What wonderful results will follow in the lives of all Christians, if they firmly believe and preach this message! The Christian then remains steadfast, unmovable,

always abounding in the work of the Lord, for our labor will not be in vain in the Lord, (I Cor. 15, 58).

Dare a true ambassador for Christ deny this wonderful and assuring message of victory over death through Christ? Nay rather, he must declare it, as did Paul, with all zeal and fervor. He will be forced to shout from the housetops,

O death, where is thy sting,
 O grave where is thy victory, . . .
 But thanks be to God, which giveth us the
 victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.
 (I Cor. 15, 55. 57.).

The Christian Church is not a club, whose members are at liberty to receive and reject whomsoever they choose. It is a society of which Christ is the Head and Lord, and is bound to receive those who possess His Spirit, and to reject those who openly and unmistakably grieve and outrage that Spirit.

The problem at Corinth was not that they were guilty of over-solicitude in church discipline, but they had to be admonished because of their serious neglect. A member of the Corinthian Christian church had committed incest.³ Such fornication was even an abhorrence among the heathen Gentiles.

1. I Cor. 5, 7.
 2. Strong and Well. pp. 222, p. 175.
 3. IMA, p. 100f. He was living with his own step-mother, "his father's wife," (I Cor. 5, 11).

Chapter Four

"Purze out the Old Leaven!"¹

Paul's Admonition concerning Church Discipline and Excommunication.

How often we hear people speak of excommunication as a process whereby someone is "kicked out" of the church! Surely anyone who speaks in such a manner has not learned the true concept of Christian church discipline. How often pastors must be warned not to fall into this pitfall!

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1. I Cor. 5, 7.

2. Spence and Exell, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 165f. He was living with his own step-mother, "his father's wife," (I Cor. 5, 1).

The Corinthians, however, had permitted him to retain the full rights and privileges of membership in the congregation. Instead of admonishing this man, they were "puffed up,"⁴ filled with pride and boasting.

Thus we have presented the two extremes. They are found in various church denominations and sects even today. One group carries out church discipline in the strictest form of legalism, while another is completely lax. It is a problem which greatly troubles every conscientious pastor. Yet, if he will be guided by the principles of Paul and follow his procedure, many of the difficulties will be solved.

The first thing which we must always keep in mind is the purpose of excommunication. We must realize that we are trying to save the soul of an individual who is on the verge of eternal damnation. Paul told the Corinthian Christians, "Deliver such a one unto Satan, . . . that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus," (I Cor. 5, 5). Church discipline is a use of the Law in its sever-

4. Mueller, *op. cit.*, p. 65. "Perhaps the man who was guilty of the crime was rich, educated, and influential. So glad were the Corinthians to have him as a member of their church that they were willing to condone his sin."

est form. With it we are trying to bring the sinner to a realization of the seriousness of his sin, to repentance and thereby to the forgiveness which is found only in Christ. Then our procedure will never become a legalistic ritual, nor will it be a neglected formula. We will use the Office of the Keys, this peculiar church power which Christ has given to His church here on earth, according to the directions of our Savior and in harmony with the admonitions of the Apostle Paul.

Another reason for church discipline Paul states in the following words: "Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump as ye are unleavened," (I Cor. 5, 1. 7.). Excommunication of impenitent sinners from the church must be exercised in order to keep the church pure. As a cancer must be removed from the body to preserve the life of a person, so the church must cut out her sinning members in order to preserve her own spiritual life.

Which sins are grounds for excommunication from the Christian church? Paul also helps us with this vexing question. He says, first of all, "I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators," (I Cor. 5, 9). Under this term he

includes every form of licentiousness directed against the Sixth Commandment. How applicable this is today! It is gnawing at the vitals of the home, the church, and the state. Divorce, the sore spot of our country, falls into this category. Immorality, loose living, and sex offenses which are so common in this day and age are an abomination unto the Lord and must never be tolerated in His church.

Secondly, the Apostle mentions covetousness, (I Cor. 5, 10). This, too, is wide-spread in our day. The man of today so often makes mammon his god and accumulates wealth by fair means or foul. He delights in his vicious idolatry. Such a one is no member of Christ and, if he manifestly disregards God's First Commandment, must be cut off from the body of our Lord -- the church.

Thirdly, the Apostle informs us that extortion is a sin worthy of excommunication, (I Cor. 5, 10). To take the goods of another by foul means defines this sin. A Christian cannot indulge in such sinful practices.

If he enriches himself at the expense of his fellow-men and especially of his fellow-Christians, if the sin of underpaying his workmen cleaves to his conscience and their cries of distress rise to heaven, he becomes an abomination in the sight of God and an offense, not only to his fellow-Christians, but also to the world at large. There is no room in the Church for a Shylock,

whose thievery and extortion stink to high heaven. If the extortioner fails to repent and amend his ways, he must be excommunicated.⁵

Fourthly, the sin of idolatry is listed, (I Cor. 5, 10). One who wishes to be a follower of Christ and a member of His kingdom must give his whole heart and soul and mind over to Christ. There can be no room for even the smallest form of idolatry.

To the class of idolaters belong also those who are ensnared in the net of lodgery, who, while worshipping Christ at church, deny Him in the lodge. Membership in the church means profession of Christ, and of Him alone. Those who continually and deliberately deny the Savior before men by participation in the idolatrous worship of the lodge disgrace Him by their presence in the church.⁶

Fifthly, Paul tells us not to keep company with a "railer," (I Cor. 5, 11). A person who habitually is given to slander and abusive speech should fall in the judgment of the church. Such a one dishonors God and defames his neighbor. He is not worthy of membership in the Christian congregation. This is a serious sin, which deserves much warning and heeding also in the church of today.

Lastly, Paul gives the sin of drunkenness as one which must be dealt with in church discipline, (I Cor. 5, 11). How prevalent and free is the flow

5. Ibid., p. 69.

6. Ibid., p. 69f.

of strong drink! It is the downfall of millions not only physically and socially, but especially spiritually.

Upon a close examination of all these sins listed by Paul, we see one common denominator. All of them are gross transgressions of the Law of God and offenses against Christ. They are sins which are public and open, (I Cor. 5, 1). By these sins the church has been disgraced and Christ has been blasphemed. A person guilty of such transgressions in reality has condemned himself. In judging such a one the congregation need not fear that they are misjudging or committing error. Such manifest sinners must be excluded from the Christian congregation.

However, in the last analysis, it is the sin of impenitence which excludes an individual from the church of Christ. No matter how gross or public a sin may be, if the sinner is penitent and promises to amend his sinful life, he is still a member of the Christian congregation. On the other hand, if he refuses to accept the admonition directed to him, he shows himself as an unbeliever in the sight of God, and renders himself as a publican and a sinner in the eyes of the congregation.

Paul also gives us the mode of procedure which is to be followed in matters of church discipline,

which self-evidently means that he must be a "brother," (I Cor. 5, 11). Those outside of the church cannot be excommunicated. Their judgment is directly in the hands of God, (I Cor. 5, 13).

Church discipline also must be exercised by the whole congregation. Paul writes, "When ye are gathered together," (I Cor. 5, 4). Not the board of trustees, or the board of elders, or any faction or group -- no, not even the pastor by himself can excommunicate anyone from the congregation. It is a power of the church, not of the ministry. Such action can take place only when the congregation is in full assembly.

Excommunication is a very serious thing, for in declaring a sinner outside of the church the congregation acts "in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ," (I Cor. 5, 4). It acts in the stead of Christ Himself. They must make sure that they follow the instructions of our Savior. But when a sinner falls under the condemnation of God's Word and is excommunicated by the church it is "as if Christ, our dear Lord dealt with us Himself."⁷

7. Martin Luther, Small Catechism, p. 13. A portion of his explanation to the question "What do you believe according to these words?" under the general heading The Office of the Keys.

In the case of the incestuous man at Corinth the disciplinary action taken had a truly salutary effect, (II Cor. 2, 1 - 10). He saw his sin and was taken once more into fellowship. A general awakening took place in the church itself and a new spirit reigned in the congregation.

Thus it should be today. The best working churches are those where discipline is exercised in the spirit of Christ and according to His Word. It is the solemn obligation of the church, in order that sinners might be saved and the church be kept pure, to "purge out the old leaven." Then we are heeding the commands of our Savior, complying with the Word of God, and following in the footsteps of the Apostle Paul.

ments of things pertaining to this life, not then
to judge who are unjust members in the Church."
(I Cor. 6, 2 - 4). The Christians will cooperate
with Christ
Chapter Five

**"Dare any of you go to Law
before the Unjust?"¹**

**Paul's Warning concerning
Litigation.**

"Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?" (I Cor. 6, 1). With these words Paul enters into another of the great problems which perplexed the Christians at Corinth. He gives his warning concerning litigation. His treatment of this matter is masterful. It is worthy of the closest study by all Christians.

To take our disputes with fellow Christians and our misunderstandings with brethren in the faith to pagan courts is utter foolishness. In a few words Paul shows its absurdity. "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 judg-

1. I Cor. 6, 1.

ments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church," (I Cor. 6, 2 - 4). The Christians will cooperate with Christ on the Day of Judgment in passing sentence upon the entire world. They will join with Christ in asserting the faithfulness of the good angels and in the condemning the rebellion of the evil spirits. Surely, the least among the Christians is endowed with more spiritual knowledge than the wisest of this world. Are we then going to ask the pagan and the heathen to pass judgment on the small and transitory things of this world? God forbid!

In litigation not only do we act foolishly, but we "do wrong and defraud," (I Cor. 6, 8). To act in such a manner is to commit sin. Paul places this sin in the same category with fornication, idolatry, adultery, thievery, coveting, drunkenness, reviling, and extortion, (I Cor. 6, 9. 10.). Of all these sins, including litigation, Paul declares that those guilty of them "shall not inherit the kingdom of God," (I Cor. 6, 9). "Those who are dishonest and defraud others, whether under the cover of the law or in any other way, shall not inherit the kingdom of God."² The con-

2. Mueller, op. cit., p. 76f.

demnation of God rests upon them.

Furthermore, Paul shows that persons guilty of litigation are not born again, are not true Christians, and therefore are still in their sins. To such Paul's words could not apply, "But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God," (1 Cor. 6, 11). How can a person who has been truly washed by the blood of Christ use the force of the law at the expense of his fellow believers? How can a man who has been truly sanctified by the Spirit of our God ask the heathen to settle his disputes? How can one who has been truly justified in the name of the Lord Jesus go to the courts of the Gentiles? Such an inconsistency cannot and must not be in the life of the individual Christian, nor dare it exist in the Christian congregation as such.

A word of explanation is in place here. Paul does not imply that a Christian may never use the courts or the civil law. This would be going to the opposite extreme -- a thing which Paul always avoided. "Christians may indeed use the courts to determine matters of fact in law or to sue for protection from the ungodly."³ The courts can be

3. Ibid., p. 77

appealed to in our dealings with the heathen. There we meet them on common ground. Law and order are also gifts of God. Therefore the Christian does not do wrong when he uses this institution of the Almighty in his relations with the world.

But here Paul is impressing upon our minds the relationship of one believer to another. In such dealings we are never to transgress the spirit and the law of brotherly love. The law of love, and not the law of the land, is to be the basis of all our actions. Let love prevail! If need be, "rather take wrong" and "rather suffer yourselves," (I Cor. 6, 7), than to be guilty of sinning against the principle of true Christian and sincere brotherly love.

If we always keep in mind these two important facts then Paul's question, "Dare any of you go to law before the unjust?" will and can be answered easily.

1. I Cor. 6, 12.

2. Galatians, ch. 2: 11-13.

Chapter Six

"Temples of the Holy Ghost!"¹

Paul's Appeal concerning the Sanctity of the Body.

Just as Christians are not of this world, but still live in the world, so also were the Corinthian Christians constantly in danger of stumbling into many of the pitfalls which were present in their city. In this "European Sodom"² licentiousness and immorality were not only commonly practiced, but they met with complete social approval. The temptation to follow the sinful example of their heathen neighbors was constantly present with them. For that reason Paul had to remind them and impress upon their minds that they were the temples of the Holy Ghost. The need was truly great for an appeal concerning the sanctity of the body.

Paul did not walk about in the clouds in his argumentation, but his principles and advice were down to earth, logical, and concrete. He presents it in this way: "Meats for the belly and the belly

1. I Cor. 6, 19.

2. Mueller, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

for meats; but God shall destroy both it and them. The body is not for fornication but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body," (I Cor. 6, 13). The body was not made for food, but food was made for the body. We eat to live, not live to eat! From this comparison Paul then makes the application. God did not make the body for fornication. The argument that God made the sexual distinctions and, therefore, it is right and proper to indulge in sexual gratification has no grounds or defense. The truth is that the body belongs to the Lord, and therefore the Lord is for the body.

Our bodies belong to Christ. This is true by virtue of His great work of redemption. Christ not only saved our souls from sin, death, and the devil, but also our bodies have been ransomed by the blood of Jesus. Since "God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power," (I Cor. 6, 14), we, not merely as spirits, but as persons are the children of God.

The body belongs to Christ as well as the soul, and it is unlawful to use the property of another against his consent and for the purposes which dishonor him. Our bodies should be instruments for the accomplishment of Christ's holy will. This truth realized, will sanctify all the common relations in life.³

3. Ibid., p. 78f.

Also, Paul declares, "And the Lord for the body," (I Cor. 6, 13). What a marvelous dignity Paul confers upon the body of the Christian. Now, as believers in Christ we are members of the body of Christ, (I Cor. 6, 15). Christ now actually dwells within us by virtue of the mystical union, for those that are joined with the Lord are one spirit with Him, (I Cor. 6, 17). Through the work of God's Holy Spirit we have been made the temples of God. God's dwelling place on earth is now the redeemed bodies of the Christians. In olden days the temple at Jerusalem was the abode of God, but now we, our bodies, are the habitation of the Most High. Therefore, this abode and habitation of the Lord must be kept morally clean and pure. "Shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of a harlot? God forbid!" (I Cor. 6, 15).

Another truth which must be remembered is that the body will be raised on Judgment Day, (I Cor. 6, 14). Heathen philosophers and modern atheists try to deny this fact. But God's Word clearly and definitely sweeps aside these false notions. The bodies of all men will be raised either to everlasting glory or to eternal shame. Hence Christians should not abuse their bodies by sin, but preserve them in purity so that they may be pre-

sented to our Lord on the Last Day unspotted and unblemished.

This was Paul's appeal. How urgent also to-day is this same plea, "Flee fornication," (I Cor. 6, 18)! The peril of immorality seriously threatens the very foundation of our spiritual life and existence. Especially must the youth of our age realize this great danger. For that reason the Christian pastor must continue to warn and to make this same appeal which Paul gave concerning the sanctity of the body. Just as Paul showed the Corinthians that they must have and keep their bodies as sanctified habitations of our God, so also must we plead with the members of Christ to be continually mindful that their bodies are not their own but are the temples of the Holy Ghost!

... which it was
... to abstain; or as something ven-
... "holy," it would unrestrained indulgence
... not only permitted, but even "god-blessing."
The Corinthians were confused. For that reason
they came to Paul for advice.

Paul did not go to the rescue. And we, the pas-
tors and Christians of today, thank God that Paul,

Chapter Seven

"Let them Marry!"¹

Paul's Counsel concerning Marriage.

One of the great problems which troubled the Corinthian Christians was the subject of marriage. Questions about matrimony would be inevitable. We can well understand why they would demand of their spiritual shepherd and leader, the great Apostle Paul, more information in this matter. The vicious immorality which was so prevalent in their city had left its marks also on the holy estate of wedlock. In their pagan philosophies the heathen had gone to one of two extremes. They regarded marriage either as something viciously sinful, from which it was desirable for man to abstain; or as something sensuously "holy," in which unrestrained indulgence was not only permitted, but even "god-pleasing." The Corinthians were confused. For that reason they come to Paul for advice.

Paul did come to the rescue. And we, the pastors and Christians of today, thank God that Paul,

1. I Cor. 7, 36.

with the help of God's Holy Spirit, could so adequately and directly answer those many questions which burdened the Christians at Corinth. These are the same questions which come to every pastor. The problems of marriage are just as prevalent among Christians of today as they were in the Christian congregation at Corinth. Such questions as, What makes for a happy marriage? How long does marriage last? Can a Christian get a divorce? What about mixed marriages? Which is better, marriage or celibacy? are questions not only which the Christians at Corinth brought to their minister Paul to be answered, but also which devout believers of this day and age, seeking guidance and advice, continually bring to their pastors. Paul's answers and solutions to these questions and problems are directly applicable in these modern times. His advice to the Corinthians concerning marriage is the same counsel which we can -- yes must -- use today.

Marriage is a divine institution. God created Eve, presented her to Adam, and thus established the holy estate of matrimony. It is not good for man to be alone, and for that reason God gave to him a wife. In order that women might find true joy and happiness God has given to her a husband.

In order that both might enjoy real contentment and a full life God has given to them each other. God told them that they were to be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth. This was the basic reason for the establishment of this estate. Marriage was for the propagation of the human race. And as with all of His creation, God looked upon it, and it was very good.

But then came the Fall. Sin entered the world, and as evil tainted all of God's creation, so also marriage was blemished because of the work of the devil. Now man is continually struggling with his human desires and drives. He must continually strive to keep them in subjection. Because of this fact marriage takes on another purpose. Paul brings out this fact when he says, "It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband," (I Cor. 7, 1. 2.). Here Paul recommends marriage to all as a means by which man may best keep himself pure.

If a person is without the rare gift of continence, it is his duty to employ that means by which God has been pleased to restrain and curb man's depraved passions. This does not debase marriage, as some have thought, but it prescribes that provision which

God has ordained for the weakness of man since the Fall. Before the Fall, marriage was designed purely for the procreation of the race. Sin being unknown, there was no unlawful and inordinate passion to reckon with. But after the Fall, marriage serves incidentally also as a curb to the perverted desires of men and as a safeguard of purity.²

Marriage is truly one of the great gifts which God has given to man. It has been said that marriage is the only part of Paradise which we still enjoy. But if we are to realize all of the happiness and all of the blessings of this holy estate, then we must use it as God has prescribed. If we violate the God-given regulations of marriage then all that can be expected is sorrow and misery.

The first fact which Paul establishes is that the divinely instituted form of marriage is monogamy. Paul told the Corinthians, "Let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband," (I Cor. 7, 2). Paul, in accordance with the whole Scripture, regards marriage as a union of one man and one woman. The twain become one flesh. Therefore, anyone who enters the marital union gives over his entire body to his spouse and cannot transfer it to another either by bigamy or by any other adulterous relations.

 2. Mueller, op. cit., p. 81

The other fact which must be kept in mind is that if marriage is to be truly happy it requires full cooperation and consideration in all matters. This is necessary also and especially in regard to those privileges which the married enjoy. Paul said, "Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency," (I Cor. 7, 3 - 5). With these words Paul declares that all of the affairs of married life must be motivated by loving cooperation and consideration. If such consideration dictates continence, either temporary or even permanent, then such dictates should and must be followed. That is the requirement and duty of each spouse. That is the key which will bring true and lasting happiness. This is so often forgotten, and is so often the reason for divorce. For that reason all pastors, as did Paul, must impress upon those who come to him with their marital problems that due benevolence, cooperation, and

consideration are the privileges, but also the requirements and duties of married life.

Concerning the duration of marriage Paul informs us that it ends naturally with the death of one spouse. "The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will," (1 Cor. 7, 39). This should answer for us the question whether a spouse may remarry after the death of the husband or wife. Death is God's way of bringing wedded life to an end. The living partner is then free and may, if desirous, marry again.

Now Paul takes up the great and vexing problem of divorce. When is divorce rightful and in accord with God's injunctions?

Although the Word of God knows of only one rightful cause for the dissolution of marriage: fornication, Matt. 19:9, there is, according to the plain apostolic statement, 1 Cor. 7, 15: . . . another case in which the innocent party may not enact, but will 'suffer,' the dissolution of his or her marriage, to wit, when a spouse deserts the other 'maliciously,' i.e., with the manifest intention of not returning to the abandoned spouse, and will not by any means be persuaded to return. In this case the innocent party, of course, after having secured a legal divorce, is according to the declaration of the Apostle, 1 Cor. 7, 15: no longer "under bondage," i.e., no longer bound to the former spouse (cf. Rom. 7:1 - 3) and must not be denied remarriage at a

proper time. Desertion is in itself divorce, while fornication is not itself a divorce, but cause for a divorce. 3

It is also well to note Paul's view concerning a separation. "Let not the wife depart from her husband: But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife," (I Cor. 7, 10. 11.). In cases of incompatibility, cruelty, non-support, and the like, a separation can be made. But in themselves, these are not divorce nor grounds for divorce. In such a case the marriage is still in force and every effort should be made to effect a reconciliation. During such a period neither party has the right to remarry. Separation is not divorce, and a divorce cannot be obtained except for Biblical reasons. For that reason in the sight of God they are still married.

A very perplexing aspect of this subject of matrimony is the great problem which arises because of mixed marriages. The validity of a union between a heathen and a Christian, or between two people of different faiths and creeds is recognized by God. It is a marriage! It is not to be broken

except for those reasons which Scripture allows. To such Paul's advice can well be given. "If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. And the woman which hath a husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: also were your children unclean; but now are they holy. But if the unbelieving depart let him depart. A brother or sister is not under bondage in such cases," (1 Cor. 7, 12 - 15). Not only because it would be unscriptural to gain a divorce for such a reason, but also for the sake of the unbelieving spouse, which the believer may be able to bring to Christ, and for the sake of the children should a believing spouse continue in such a marital union.

However, a word of warning must be given to those who contemplate entering into such a mixed marriage. Marriage not only should comprise living together as one flesh, but also should include a unity of spirit and soul. How can two people live together happily as one if they are of different faiths? A complete unity cannot be accomplished, and their lives both physically and spiritually become endangered.

Chain two vessels together on the ocean, allowing them to be some yards or even feet apart, and in the storm they will soon tear themselves to pieces and go down into the depths. But if you so rivet them together that the twain will be one, they will be mutual helps, and they will stand the tempest. So in marriage.⁴

Paul now turns to the other side of this problem. What about celibacy? Is it something which is sinful, or is it more God-pleasing than marriage? Paul's advice to the married definitely shows that marriage is not sinful and is not inferior to celibacy. But here Paul does give certain advantages which celibacy may enjoy under certain or peculiar circumstances. The unmarried can during periods of uncertainty and distress be spared many of those difficulties which cannot be avoided by the married, (I Cor. 7, 26. 28.). They also are less likely to set their hearts on the things of this world, (I Cor. 7, 29. 30.). To the married the temptation may be stronger to set themselves on the material things of this life -- the children, the home, the means of support, and the like. Finally, those who are unmarried can often more easily dedicate themselves fully to Christ and freely engage in the work of the Lord, (I Cor. 7, 32 - 34).

4. Spence and Exell, *op. cit.*, p. 231

Nevertheless, Paul does not go to either of the extremes on this subject. Both celibacy and marriage are gifts of God. He who has the gift of continence, and wishes to serve God with his whole life, does so with the blessings of God. But he who wishes to marry, also "doeth well," (I Cor. 7, 35 - 37.)

At this point Paul turns to the parents. He also has words of advice to them in this matter. Parents too have power and authority with regard to the marriage of their children. Their consent also is required. Children are not merely to "get married," but are to be given in marriage by their parents, (I Cor. 7, 38).

But this does not mean that the parents have the complete authority in the marriage of their children. They must also take into consideration the feelings of their child. They dare not force their offspring to marry whom they please, or refuse to give their consent when they have no just or valid reasons. This would be a misuse of their power and authority.

Still they may guide and direct their child in his or her choice of a spouse. They may expect their son or daughter to choose one who is of the same faith and who leads a life which is pleas-

ing and acceptable to God. If such is the choice then they can -- yes should -- give their consent and blessings.

Such is the advice of Paul on this whole subject of marriage. He does not say that you must marry, nor does he declare that you dare not be married. He does not even say that one is better than the other. Such must be the attitude of every pastor. He dare not fully advocate one to the exclusion of the other, nor completely disavow one without consideration for the opposite. Marriage and celibacy stand side by side. Under certain circumstances he may see fit to advise celibacy, while in other instances he too may say with Paul, "Let them marry." If he follows this same approach which Paul used in his counsel concerning marriage, a pastor can be assured that he is giving the best marital counsel which can be found, for it is the advice and guidance of none other than God's own Holy Spirit.

Chapter Eight

"All Things are Lawful, but not Expedient!"¹

Paul's Instructions concerning Christian Liberty.

One of the special problems which perplexed and confused the Corinthians Christians was the matter of "touching things offered unto idols,"² (I Cor. 8, 1). For the Corinthians this was a very serious matter. Because they lived in a pagan city which was constantly bringing them in- to contact with this perplexing and confusing problem, they came to their pastor Paul for sane and sober advice.

Paul treated this question in a truly master- ful manner. He showed his great mastery by the fact that his utmost concern was not so much with this particular problem but rather with the prin- ciple which was involved, i.e., Christian liberty in matters of adiaphora. He stated the principle with an understanding, clearness, and precision

1. I Cor. 10, 23.

2. Mueller, ed., Concordia New Testament with Notes, p. 463. i.e., "the flesh of animals sac- rificed to idols, on which the offerers and their friends feasted in the idol's temple, verse 10, and which was sometimes sold in the market, chap. 10:25."

that plainly proved him a divinely inspired apostle and a true servant of Christ.

While to-day we do not have cases such as these,³ the principles set forth by the apostle are of wide and daily application to questions pertaining to amusements, social affairs, pleasures, ways of spending Sunday, kinds of professional pursuits one may follow etc. In our mingling with society many questions arise which are similar to those that confronted the Corinthian Christians and about which there is no definite agreement among Christians.⁴

For that reason these chapters of First Corinthians, (chapters 8, 9, and 10), on the subject of Christian liberty are of the greatest importance of the pastor of today.

Paul very tactfully and effectively stresses, first of all, that Christian liberty must not only be viewed and judged from the point of mere knowledge. Knowledge only puffeth up! (I Cor. 8, 1). It usually brings with itself arrogance and conceit. A man who has such knowledge, which vaunts only itself, in reality knows nothing yet as he ought to know, (I Cor. 8, 2). He is an ignoramus in regard to this basic principle of Christianity.

3. Morgan, op. cit., p. 106. The author gives an extraordinary example where the subject of offering meats to idols had direct meaning in missionary work in China.

4. Mueller, op. cit., p. 91f.

On the other hand, however, "charity edifieth," (I Cor. 8, 2). Love toward God and also toward his neighbor is the true mark of a real Christian. Merely knowing that all things are lawful for the Christian is not enough. But having true love and brotherly charity in these matters of adiaphora is the characteristic of a true child of God. Expediency will often require the stronger Christian to refrain from certain things for the sake of the weaker brother. He is kind and considerate toward the weak faith and sensitive conscience of his fellow believer, (I Cor. 8, 7 - 13). The true Christian realizes that, while all things are truly lawful for those who have been freed through the blood of Christ, yet all things are not always suitable or advantageous. Therefore, knowledge is not the only motivating power for our actions, but charity must rule in all matters.

To illustrate this principle of Christian liberty Paul uses a personal example. He shows the Christians that he truly 'practices what he preached.' He tells them, "Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Are not ye my work in the Lord? If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord. Mine

answer to them that do examine me is this: Have we not power to eat and to drink? Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas? Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working? (I Cor. 9, 1 - 6). In other words, Paul emphasizes that he was fully entitled to ask for support from his Corinthian Christians. The right to do this was his! This he proves very conclusively. First of all, it was the common right of the apostles to be supported by their congregations, (I Cor. 9, 5).

Again, the right to ask for support is based on the universal principle of remuneration for services rendered. In every profession the laborer is worthy of his hire. The soldier expects to receive his wage from his government. The man who has a vineyard has the full right to eat of the fruit thereof. The shepherd can enjoy the benefits of his flock, (I Cor. 9, 7). Even so should a minister receive a reasonable compensation for his work and labor.

This claim of Paul is also based upon the law of the Old Testament, (I Cor. 9, 8 - 10). There God Himself instructed His people, "Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the

corn," (I Cor. 9, 9). No one challenged this right of the ox to receive his food. How much more is the minister of the Gospel to receive his compensation!

Finally, Paul shows that in the Old Testament the priests of the temple were provided for by definite Mosaic legislation, (I Cor. 9, 13). The priests and Levites who conducted the religious services in the Temple were supported from the offerings and contributions which the children of Israel brought to the House of God as sacrifices. So shall the pastors and ministers of the New Testament receive their support.

Paul sums it all up when he says, "Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel," (I Cor. 9, 14). This is God's express will and law. He Himself guarantees this right of support which Paul here maintains. That should completely and finally settle the matter.

Now Paul draws the important lesson. He says, "But I have used none of these things," (I Cor. 9, 15). Paul abstained from making use of this right. Rather, he showed the greatest consideration for his newly-founded congregation at Corinth. Because he desired no glory, praise, or benefit for himself,

(I Cor. 9, 19), Paul completely refrained from receiving any compensation from them.

Rather, he says, "I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law; that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without the law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak," (I Cor. 9, 19 - 22). Paul emphasized that he completely abstained from the use of his right and Christian liberty for this one great purpose, "that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel's sake," (I Cor. 9, 22. 23.). Oh that all pastors and ministers of Christ would realize this great lesson which Paul here taught so vividly, that they be all things to all men, (I Cor. 9, 22), for the sake of the Gospel and of Christ!

Paul also uses an illustration from activities which were well-known to all the Corinthians. "Know ye not that they which run in a race, run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things," (I Cor. 9, 24. 25.).

How thrilling it must have been for the Corinthians to hear Paul speak of those famous games which they loved so dearly. How readily they realized the lesson which Paul was impressing upon their minds. They fully understood the point which he was trying to emphasize.

As in those Corinthian games, so also in Christian liberty one fact was important, i.e., that anyone preparing for them guard himself in his use of Christian liberty. He must be willing to abstain from all things that might hinder him from obtaining his own salvation or that of others. He must not insist upon Christian liberty when the spiritual welfare of a soul is at stake, either his own or that of a brother, but must forego his privileges for the sake of the great prize which the Gospel promises and offers. If this principle is followed then we are using our Christian liberty as God would have us use it and we are following the advice which Paul, as an apostle of Christ, has given us in this matter.

Paul now uses the Children of Israel in the Old Testament as an example for the Corinthians, (I Cor. 10, 1ff.). They are to serve as a warning against the abuse of Christian liberty. God had recognized them as His very own beloved children.

They had enjoyed the closest communion with their heavenly Father. God had continually presented to them the answers to all their needs. He had supplied them with food and water, and had continually showered upon them His richest blessings. Never was a nation as privileged as were the Children of Israel.

But in return for the great blessings which they had enjoyed at the hand of God, the Children of Israel continually murmured and grumbled against their God, (I Cor. 10, 10). Instead of being faithful to their Heavenly Provider, they fell away from Him and followed the idols of the heathen, (I Cor. 10, 7). Instead of dedicating their entire lives to the glory of God and to the service of His name, they "sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play," (I Cor. 10, 7). They completely abused and misused the wonderful privileges and great blessings which God had showered upon them.

"Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition," (I Cor. 10, 11). The Corinthians, too, were now a privileged people in the sight of God. Through the blood of Christ they had received the adoption of sons. Because Christ had conquered sin, death, and the devil, they were now the free children of God.

But they must beware lest they misuse the liberty which was now theirs. They must be warned that they do not fall into the same terrible sins of which the Children of Israel were guilty. They dare not abuse the freedom which they now enjoy, but must learn to use it cautiously and reservedly. If they will learn this lesson, then the example of the Israelites of the Old Testament has been of benefit and profitable for them. Then they have learned the true concept and real meaning of Christian liberty.

But Paul does not stop with merely rebuking the abuse of this liberty. He now brings to his Corinthian Christians great words of encouragement. He says, "There hath no temptation taken you but as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it," (I Cor. 10, 13). The lot of the Corinthian Christians was not an easy one. Every phase of Christianity presented problems for them. Every doctrine seemed to involve difficulties.

But they must not fall into despair. Over all of these temptations and trials there was still a God in heaven, who was watching over and pro-

protecting His people. He will not let them succumb to the temptations, but will give them the strength by which they will be able to stand up against and overcome the snares of the devil. Thus also in this matter of Christian liberty God would help and guide them so that they would follow the right course. He would give them such spiritual insight that they would be able to discern when they could indulge in their liberty, and when they were to refrain for the sake of the weaker brother. Not only does Paul's advice help in solving this problem, but God Himself will also come to our assistance.

As we study this discussion on Christian liberty, we again find that our Church is in full accord with the practice which Paul prescribes to the church at Corinth. Paul insists on the acknowledgment of Christian liberty, as we do to-day. He does not declare anything to be a sin which God in His Word does not condemn as a sin. That, too, is the practice of our Church to-day. Yet Paul warns the Corinthians most earnestly against abusing their Christian liberty, through which their weak brethren might be offended. For the sake of not giving just occasion for offense, Christians must be ready to desist from all things that are not expedient or do not edify. . . . All its teaching, warning, and exhorting our Church does, as Paul did, alone by means of the Gospel. . . . Similar evils as those at Corinth are found here and there in the true visible Church of to-day. But by God's grace there is with us to-day also the precious balm which God has given us for the healing of sick mankind -- the Word of God.

5. Ibid., p. 106f.

Laxity in Christian practice is not what the Apostle Paul here advocates. Rather, he insists upon a full and complete subjection to the Word of God. But he also warns against every form of legalism. Where God's Word does not speak there we dare not make demands upon Christians. In matters of adiaphora, where Scripture is silent, each member of Christ has the right to exercise his Christian liberty. But in doing so he must remember the warning of Paul that though all things are lawful, yet they are not always expedient. This is, and even must be, the guiding principle which we must follow if we are to avoid any abuse of our Christian liberty.

Paul's governments and ordinances, which were based on the Gospel of Christ, but when it came to the practical application of the basic principles of the Word of God, then they in effect fell by the wayside. Paul returned again where he had been, but now Paul must come again, in an evangelistic manner, to his beloved flock. This time he must bring to them advice concerning proper church doctrine. He must impress upon their minds that "all things may be done decently and in order," (I Cor. 14, 40).

Chapter Nine

"Let All Things be done Decently and in Order!"¹

Paul's Advice concerning Proper Church Decorum.

"Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you, BUT, . . .," (I Cor. 11, 2). Yes, Paul could pay his Corinthian Christians this very high compliment. They followed him as good sheep follow their shepherd. Still, he had to continue with that little word 'but.' They were willing to follow his commandments and ordinances, which were based on the Gospel of Christ, but when it came to the practical application of the basic principles of the Word of God, then they so often fell by the wayside. Paul rendered praise where praise was due, but now Paul must once again, in an evangelical manner, chide his beloved flock. This time he must bring to them advice concerning proper church decorum. He must impress upon their minds that "all things must be done decently and in order," (I Cor. 14, 40).

1. I Cor. 14, 40.

One of the points which caused much disturbance in the Corinthian congregation was the position of women in the congregation. With their behavior they were often the cause for offense. They were publicly praying and prophesying. They came into the church with their heads uncovered, (I Cor. 11, 5). This was causing strife in the congregation. Therefore the members of the church came to Paul with this problem, as they had done with so many of their difficulties, seeking true and sound pastoral advice.

Paul does not here speak of the spiritual relationship of women, i.e., her relationship to her God. In this she is equal to the man. She too is a royal priest in the priesthood of all believers. Paul definitely shows this in his other epistles, (cf. Gal. 3, 28). But here Paul stresses her temporal or earthly relations, i.e., her dealings with her fellow men. When she becomes a Christian the woman does not break off all of her relationships with others in the world. She is still bound to her rightful position in life, and that is in subjection to the man.

Paul bases this fact upon the divine order which God Himself has ordained. "The head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the

man; and the head of Christ is God," (I Cor. 11, 3). Christ forms the center. Christ is the head and we are all His submissive members. So is the woman subject to the man. When the woman changes this order, she is not merely altering a custom of the human race, but she is tampering with the ordinances of God Himself. Rather than be guilty of such a serious transgression of the Law of God, she should lovingly and willingly submit to the will of God and show this attitude in the way she acts, yes, even in the way she dresses, (I Cor. 11, 4f.).

The position of the woman is also based on an argument from moral propriety. Paul says, "For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered. For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man. For the man is not of the woman, but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman, but the woman for the man," (I Cor. 11, 6 - 9). Also outside of the sphere of the church, Paul argues, God has established a certain propriety in man's relation to woman. Even the unwritten law in man's heart instinctively declares to man that he was not created for woman, but the woman for man.

God's actions also agree with this. He created first the man and then took woman out of man. Man came first, reflecting the glory of God. Woman came next, as the glory of the man. She also was the first to sin, and also the one guilty of causing man to fall into the snares of the devil. Henceforth, she is lower than man and is to be subject to him. She should show this position even in the apparel which she wears, as also the man is to declare in the same manner his position over against the woman. Rebellion in this matter is not only against the Word of Christ, but is even against the natural law which God has given to all men.

What about women voting in the Christian congregation? Even this practical problem of today is easily solved for us if we follow the principle of Paul. Women are to be subject to the men. This Scripture teaches very plainly and clearly. This holds true also in the affairs and business of the church. Paul said, "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience," (I Cor. 14, 34). The men, therefore, hold the right and privilege of voting in the Christian church.

However, this does not mean that the women should not be concerned about nor interested in

the affairs of the church. They may, through proper and recognized channels, make suggestions and voice opinions to the congregation. But, Paul says, "If they will earn anything, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church!" (I Cor. 14, 35). They are not to usurp to themselves those rights which belong only to the men. Therefore, they are not to hold voting power in the Christian congregation.

The reversal of God's law respecting women was not, however, the most serious transgression against proper church decorum found in the Corinthian congregation. Far greater were the abuses which crept into the church with regard to the observance of the Lord's Supper. It was a serious and scandalous situation, one which Paul had to deal with rather harshly.

How shocked Paul must have been when this terrible news came to him that "when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you. When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's Supper. For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is

hungry, and another is drunken," (I Cor. 11, 18 - 21). These Corinthians had taken the Holy Sacrament of the Altar, something which is held so sacred and cherished so dearly by all true believers, and had grossly desecrated and violated it. They had taken this great and wonderful spiritual meal in which Christ gives us His own body and blood, and made out of it just an ordinary dinner or supper which we eat in our homes. And it was even worse than that! Selfishness, inconsideration, lovelessness, yes, even gluttony and drunkenness were indulged in at the celebration of the Lord's Supper. The cliques and factions in the Corinthian congregation had used the celebration of the Sacrament of the Altar as a means whereby they would display their social position, their wealth, yes, and also their false ideas and misconceptions concerning the Lord's Supper.

This was nearly more than Paul could bear. With biting and piercing words he says, "What! Have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? Or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I praise you not," (I Cor. 11, 22). Seldom did Paul use such strong language, but in such a situation as this he deemed it an absolute necessity in order to awaken and arouse the Corin-

thians out of their lethargy of sin before it would be too late.

Paul takes his readers back to the night in which the Savior was betrayed, and with the recounting of the institution of the Lord's Supper he attempts to impress upon them the sacredness of this sacrament and the high esteem with which all true believers of Christ must regard it. On that night the Lord broke the bread and took the wine and in, with, and under those elements He gave to them His true body and blood. With that act He gave not only to those disciples but also to all believers, (I Cor. 11, 26), an individualized absolution and forgiveness of sins, and a personalized assurance of eternal life and salvation. This is the true essence and these are the real benefits for which this Sacrament was intended and instituted.

Should there be any doubt in our minds with regard to the doctrine of the Lord's Supper? Paul told the Corinthians, "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you," (I Cor. 11, 23). The teachings of the Lord's Supper were directly revealed and communicated to St. Paul by Christ Himself. Can there be any doubt as to the certainty of the Real Presence of the body and blood of Christ in the elements of the bread and the wine? Can there be any uncertainty as to

the benefits and blessings which are derived from Holy Communion, when Christ Himself has promised them to us? And for the Christian of today there is also another added factor of certainty. Can we not see the great and gracious wisdom of God in this fact that the Holy Spirit deemed it advisable to give us the inspired account of the words of institution four times on the pages of Holy Writ. All three of the Synoptic Gospels include this account, and the fourth is found here in this Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians. This was not mere repetition, but each account adds assurance upon certainty as to the truthfulness of this wonderful and comforting doctrine.

Paul now makes the practical application. How are we going to receive this sacrament? What will our attitude be and how will we act when we attend Holy Communion? He impresses upon the minds of the Corinthian Christians, as well as of all believers, that we must beware and be careful that we will not be unworthy recipients of the Lord's Supper. He warns, "Wherefore, whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. . . . For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not dis-

cerning the Lord's body," (I Cor. 11, 27. 29).

Woe to the man who takes of the Lord's Supper unworthily. The judgment of condemnation of Christ Himself rests upon such a one.

Therefore, to ensure a worthy reception of the Lord's Supper, Paul tells us, "But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup," (I Cor. 11, 28). We must examine ourselves to see, as Luther puts it, "whether we truly repent of our sins, whether we believe in Jesus Christ as our Savior, and whether we have the good and earnest purpose with the aid of God the Holy Spirit henceforth to amend our sinful lives."² If we can say that, with the help of God, these requirements have been met, then we know that our communion-going will be worthy and we will derive those blessings and benefits which the Sacraments offer.

Because of the seriousness and terrible consequences of an unworthy reception of the Lord's Supper, our church practices a "closed communion." The pastor serves as the guardian and watchman of the Lord's Table. He is to do all that is within his legitimate power to make certain the worthiness

 2. Martin Luther, Small Catechism, 1943 edition, p. 204.

of all those attending Holy Communion. For this reason it is required of all who intend to go to communion to announce this intention with the pastor. In this way he can also help and aid them in their self-examination. Though we have no direct command from God that we must follow the above-described procedure, it is in full harmony with the spirit of the Word of God concerning the Lord's Supper. It is a legitimate and valid deduction which we make directly from the Scriptural statements on this doctrine. Therefore, we as Christians and as pastors must insist upon this position and practice of the Lutheran Church with regard to communion.

All things must be done decently and in order. This must be the rule for proper church decorum. With Paul as their teacher and beloved pastor the Corinthians could not help but learn this important lesson. They had to be reminded that everything in the church must be done either for the glory of God or for the edification of those attending worship. Nothing is to detract from this! So also in the church of today does this same principle apply. It must guide every action of both the pastor and the members. Always they must realize that just as it is true in the business of the

world so also is it certain in the affairs of the church that all things must be done decently and in order.

The Spiritual Gifts

*Paul's Instructions concerning
Spiritual Gifts.*

"Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I want not have you ignorant," (1 Cor. 12, 1).

Supernatural gifts were not only given to the apostles, but also were found among many of the churches of the apostolic age. Thus too, these gifts of the Holy Ghost were marked by a great diversity. Thus, regarding these could perform miracles, prophecy, speak in unknown tongues, etc. So serious there was confusion among the Corinthian Christians, if they needed help and assistance in the basic principles of Christianity, certainly Paul would have to give them guidance and advice in this matter of the supernatural and miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit.

First of all, Paul tells the Corinthians that they must make sure that the gifts among them are love and genuine. He gives them the simple test which is to be made. "So man speaking by the Spirit"

Chapter Ten

"The Greatest is Charity!"¹

Paul's Injunctions concerning Spiritual Gifts.

"Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant," (I Cor. 12, 1). Charismatic gifts were not only given to the apostles, but also were found among many of the churches of the apostolic age. Then too, these gifts of the Holy Ghost were marked by a great diversity. Those possessing them could perform miracles, prophecy, speak in unknown tongues, etc. No wonder there was confusion among the Corinthian Christians. If they needed help and assistance in the basic principles of Christianity, certainly Paul would have to give them guidance and advice in this matter of the supernatural and miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit.

First of all, Paul tells the Corinthians that they must make sure that the gifts among them are true and genuine. He gives them the simple test which is to be made. "No man speaking by the Spir-

1. I Cor. 13, 13.

it of God, calleth Jesus accursed; and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost," (I Cor. 12, 2). The genuineness of charismatic gifts depends upon the attitude which the individual has over against Christ. If he despises Christ, if he rejects Him as his Savior, if he acts contrary to the Word of God, then he can be sure that the gifts which he displays are not of the Holy Ghost. But if he is a true believer, and uses his gifts to glorify God and praise the name of Jesus, then the gifts are genuine; for no man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost. Thus Paul tells the Corinthians in his injunctions concerning spiritual gifts that they should examine them and make sure that they are true and genuine.

The second fact which Paul tells the Corinthians is that they must realize that though there is a great diversity of these gifts, yet they all come from the Holy Ghost. "Now there are diversities of gifts, . . . And there are differences of administration, . . . And there are diversities of operations," (I Cor. 11, 4. 5. 6.). In their outward appearance these gifts of the Holy Ghost take on various forms, because of the different purposes which they are to accomplish. This was

evident especially in the Corinthian congregation. For to one was given by the Holy Ghost the word of wisdom; to another, the word of knowledge; to another, faith; to another, the gift of healing; to another, the working of miracles; to another, prophecy; to another, discerning of spirits; to another, divers tongues; to another, the interpretation of tongues; (I Cor. 12, 8 - 10).

But in all these gifts, no matter how varied or divers they were, this one important fact had to be remembered, "All these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will," (I Cor. 12, 11). In all of them it was always the one and same Spirit. This was never to be forgotten.

To illustrate this Paul says, "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free: and have been all made to drink into one Spirit," (I Cor. 12, 12. 13.). There are many different members and parts to the body, but all of them find their source of strength in the body as a whole. There are many believers and various classes of people

and nationalities in the Christian church, but all of them find their power in our one and only head, Jesus Christ. So also, there are many kinds of spiritual gifts, but still all have one source, i.e., the Holy Ghost.

Since all of these gifts have one author and one source, they also must have one unifying purpose. They cannot cause divisions or schisms in the congregation. Of genuine charismatic gifts this is impossible. How can God's Holy Spirit work against Himself? Rather, just as the members of the body are mutually dependent and work together for the one purpose of sustaining the body, (I Cor. 12, 14ff.), so also do the members of Christ's body, the church, who possess these gifts, work together in concord and harmony, always having in mind the well-being and advancement of the Christian congregation.

Thus Paul gives the principles which must serve as the criterion of true spiritual gifts. This is the test which must be used to see if they are truly gifts of the Holy Spirit. This is also the same test which we of today must apply to all who claim to possess charismatic gifts. We do not deny the possibility of their existence today. But we must examine them and always see that they

fulfill all of the requirements which Paul lays down for them. If people come to us who claim to possess these spiritual gifts, (Pentecostals, etc.), we must put them to the test. If they cannot fulfill these Biblical principles and show the credentials of true spiritual gifts we cannot, yes, must not accept their validity. We must be on our guard that we are not led astray.

Now for a moment Paul deviates from the general subject of spiritual gifts. He gives, as it were, an extended parenthesis. The literary style of the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians is unsurpassed in all the pages of Scripture.² Paul speaks with all loftiness and grandeur when he begins to describe the greatest of all spiritual gifts, i.e., Christian charity.

2. Doremus A. Hayes, The Heights of Christian Love, p. 15. "Dean Alford said of this chapter that it was a pure and perfect gem, perhaps the noblest assemblage of beautiful thoughts in beautiful language extant in this our world; and a recent writer declares of it that it is beyond question the noblest statement of all that a Christian man ought to be and do and suffer, that has ever been penned. Other passages in the Pauline Epistles may be very precious to us: but if we would enjoy the very best which Paul has to offer us, we must read and study, appropriate and absorb until it becomes a very part of our being, the thirteenth chapter of the First Epistle to Corinth. Paul never wrote anything else to equal it. This chapter is the brightest gem among all his treasures, the fairest flower to be plucked in his garden, the highest mountain peak to which even his daring spirit could ascend."

The first magnificent thought which Paul brings out is the excellency of Christian love, (I Cor. 13, 1 - 3). He declares that even if he had the gift of tongues, had the oratory of the greatest of men, but had not Christian love, it would be only the harsh clanging of brass and cymbals. Even if he had the gift of prophecy, so that he could look into the future and reveal events which were yet to come to pass, but had not Christian love, it would be worth nothing. Even if he could understand all of the mysteries and knowledge of the world, and be the wisest man in the world, but had not Christian love, all would be to no avail. Even if he had the faith which would be able to perform miracles, but had not Christian love, it would be of no real profit. Even if he was the greatest humanitarian that the world has ever seen and gave all his possessions to the poor and needy, but had not Christian love, it would be of no real benefit. Even if he would be willing to sacrifice, yes, even to the extent of giving up his life on behalf of a fellow man, but had not Christian love, there could be no real gain. Orator, prophet, scholar, sage, believer, philanthropist, . . . you are nothing unless you are lover too. Love is worth more than all your graces and

and gifts."³ Or as Paul said, "The greatest is charity," (I Cor. 13, 13).

Paul proceeds next to prove the supremacy of love by introducing us to its nature and attributes, (I Cor. 13, 4 - 7). "It is a description characterized by simplicity and sublimity combined. It is so plain in its appearance that we scarcely realize its grandeur, . . ."⁴

Love is long-suffering, that is, patient, and kind; free from envy; free from empty boasting and self-pride. Again, love is decorous and well-behaved. It "doth not behave itself unseemly," but is polite and mannerly. Love is unselfish; it "seeketh not her own," but the good of others, and is forgetful of self. Love does not give way to passion; it is "not easily provoked;" it is not quick-tempered. Love "thinketh no evil." It is not disposed to impute evil designs to others. Love takes no delight in wickedness; "it rejoiceth not in iniquity" and has no sympathy with it, but "rejoiceth in the truth," its propagation and reception and in whosoever may be its instruments. Love bears all things inflicted by others, so far as this is consistent with duty; it "believeth all things;" it "hopeth all things;" that is, it is disposed to put the best construction upon men's conduct and hope the best concerning them; it "endureth all things" which, in the path of duty, it may be called upon to suffer.⁵

3. Ibid., p. 44.

4. Ibid., p. 45.

5. Mueller, op. cit., p. 127.

Here again, in all plainness and yet profoundness this fact is emphasized that the greatest of all gifts is charity.

The outstanding feature and characteristic of Christian love is that it "never faileth," (I Cor. 13, 8). It is eternal and will last forever. The other spiritual gifts are passing and transitory. Prophecy will soon pass away and the foretelling of the future will soon no longer be necessary. The gift of tongues is only temporary and soon there will be no need for it. The capacity to receive the revelation and knowledge of God is needed only for this life. Just as a child knows and understands only unclearly and obscurely when it is young, but then thinks maturely when it is grown up, so also is the gift of knowledge in spiritual things limited and imperfect while we live here on this earth. But when we reach the full manhood of Christianity, when we enter the eternal bliss and happiness of heaven, then we will come face to face with God and our knowledge will be complete and perfect. But of love, the apostle says, it is never-failing. It is a gift of the life hereafter which we can already enjoy in this life. For that reason, of all spiritual gifts it is the greatest.

But Paul soars even higher until he reaches a climax in the words, "And now abideth faith, hope, and charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity," (I Cor. 13, 13). These are three wonderful and lasting gifts of the Holy Spirit. Faith will abide forever in the sense of having full confidence in God and in Christ. Hope will abide as eternal, blissful looking forward to ever-increasing blessedness in heaven. But even over against faith and hope, charity is greater. Love is an actual reflection of God Himself, for God is Love. Christian charity will then be all in all in heaven. It is, therefore, the greatest of all the spiritual gifts which the Holy Ghost has given to us.

We can easily understand Paul's injunction that we are to seek and covet this gift. Things that are temporary and secondary should never be our chief concern. Nothing should hold us that will not last forever; and the greatest of all permanent and everlasting gifts is love.

Concerning the charismatic gifts, these lesser gifts of the Holy Ghost, Paul places the gift of prophecy at the head of the list from the viewpoint of value and usefulness, (I Cor. 14, 1). Love far supersedes any of these other gifts, but

nevertheless, of all these other gifts prophecy is the most important. It is the gift through which the will and knowledge of God is revealed to men. "He that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort," (I Cor. 14, 3). God used the prophets of the Old Testament as the mouthpieces through which He made Himself known to His people, and He uses the ministers and pastors of today as His prophets of the New Testament. For that reason this gift is greater than any other of these lesser gifts of the Spirit, because it is the most practical and most edifying.

The gift for which the Corinthian Christians seemed to strive mostly was the gift of tongues. They had to be warned so that they would not over-stress this gift. Paul said that he would rather speak five words with understanding than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue, (I Cor. 14, 19). He had a true evaluation of this gift and in giving the Corinthians a true picture of the gift of tongues he gives them certain facts which must be remembered.

1. It is a gift of speech which is directed not to men, but to God (14:2).

2. In itself it does not edify the general Church. Whatever edification there is in it is purely individual and personal (14:4).

3. It is an unintelligible succession of sounds, like an unknown foreign tongue, not to be understood without interpretation (14:6-13).

4. The gift of interpretation is distinct from the gift of tongues, and it may be granted to the same individual who has the gift of tongues or to another (14:13,27,28).

5. It is an energizing by the spirit, and is independent of the intellect of man (14:14).

6. It is a thanksgiving and a blessing addressed to God (14:16,17).

7. It is a sign to the unbelieving (14:22).

8. A number of people speaking with tongues at one and the same time will seem to the unbeliever to be maniac (14:23).⁶

Thus Paul pictures the value of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. They were special blessings of the early Christian church. But even then they were never to supersede the basic doctrines of Christianity. Salvation does not and dare not be made to depend upon them. This is accomplished only through the means of grace, i.e., the Word and the Sacraments. They do not take the place of the fundamental Christian virtues. First Corinthians, chapter thirteen, beautifully shows this. But they were gifts "belonging to the immature rather

6. Doremus A. Hayes, The Gift of Tongues, p. 13f.

than the mature development of the Church."⁷ They were added signs which God graciously gave to the first Christians. But even then, as today, this fact remains that the only gifts which really abide are faith, hope, and charity, and the greatest of all spiritual gifts is and can only be charity.

Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye," (I Cor. 16, 1). With these words Paul gives the Corinthian Christians his recommendations concerning Christian stewardship.

Now often we hear people complaining that their pastor is always preaching about money. Now we hear such accusations or know that one of the things, no doubt, is wrong. Either there is something wrong with the person speaking, or else, there is something wrong with the pastor. Money matters are a vital part of church affairs! They are included in Christian living! Therefore, when people complain that they never always give to the church, either they have not learned this important lesson of Christianity, or else the pastor has failed to present this matter in the correct manner.

7. Ibid., p. 117.

Chapter Eleven

"Now Concerning the Collection!"¹

Paul's Recommendations concerning Christian Giving.

"Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye," (I Cor. 16, 1). With these words Paul gives the Corinthian Christians his recommendations concerning Christian stewardship.

How often we hear members complaining that their pastor is always preaching about money. When we hear such accusations we know that one of two things, no doubt, is wrong. Either there is something wrong with the person speaking, or else, there is something wrong with the pastor. Money matters are a vital part of church affairs! They are included in Christian living! Therefore, when people complain that they must always give to the church, either they have not learned this important lesson of Christianity, or else the pastor has failed to present this matter in the correct manner.

1. I Cor. 16, 1.

In order to help both pastor and people, let us examine these recommendations of the Apostle Paul. Here he gives us both the principles which should guide us in our giving and also the motives which should move us toward good stewardship.

"Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come," (I Cor. 16, 2). In this one short verse we have the recommendations of Paul. They are so brief and short that at first glance they might seem in adequate. But when we begin to study and examine them, we will see that all of the principles involved in true Christ-like giving are included.

The first principle which is to be followed is that our giving is to be systematic giving. "Upon the first day of the week," Paul recommends. On that day when we hear the Word of God, when we serve Him with our prayers and our hymns of praise, on that day also we are to bring our offerings.

Secondly, Paul tells us that the church is to practice all-inclusive giving, i.e., "everyone of you." Whether young or old, whether rich or poor, whether honored or obscure, all are to give of their possessions to the Lord. None are excluded.

But while recommending all-inclusive giving Paul does not forget the third principle which must also be exercised, i.e., proportionate giving. He said, "Let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered you." Paul did not demand for his followers a certain sum, as for example the tenth part, which was prescribed in the Old Testament. Tithing is truly God-pleasing and highly commendable, but no pastor can demand it of his people. All that he can say is that each one is to give as the Lord has prospered him.

On the other hand, all members must remember that they are not to give the barest minimum which is required of them, but they are to give according to the blessings of God which they enjoy. If they follow this principle then liberal giving will be a natural result. God has given everyone enough so that he can give. People complain about poverty, of the high cost of living, and do not know how to 'make ends meet.' In nearly all cases, these arguments are merely used as excuses. Upon an honest self-examination most will be forced to admit that God has amply provided for them. Their trouble is that they have failed to learn this lesson of proportionate giving.

The final principle which Paul emphasizes is that our giving is also to be prompt. He told the Corinthian Christians, "that there be no gatherings when I come." Today he would say, Now the Lord has prospered you; now the church is in need; now, therefore, give to the Lord of the riches which He has bestowed upon you! The needs of the church are urgent! The church is to fulfill the greatest need which the world has, and it must do it now! Therefore, our gifts to the church are not to be put off until tomorrow, but are to be given now -- today. They are to be prompt!

How is the pastor to present the matters of money and of giving to his congregation? Here again Paul shows himself a truly great minister of the Gospel. Even when speaking of stewardship and contributions, Paul uses the Gospel of Christ as the power which is to motivate all giving. When the Jewish Christians at Jerusalem were desperate and in great need, Paul, on their behalf, did not come to the Gentile Christians and tell them that they had to give, that it would be a fine gesture on their part, or that it would be a fine gesture on their part, or that it would be a fine humanitarian act. But rather, he said to them, "I speak not by commandment, but . . . to

prove the sincerity of your love. For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich. And herein I give my advice: for this is expedient for you, . . . Now therefore perform the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have," (II Cor. 8, 8 - 11). There is no use of the Law in this appeal, but only with the power of the Gospel does he urge the Corinthians to show and prove their love.

How important is this lesson for the pastors of today! Christian giving will not and cannot be truly motivated by the preaching of the law. But preach the Gospel of Christ! Show how Christ, though rich, became poor for our sakes! Depict Christ as the personal Savior of all sinners! Then watch the results! Liberal, God-pleasing giving is bound to follow. A person who is truly filled with the love of Christ can do nothing but show forth in return his own gratitude and love to Christ. He will be constrained by the Gospel message to dedicate as a thankoffering to God all of his earthly possessions. If this is the motivating power which we place in the hearts of our members,

then we are doing as Christ would want us to do and we are using the same approach which Paul used.

These are Paul's recommendations concerning Christian giving. They are truly important for each and every Christian, for only when he follows them can he be assured that his gifts to the Lord will be pleasing and acceptable and bring the results and blessings that they should. They are also important for the pastor, for they give to him the rules and principles which must be followed when he brings this subject to the attention of his people. All must learn and realize that truly godly and God-pleasing giving can only be accomplished when, after being motivated by love for Christ, each and everyone of us upon the first day of the week lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him. Then the difficulties and the problems concerning the collection will be easily solved.

Conclusion

What reaction did these letters of Paul have upon the Corinthian Christians? What fruits did Paul's pastoral advice work in them? The church father Clement supplies us with some interesting information which helps us to answer these questions.

He speaks (evidently from his own personal experience) of the impression produced upon every stranger who visited the Church of Corinth, by their exemplary conduct; and specifies particularly their possession of the virtues most opposite to their former faults. Thus, he says, that they were distinguished for the "ripeness and soundness of their knowledge," in contrast to the unsound and false pretence of knowledge for which they were rebuked by St. Paul. Again, he praises the "pure and blameless lives of their women," which must therefore have been greatly changed since the time when fornication, wantonness, and impurity was the characteristic of their society. But especially he commends them for their entire freedom from "faction and party-spirit," which had formerly been so conspicuous among their faults.¹

We see that Paul showed himself a true pastor. His pastoral advice had a salutary effect. He brought a message which not only affected the soul and the mind, but which also showed its re-

1. W. J. Conybeare and J. S. Howson, *op. cit.*, 7th edition, New York, Charles Scribner Company, 1868, p. 153.

sults in daily life. He did not present mere theories nor deal merely in academical questions, but he viewed Christianity as something which was truly practical. He made Christ real to his hearers, caused Jesus to actually live in their hearts, with the help of God's Holy Spirit, which in turn made Christianity vital and living also in the lives of the believers. He showed this in all of the problems with which he dealt at Corinth. He pleaded, he exhorted, he urged, he warned, he argued, he advised always on the basis of the Gospel of Christ. He knew that all the problems at Corinth could and would be solved only after the people in that congregation had learned to love Christ and His Word. That was the basis and the foundation upon which he built all of the solutions for all of their problems. Therein he showed his greatness as a true pastor of Christ and a real shepherd of his flock. May this same greatness be reflected also in the Christian ministry of today!

The Apostle Paul was one of the truly great heroes of the Christian Church. We find him described to us, especially in the Book of the Acts, as a great missionary. Again we see him presented to us, especially in the Epistle to the Romans, as

a great dogmatician. Likewise we behold him, in his other Letters, as a great logician, a great debater, and a great preacher. He was one of the truly great figures in the history of early Christianity. And after we have examined and studied Paul's First and Second Letter to the Corinthians, we are ready to admit and recognize that the Apostle was also a truly great minister and ambassador of Christ. In these letters we see the greatness of PAUL, THE PASTOR.

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