

## LESSON TEXT: 1 Corinthians 1:31

Prepared by Paul T. Butler

### INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

“Let’s choose up sides and play!” As children, we’ve all chosen sides to play ball, tag, kick-the-can, etc. In any form of competition you have to divide up, choose up sides and contend against the opposition. And, in many aspects of life competition is inescapable (sports, politics, business)---therefore division is inevitable.

Paul found Christians in the city of Corinth choosing up sides and dividing themselves against one another within the church. It is expected that sports teams, political parties, or businesses will oppose one another! But it is destructive for members of the same family, team or organization to oppose one another! The Corinthian Christians were choosing sides according to the person by whom they had been immersed into Christ. Some were on Paul’s team; they opposed those on Peter’s team and these opposed those on Apollos’ team. They quarreled and strove with one another over who should run the church, what should be preached, how to discipline, who should marry and who shouldn’t, with whom to associate among the heathen, women’s place, the Lord’s Supper, spiritual gifts---even over the resurrection.

The apostle used the Greek word *schizmata* to describe their squabbling and fighting. *Schizo* is used as a prefix to many words in psychology to describe the mental disorder sometimes referred to as split personality. *Schizophrenia* is a type of psychosis characterized by loss of contact with environment (reality) and by disintegration of personality. This is an apt description of a divided Christendom. Divisions between those professing sincere faith in God and Jesus Christ present to the world a *schizoid* Christianity which has withdrawn from the reality of God’s word!

James writes in his epistle that division among Christians is diabolical or demonic. The devil is the master *schismatic*. He is the author of strife and anarchy. Those who deliberately practice and cherish dividing the church of Jesus Christ are children of the devil!

After D-Day in World War II, someone said to general Eisenhower, “It’s great how you were able to coordinate all the teams in that great enterprise.” The General quickly corrected him: “Not teams,” he said, “but team.”

### QUESTIONS:

1. How could Paul address people as “saints and sanctified” who had so many spiritual failures? 1:2
2. Do Christians have to agree on everything and think alike? 1:10
3. Why do people divide the church over human leaders? Do leaders sometimes contribute to division? Why didn’t Paul? 1:12-13
4. Did Paul imply in 1:14-17 that baptism was unessential or unimportant? Is it something those who claim to be “Christian” should divide over?
5. Is preaching foolishness? Why does the world consider the cross foolishness? 1:21
6. Does Paul’s denunciation of the wisdom of the wise mean Christians should reject all human knowledge? 1:20-25
7. Should Christians keep reminding themselves of what they were before being saved? What has that to do with unity in Christ? 1:26ff
8. Don’t Christians have something about which they may boast? 1:30-31

The Polish border town of Cieszyn (pronounced che-shin) has an interesting name. It’s a contraction of a Polish sentence that means “I am happy.” According to legend there were three brothers, long separated. They were reunited in this place and one said, “I am so happy here,” giving the town its name. It reminds us of Psalm 133:1, “How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity!”  
---1000 Windows, by Robert Shannon

## LESSON TEXT: 1 Corinthians 2:1-16

Prepared by Paul T. Butler

### INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Problems that plague the saints! That's what 1 Corinthians is all about. We've studied in the first chapter already, the problem of schizophrenic, divisive Christians. It is an ever-recurring problem in the church and brings disrepute to the name of Christ and a hindrance to evangelism.

Another problem plaguing the saints is that of **divine revelation** and apostolic authority. This problem is crucial. **It may be the root cause of all the other problems afflicting the church!** The problem is essentially this: How, when, and where does God reveal himself for the salvation and sanctification of all human beings?

A multiplicity of choices are offered to that question (problem):

1. God reveals himself in nature alone.
2. God reveals himself through human reason alone.
3. God reveals himself subjectively and privately in human feelings.
4. God reveals himself by the Holy Spirit extra-biblically, subjectively and individually, by some mystical inner communication.
5. God reveals himself to specifically gifted or called or anointed prophets who have visions and revelations in every generation of man.

**None of the above.** To select any one of the above, or all of the above, is to destroy the **Bible** as **God's final authority** (in human language) in faith and practice. If the Bible alone (esp. the New Testament) is not the only revelation of God for salvation and sanctification, then confusion, division, falsehood, and failure will seize Christendom. In fact, that is the state of Christendom now!

The apostle Paul deals with this crucial problem in our lesson text here. God has revealed himself for the salvation and sanctification of human beings through Jesus Christ's death and resurrection. The apostles (and other NT writers) are the **only** persons to whom God has finally revealed the facts and meaning of the Gospel. They **alone** know the mind of the Holy Spirit and they **alone** have revealed it to the world in human language---their revelation is **only** in the New Testament.

### QUESTIONS:

1. Why was revelation a problem when the apostles were still alive? 2:1  
Is it still a problem in the world today? Why? Why in the church?
2. Why did Paul have to defend the simplicity of preaching? 2:2-6 Is there nothing profound about the Gospel?
3. How does Paul illustrate that no man can know the mind of God unless God reveals it? 2:7-9
4. To whom has God revealed his mind? 2:10-12; 2:13; 2:16 How do you know?
5. By what instrumentality or method has God revealed his mind? 2:13 Is God revealing any **new** thoughts from himself? How do you know?
6. Is it impossible to understand the Bible unless the Holy Spirit works outside the Bible on each individual to enlighten him? 2:14-16
7. Is the NT the final, full and complete revelation of God for all things that pertain to life and godliness? 2:16 Why? How do you know?
8. How is the world to come to faith in Christ? see Rom. 10:14-17; Col. 1:24-29

For ever, O Lord, thy word is firmly fixed in the heavens. Psalms 119:89

The sum of thy word is truth; and every one of thy righteous ordinances endures forever. Psalms 119:160

The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand forever. Isaiah 40:8

The secret things belong to the Lord our God; but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law. Deuteronomy 29:29

"God's revelation unfolded gradually, but it is now open for any and all to see. You may read it when you need guidance, or comfort, or strength, or inspiration." ----- *1000 Windows*, by Robert Shannon

## LESSON TEXT: 1 Corinthians 3:1-23

Prepared by Paul T. Butler

### INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Problems, problems, problems. Problems even plague the saints of God! A Christian will have problems all his life on earth. You will never find a congregation of saints on this earth without some problems---none are perfect! And the one problem that plagues every congregation is the spiritual maturation of all members.

There was something wrong with the "feeding" the Corinthian congregation was getting. Paul was having to minister to them on the spiritual level of baby-hood. They could not handle the tough, hard, demanding realities of true spirituality.

So, what is true spirituality? The NT says **spirituality is setting the mind on the things of the Spirit** (Rom. 8:5-8; Col. 3:1-4). Spirituality is *not* emotionalism. It is *not* measured by quantity of good deeds, or even by the enthusiasm of worship activities. **Spirituality is fundamentally a mind-set.** No matter how emotional, enthusiastic, or religiously active we may become, if our *reasons* for doing good and observing forms are carnal, selfish, and doctrinally wrong, we are **not** spiritual.

The crucial issue is **where** do we **find** the things of the Spirit? That is precisely what Paul has declared in chapters one and two of this epistle! The things of the Spirit of God are found in the Bible--- more specifically, now, in the New Testament! The NT and the NT **alone** is the final revelation of the Holy Spirit of God for the salvation and sanctification of mankind.

Had these Corinthians fed themselves on the apostolic revelation they had been given, rather than the sophistries of Greek philosophy, Jewish mysticism, and their own fleshly pursuits, they would not have had problems dealing with the tough realities of believing and living the Christian life.

We **are** what we **eat** is a truism physically, but just as certainly a fact spiritually! Jesus stated this principle succinctly in his great sermon on The Bread of Life (Jn. 6:25-71). Unless a person feeds on the Bread of Life (the **words** of Jesus and his apostles--see Jn. 6:63)

he or she will have **no** spirituality no matter how he or she feels about anything.

The *explicit* work of the Christian ministry is the feeding of the flock of God (Acts 20:28-32; Jn. 21:15-19; 1 Pet. 5:2) in order to bring the **whole** flock (each member) to spiritual maturity (Eph. 4:1-16; Col. 1:24-29; Heb. 5:11-13).

### QUESTIONS:

1. What is a babe in Christ? 3:1-2 Should we remain babes in Christ? Are babes to be fed differently than others?
2. What is a clear manifestation of spiritual immaturity? 3:3-4
3. How is spiritual immaturity turned into spiritual maturity? 3:5 Whose responsibility is it to see that this is done?
4. What is the **one** and **only** essential to church growth? 3:6-7 Where does God put his power to give growth. (see Mk. 4:1-32)
5. Is God serious about Christians being careful how they "build" his building? 3:10-11
6. Have you seen any of your "building materials" tested in the fire? 3:12-15
7. What will God do with those who destroy his church through division? 3:16-17. Is the Christian Church perpetuating division in Christendom?
8. Do you really believe that all of God's creation is **yours**? 3:21-23 Are you using it? For whom?

Thy words were found, and I ate them, and thy words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart...Jeremiah 15:16

The Bible has been the greatest source of first names in history: How many do you know?

- \_\_\_\_\_ King (American horror novelist)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Carter (former U.S. President)
- \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ Dorsey (American band leaders)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Sousa (the "March" king)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Stalin (former Soviet leader)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Warhol (offbeat American artist)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Seeger (folk singer)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Franklin (colonial American leader)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Williams (American playwright)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Hawthorne (American novelist of the 1800s)

## LESSON TEXT: 1 Corinthians 4:1-21

Prepared by Paul T. Butler

### INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

The Corinthian Christians were showing partiality toward their favorite apostles and other leaders. Partiality has no place in the kingdom of God. Yet it is a constant problem in the church. Partiality is severely condemned in the Bible (Lev. 19:15; Deut. 1:17; 16:19-20; Job 13:10; Prov. 24:23; 28:21; Mal. 2:9; Matt. 5:43-48; Col. 3:22--41:1; Rom. 2:11; Gal. 2:6; Eph. 6:9; 1 Tim. 5:21; Jas. 2:9). The Corinthians were not evaluating their leaders by the *one and only* God-approved standard—**faithfulness**. They were judging by worldly standards---success, position, education, wealth.

Paul uses two Greek words by which he categorizes **all** Christians---whether apostles or not. These words are: *huperetas* (galley-slave), and *oikonomos* (house-servant). No matter what a Christian's function in the church, he or she is a **servant!** All Christians are to be evaluated only as to whether they are faithfully *accepting* the position of **servant**. We are not to compare one another's relationship to the Lord on the basis of skills, talents, accomplishments or any other quantitative measurement. God will do the quantitative judging. If quantitative measurements are the criteria of God's judgments, the parable of the pounds (Lk. 19:13-25) is misleading!

Christians must always think of one another (even of leaders) as **servants**. To think otherwise produces favoritism and partiality and, ultimately, destructive division. Paul *was emphatic!* Jesus *was emphatic!* "It shall **not** be so among you," Jesus said to his followers (**Matt. 20:25-28**).

Partiality and egotism in the kingdom of God creates discord; it causes denigration of God; it defiles the conscience and ultimately destroys the soul.

In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels I charge you to keep these rules without favor, doing nothing from partiality.  
---the Apostle Paul to Timothy (1 Tim. 5:21)

### QUESTIONS:

1. Does the admonition against favoring one another mean Christians should not feel closer to some brethren than to others? Why?
2. What is a steward? 4:1 What is *trustworthiness*? Why is this the only standard for judging a steward?
3. What should a church seek foremost in calling a preacher or appointing a leader---personality, eloquence, age, administrative success? 4:2-5
4. Why did Paul use satire 4:6-8 about what the Corinthians thought of themselves? Is it alright for Christians to use satire? When? Why? Did Jesus?
5. If the apostles were held in such low esteem in their own lifetimes, why are they widely venerated by the world today? 4:9-13 How did Jesus explain this caprice in human nature? (see Matt. 23:29-31).
6. How are people *begotten* in Christ? 4:14-16 Should those who lead others to Christ feel like a spiritual parent? What would that involve?
7. What power was Paul going to use on the Corinthians? 4:18-21 Do you look upon *truth* as powerful? What power does truth have? (see 2 Cor. 10:3-5; John 8:31-32).
8. Have you been partial lately? Have you expected someone else to be partial toward you, lately? At the check-out counter, at home, at school, at the drive-through bank----'Fess up!

You shall not pervert justice; you shall not show partiality; and you shall not take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and subverts the cause of the righteous. Justice, and only justice, you shall follow, that you may live....  
---Deuteronomy 16:19-20

## LESSON TEXT: 1 Corinthians 5:1-13

Prepared by Paul T. Butler

### INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

The Christians in Corinth divided when they were supposed to be united, and united when they were supposed to be dividing! Is there ever a time when Christians are supposed to divide? Certainly not over insignificant preferences. But immorality within the body of Christ is never an insignificant matter.

And there was immorality of the basest, most depraved kind going on in the congregation at Corinth. It was sexual immorality so shocking it was not even named among most Gentiles. It was incest! Of course, Paul is speaking hyperbolically to emphasize the seriousness of the crime. Incest **was** indeed practiced among a few of the more depraved Gentiles (e.g. Cleopatra and Ptolemy--brother and sister; Herod Antipas and Herodias--her uncle and brother-in-law; Caligula and his three sisters). But even modern anthropologists and sociologists find incest a crime considered immoral, aberrant and destructive in all ages and cultures. Only those who have surrendered all decency to Satan would practice it.

God expects Christians to keep themselves separated from anyone who calls himself a brother and is continuing to practice moral depravity. Paul was shocked about the incestuous relationship in this member of the church at Corinth. But he was **more shocked** at the **attitude** of the congregation toward it all! The Corinthian brethren had taken the sophisticated, *laissez faire*, attitude. They wanted their urbane Greek and Roman neighbors to see them as smart, cool, bad, and with-it. If they took the drastic action taught by Christ and the apostles, they might be stigmatized as prudes, nerds, or squares. Maybe, too, they didn't have the righteous fortitude to take the action the word of God calls for in such situations. Some members may have said, "Don't make waves, we can't afford to lose these members." Some may have said to the elders at Corinth, "Judge not, that ye be not judged." Whatever was being thought or said, the brethren at Corinth were **WRONG!** Be in Bible School to learn what the **RIGHT** attitude and actions should be in matters such as this!

### QUESTIONS:

1. Could a 20th century congregation of Christians be arrogant about such gross sin within itself as Corinth was? 5: 1-2 Is incest wrong? Why?
2. Was Paul suggesting harsh, unchristian measures against this sinner? 5:3-5
3. What is delivering a man to Satan? 5:5 Who is to do this?
4. What is destruction of the flesh? 5:5 Why? Isn't this mind control?
5. Why does Paul talk about leaven and the lump and the paschal lamb? 5:6-8
6. Why is it permissible to associate with immoral people outside the church and not those within the church? 5:9-13 Isn't that hypocrisy?
7. Is sexual sin the only sin demanding dis-fellowship? Does the church today follow the apostles' instructions in church discipline? What about idolatry?
8. What if a congregation does **not** "drive out the wicked person from among" them? 5:13 Wouldn't it be better to let God judge people?

"For every social wrong there must be a remedy. But the remedy can be nothing less than the abolition of the wrong."  
---Henry George (1839-1897)--American economist, writer, and lecturer

Christian discipline is affirmative action! Its goal is the death of carnal-mindedness in order to save the soul. —PTB

Evil does not disappear merely by being ignored.  
—Anonymous

## LESSON TEXT: 1 Corinthians 6:1-20

Prepared by Paul T. Butler

### INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

It is shameful enough when members of one's immediate family fight, deceive and defraud one another over settlement of estates or other such matters. And when one's family members are professing Christians the shame is magnified in the eyes of the unbelieving world.

What about a Christian businessman or professional---or just a Christian neighbor who cheats another Christian?---or cheats another person of any persuasion, atheist or otherwise? Christians should never have to resort to civil law to arrive at what is fair, honest and just between themselves and non-Christians. If a Christian is being unjustly treated, by anyone, he certainly has biblical precedent for appealing to civil authority for protection and redress. But the Christian **himself** should never have to be arraigned in civil court so as to be forced to be honest, fair and just! This is shameful and shows such a person is unfit for membership in God's kingdom.

Being dishonest or unjust is not nearly as bad as adultery, homosexuality, robbery or drunkenness---**or is it?** And how can doing recreational drugs, gourmandism, or "trial marriage" be wrong. And what about abortion---it's the woman's body and doesn't she have a right to do with her body whatever she wishes? Shouldn't human beings have sovereignty over their own physical bodies to do with as they deem right and proper?

Paul makes it clear and emphatic that every action, either physical or mental, in which man has a choice, is either moral or immoral according to whether it is in accord with the revealed will of God or not. Man was given a human body to use as an instrument to bring honor and glory to God. **The human body does not belong to the human!** Man did not make his body, and he does not ultimately dispose of it. HUMAN BEINGS AND BODIES BELONG TO GOD BY RIGHT OF CREATION AND REDEMPTION!

"...I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize."

---St. Paul (1 Cor. 9:27, NIV)

### QUESTIONS:

1. Could Christians actually settle disputes with one another outside civil court? 6:1-6 All kinds of disputes? How?
2. Would you be willing to allow yourself to be defrauded by a Christian brother before taking him to civil court? 6:7-8 To what extent?
3. Continued sexual misbehavior excludes people from God's kingdom; does continued financial misbehavior? continued abuse of the body? 6:9-11
4. Is homosexuality predetermined (genetic) behavior? 6:9 Is it wrong? Why? May it be changed? How?
5. What should the Christian expression or "position" toward homosexuality? 6:9-11
6. If all things are "lawful" for a Christian, why isn't homosexuality lawful? 6:12-18
7. How does the Holy Spirit dwell in the human body? 6:19 How do you know you have him in yours?
8. Does "You are not your own..." mean we have no say about what we may think and do? 6:19-20 If we aren't our own---whose are we?

"If anything is sacred, the human body is sacred,  
And the glory and sweet of a man is the token of manhood untainted..."  
---Walt Whitman, in "I Sing the Body Electric," 1855

"There is an evil which most of us condone and are even guilty of---indifference to evil. We remain neutral, impartial, and not easily moved by the wrongs done unto other people. Indifference to evil is more insidious than evil itself; it is more universal, more contagious more dangerous"  
---Abraham Jeschel

## LESSON TEXT: 1 Corinthians 7:1-40

Prepared by Paul T. Butler

### INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Do Christians have problems with sexuality?---with marriage? Yes, indeed! Both single and married Christians have problems. Sexuality and marriage are at the very core of being human. Interpersonal relationships of all kinds are complex and stressful. Sexuality and marriage, because of the intense intimacy involved, are the areas of humanness most fraught with the potential for problems. And because Christians have chosen to live on the godly side of the tension between holiness and carnality, the problems they must face with sexuality and marriage increase an hundredfold.

The congregation of saints at Corinth faced three conflicting ideologies in this tension: (1) members with Jewish background considered the unmarried and childless as probably cursed by God for some secret sin; (2) some ascetic cult evidently was teaching that the *most spiritual* people were those who were "married" platonically (i.e., without sexual intercourse) or not married at all; (3) finally, those Corinthian Christians were trying to practice the holiness of the gospel surrounded by the loose and wicked morals of Greco-Roman culture. In that culture rape, fornication, adultery, incest, homosexuality and other perversions were glorified in the theaters and religions of that day. Divorce was the rule rather than the exception.

Does this sound familiar? It should! We Christians live in a society today so much like the one in Corinth A.D. 56, we are struck again with the realization that human nature never changes, except by the power of the Gospel of Christ!

Sexuality and marriage were **not** evolved by man and were **not** brought into existence as ends in themselves. God made man and then he made woman and made the two with sexual natures to be shared only within the protection, limitations and expressions of the Creator's revealed will in the Bible. Man and woman were made to glorify God and enjoy him forever. God made sexuality and marriage for man to use to glorify him. It is the devil and the sinful world that tries to seduce Christians into believing otherwise.

### QUESTIONS:

1. Why would Paul say, ...each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband..? 7:1-2
2. What does Paul mean by saying, ...the wife does not rule over her own body, but the husband does...? 7:3-4
3. Paul *emphasizes* that the human sexual drive is very strong---how strong? 7:5-6
4. Are the unmarried of 7:8,25,32,35 those who have **never** been married?
5. What should Christians do who are married to unbelievers? 7:10-16 What if the unbeliever divorces the believer? May a believer ever divorce a spouse? When? Why?
6. May a believer, having divorced, or having been divorced, remarry? Under what conditions? 7:10-39
7. Is divorce a sin not forgivable by God? by Christians? (see Matt. 12:31; Mark 3:28-30; Luke 12:10). Are there certain reservations to forgiving divorce?
8. Would enforced celibacy produce the highest spiritual good? 7:1-40
9. Since God saw that it was not good for man to be alone (Gen. 2:18), why does Paul say he who refrains from marriage will "do better"? 7:38

"Two persons who have chosen each other out of all the species, with the design to be each other's mutual comfort and entertainment, have, in that action, bound themselves to be good-humored, affable, discreet, forgiving, patient, and joyful with respect to each other's frailties and perfections to the end of their lives."

----Joseph Addison (1672-1719) English writer and Member of Parliament

"I would say that the surest measures of a man's or woman's maturity is the harmony, style, joy, dignity he creates in his marriage, and the pleasure and inspiration he provides for his spouse. An immature person may achieve great success in a career but never in marriage"---Dr. Benjamin Spock, 1968

## LESSON TEXT: 1 Corinthians 8:1-13

Prepared by Paul T. Butler

### INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Petronius (ca. A.D. 6-66), an Epicurean friend of Nero, wrote: "Let's see, first off we had some roast pork garnished with loops of sausage and flanked with more sausages and some giblets done to a turn...there were pickled beets and some whole wheat bread...then came a course of cold tart with a mixture of some wonderful Spanish wine and hot honey...there were chickpeas and lupins, no end of filberts, and an apple apiece...The main course was a roast of bear meat...I put down a pound of it. Besides, I'd like to know, if bears eat men, why shouldn't men eat bears? To wind up, we had some soft cheese steeped in fresh wine, a snail apiece, some tripe hash, liver in pastry boats and eggs topped with more pastry and turnips and mustard and beans boiled in the pod and---but enough's enough..."

Practically every morsel of meat sold and eaten in Greek and Roman cities had been a part of sacrifice to an idol. This presented a very serious problem for the infant church. It involved the most crucial elements of that Christian community ---love, liberty, conscience, temptation, knowledge and spiritual maturation. Some Christians could eat such food with a clear conscience, some could not.

The terms strong and weak are not referring to spiritual strength or weakness---nor to morality. It is better to understand strong and weak in terms of eating and abstaining as in Romans 14:3. Both categories of brethren, if they have not love, consider themselves spiritually *superior* to the other. The terms **do** have to do with matters of opinion or individual preferences; with an individual's cultural, psychological, traditional background and experience.

Those who because of their superior knowledge (i.e., the strong) ate meat sacrificed to idols without guilt were not esteemed by God any higher than those who abstained because of conscience, AND VICE VERSA! Paul is concerned in 1 Cor. 8 with the eater being careless toward the abstainer. **But that does not relieve the "abstainer" from obligation to understand the eater's liberty to eat** (cf. 1 Cor. 10:29).

The issue is: HOW MUCH DO YOU LOVE YOUR BROTHER? It is a principle that applies in entertainments, foods, cultural traditions, vocations, avocations, and many other areas of lifestyles.

### QUESTIONS:

1. Name some articles and actions today sometimes associated with ungodliness which might be neutral in themselves but injurious to some Christian's consciences. 8:1-6
2. What should a Christian in a foreign country do about articles and actions that might be associated with idol worship? 8:7
3. When brethren seem to be **too scrupulous** about some things, what should we do? 8:8
4. If brethren are **too insensitive** toward other's scruples what should we do? 8:9
5. Would you classify yourself as an eater or an abstainer? IN WHAT?
6. What about movies? T.V.? Gambling---bother your conscience? the conscience of others? What to do? 8:10-11
7. Do you think one Christian should give up ANY right he has just because another Christian THINKS it is sinful? How would you handle it?
8. Do you think Christian liberty is a threat to Christian unity? 8:12-13
9. When would an eater be obligated to resist the demands of an abstainer?

"Rivers gain more attention than the little streams that create them. You can name the great rivers of the world but you cannot name their tributaries.

However, without the tributaries there would be no rivers. It must be remembered, too, that the smaller streams, while less well known, are purer and are found on a higher elevation. Some of our lives are tributary lives. It is our role to provide the pure water from the higher elevations that enables another to be a mighty river of power and influence."

-----1000 Windows, by Robert C. Shannon

## LESSON TEXT: 1 Corinthians 9:1-27

Prepared by Paul T. Butler

### INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

This chapter deals with the problem of *freedom*. Problem? Freedom? You mean that when a person has freedom he will have problems? Yes! As long as human beings must live in a bifurcated world where truth and falsehood both exist, where love and hate, goodness and evil, freedom and enslavement compete for men's souls, those who have *freedom* will have *problems*.

Most people think of the ultimate freedom as being able to do as one pleases regardless of others, without any restraints, and without any unpleasant consequences. Freedom is generally thought of in a strictly physical context. Freedom of speech, freedom from fear and want, and freedom to go anywhere one wishes. How often have you heard people say, "If I had 20 million dollars, I would be *free*!"---or, "As soon as I get away from home, I'll be free,"---or, "If I didn't have a boss---If I didn't have a husband---If I didn't have children---If I had good health---If I lived all alone on an deserted island---I'd be **free**!"

Freedom is a state of *character*, not circumstances! Freedom belongs to persons, not things. Freedom is not an end in itself; it exists for man in his spiritual essence, for that which is higher than physical. Freedom exists in order that people may reach for the highest spiritual potential for which they were created---which is, **the image of God's Son** (Rom. 8:29).

Freedom is from God through Christ to remove all hindrances that would keep a person from being transformed into the nature of Christ. Freedom has to do with mind-set. It has to do with attitude. Surroundings, associations, and circumstances do not keep us from our highest God-ordained possibility. Attitudes are what enslave us; falsehood, rebellion, guilt, insecurity, selfishness, envy---these bar us from partaking of the divine nature.

Christians are free! We are reconciled and forgiven. We have the truth (reality) about everything. We have an absolutely secure future and we are at liberty to make ourselves as much like Jesus Christ as we want! We even have the word of God's Holy Spirit to assist us in staying free in Christ. Cherish that word, be in BIBLE SCHOOL CLASS and enhance your freedom.

### QUESTIONS:

1. Why did Paul have to ask the Corinthians about his freedom? 9:1-7
2. What has the word of God to do with freedom? 9:8-12a; cf. Jn. 8:31-3
3. Would you relinquish a conscientious personal right for the sake of a weaker brother? 9:12b-14
4. Would you rather *die* than cause a weaker brother to stumble? 9:15-18
5. How far would you go in accommodating yourself to someone else's culture in order to save him? 9:19-22 How far **should** you go?
6. If we are free in Christ, why do we have to do what Christ says? 9:23
7. What is self-control? 9:24-27 If we are to be **self**-controlled, what is the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives?
8. Are you free in Christ? Free to do what? Do you **really** feel free? Or is your Christianity something that keeps you from being free?

"...the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh; for these are opposed to each other to prevent you from doing what you would." ----Paul to the Galatians, 5:17

"The basic test of freedom is perhaps less in what we are free to do than in what we are free not to do."  
---Eric Hoffer

## LESSON TEXT: 1 Corinthians 10:1-33

Prepared by Paul T. Butler

### INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

The problem of *presumptuousness*! Would the people of God ever become presumptuous? You bet! The Israelites did--and did so surrounded by miracles including miraculous groceries! Their story is in Exodus 32; Deuteronomy 9; Numbers 24-25; and here in 1 Corinthians 10.

**Warning!** Christians have privileges and liberties beyond anything the Israelites ever enjoyed. Israelites were slain in the wilderness because they used the freedom from bondage God gave them for occasion to indulge their fleshly desires.

There is **risk** in freedom. The very nature of freedom makes those who have it vulnerable to accountability. Responsibility is demanded of those who have freedom. There is always the risk that people will use their freedom as a pretext for evil (cf. 1 Pet. 2:16). Responsibility cannot be wrought by force; it can only be produced in a matrix of freedom to choose where motivation is by the compulsion of Christian faith and love.

God has revealed precisely what kind of thinking and acting constitutes responsibility. By the redemptive work of Christ, God has made available the power for right thinking and acting. However, God cannot, and will not, make choices for his creatures. That is the risk God takes when he makes us **free in Christ**. The risk itself is not bad---it is divine love epitomized. Human beings could never grow into the potential for which God created them if the freedom to choose was not there.

The freedom that comes by the grace of God should humble man, but too often self-centered man takes his freedom for granted, becomes presumptuous and indulgent. As a result he despises and loses the very prize for which he was set free---**the divine nature of Jesus Christ in his soul**.

### QUESTIONS:

1. Why was God displeased with the Israelites in the wilderness? 10:1-5
2. Are idolatry and immorality usually coincidental? 10:10:6-8 Why?
3. What is putting the Lord to the test? 10:9 Do Christians today do that? How?
4. Why are Christians warned against grumbling? 10:10
5. When did the "end of the ages" come? 10:11
6. Are there any temptations for which there are no escapes? 10:13 How does one escape temptation?
7. Is transubstantiation (i.e., the Lord's Supper becoming the literal body and blood of Jesus) the issue in 10:14-22? What is the issue?
8. How careful must the Christian be about criticizing and ridiculing another's *scruples*? 10:23-27
9. Should a Christian condescend to behaving according to a weaker brother's more rigid scruples? 10:28-33 Why? or, Why not?

"A state of nature, though it be a state of perfect freedom, yet is far from a state of licentiousness. The law of nature gives men no right to do anything that is immoral, or contrary to the will of God, and injurious to their fellow-creatures..."

---Samuel West, minister, Dartmouth, MA, in a sermon, 1776

"No man was ever endowed with a right without being at the same time saddled with a responsibility."

---Gerald W. Johnson

## LESSON TEXT: 1 Corinthians 11:1-34

Prepared by Paul T. Butler

### INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

The quality of worship that pleases God and glorifies him demands **thought**. Worship is our *logical service* (see Rom. 12:1-2). We are to pray and sing with **mind** and **spirit** ("spirit" is will, not merely feelings, see 1 Cor. 14:13-17). The primary issue in worship is **understanding**, not feeling!

Christians in first-century Corinth were having a *problem* with worship. They weren't the last Christians to have worship *problems!* The same problems exist in 20th century churches. Most of the problems have their origin in a wrong concept of what worship **is**, and **how** it is to be done. Sensationalism is not worship! The very word *sensation* has to do with the flesh. We worship God because it is the logical, rational, reasonable thing to do. One of the primary causes for the lack of true worship is that people don't *feel* like getting up and going to church, or, just don't have religious *feelings*, or, ...don't get any *feeling* out of their church's worship service...

The worship-problem in Corinth manifested itself by two symptomatic actions in the public gathering: (1) disorder in the man-woman hierarchical order; (2) disorder in the Christian brother-to-brother relationship. **It had nothing to do with feelings!**

The male is the final authority and the leader in the home and the church. Some of the women *and men* in Corinth felt God's word on this matter was out-of-date. Paul corrected that. *Orderly* worship of God involves understanding the will of God---feeling comes *after* we have *understood God's will*.

While the well-to-do in Corinth were indulging themselves in complete disregard of the poor, they were pretending they were worshipping. They were thus manifesting *contempt* for the body of Christ while professing to be partaking of it. A man in Christ is my brother not because I feel like he is but because the Bible says he is! Feeling comes *after* I *understand* that!

Worship has occurred when life responds with an openness to how God could change our lives."---C. Neil Strait

### QUESTIONS:

1. Why should worship be decently and in order 11:1 (cf. 1 Cor. 14:40)? What is order? Should Christian Churches be on guard about this?
2. As a woman, do you believe you should be subordinate 11:3-11 to a husband? Why? As a man, what do you think "being the head of a woman" means?
3. If you were asked to decide whether men should wear long hair or not, what would you decide? 11:13-16 Why? How long is long?
4. Were Christians actually getting drunk during worship? 11:21-22
5. Is it forbidden to have meals and eat in the church building? 11:22
6. Do you think of yourself as being locked into a **covenant** with Christ? 11:23-26 What is a covenant?
7. What is discerning the body? 11:29 (Don't forget the *context*)
  8. Who should partake of the Lord's Supper? Who shouldn't?

Answer to last week: Isaac Watts wrote the song---**not** about Christmas; he intended it as Psa. 98 set to music concerning the rule of God as King.

This week's question: Where was Jeremiah when he had his vision of the valley of dry bones?

Nobody described worship better than Sir William Temple. He wrote, "To worship is to quicken the conscience by the holiness of God, to feed the mind with the truth of God, to purge the imagination by the beauty of God, to open the heart to the love of God, to devote the will to the purpose of God."

----*1000 Windows*, by Robert C. Shannon

## LESSON TEXT: 1 Corinthians 12:1-31

Prepared by Paul T. Butler

### INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Contrary to much popular teaching today, 1 Corinthians ch. 12-14 is not a theological treatise on miraculous spiritual (charismatic) gifts. Nowhere in these chapters are miraculous gifts commanded or promised to **all** Christians **for all time**. Miraculous gifts were for **some** Christians during a limited time. The book of Acts shows clearly that all did not have them. The fundamental problem being dealt with in these chapters is the **faulty attitudes** the Corinthian Christians had toward miraculous gifts.

We have difficulty understanding the problem, partly, because the phenomenon of miraculous gifts no longer exists. The **pseudo** miraculous gifts of some modern Christian groups (and of some Christ-denying sects) are, at best, psycho-somatic and mostly fraudulent hoaxes. The gifts Paul discusses were unquestionably miraculous and unique. They were also to pass away (1 Cor. 13:8-13). John Chrysostom (A.D. 345-407) wrote that Paul's discussion of miraculous gifts was obscure to the church of the 4th century, because such phenomena no longer took place.

The problem Paul confronts in ch. 12 is that of maintaining unity in the midst of diversity. This problem will always exist. We are not all alike. We have different backgrounds, genetic codes, ways of expressing needs, and certainly different interests, training, and abilities. Ultimately all the differences have their source in God our Creator. And he wants it that way! He is infinitely ONE---that's the way all the rest of his creation is.

While we are all different, we are all begotten by the same Divine Father. He wants us all, with our differences, to dwell together in one harmonious body, each supplying what the other lacks. As we do this, he would have us know that any one member of that body is not more important than any other member---even if one member speaks with a foreign language or is martyred in flames! GET HOLD OF THIS---YOU CAN'T GO TO HEAVEN WITHOUT IT!

"Men's hearts ought not to be set against one another, but set with one another, and all against evil only" Thomas Carlyle

### QUESTIONS:

1. Why is attitude toward a gift, miraculous or not, more important than the gift itself? 12:1
2. Is one *really* saying Jesus is Lord if he claims miraculous gifts but rejects other apostolic doctrines? 12:
3. Would Christian unity be better served by **more** reminders that Christians have absolutely nothing except what has been given them by God? 12:4-6
4. What is the criteria (plural) by which miraculous gifts are distributed?  
12:7-11
5. Is the church *actually* the body of Christ in the world today? 12:12-13 Why is the church called *the* body of Christ?
6. Why has God made such diversity in the members of Christ's body? 12:14-17
7. Does *every member* of a Christian body (congregation) have a function to fulfill? How does one know what his function is? 12:18-24a
8. Is there a way to have unity through diversity? What is that way? 12:24b-31

"Men's hearts ought not to be set against one another, but set with one another, and all against evil only." -----Thomas Carlyle

## LESSON TEXT: 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

Prepared by Paul T. Butler

### INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

**Remember**, the context of 1 Corinthians 12-13-14 has to do with UNITY in the midst of DIVERSITY. These chapters deal with miraculous (charismatic) gifts **only** because the attitude of the Corinthians toward them was symptomatic of a much more significant problem.

When *that* (not, *he*) which was perfect came, charismatic gifts were to cease! The problem then, just as today, was that the Corinthians believed miracles were to be perpetuated as the most significant part of the Christian experience. The more spectacular the miraculous gift, they thought, the more significant the member of the body who had that particular "gift." NO on both counts!

The miraculous gifts were **temporary**, transient, and were to pass away when the **complete word of God** was finally written down. Paul's line of reasoning, the context, the original language (Greek text has as its subject a neuter noun), and corollary NT passages (e.g., Jas. 1:21-25; Heb. 1:1-2; 2:1-4) substantiate Paul's revelation here. Charismatic gifts were perpetuated **only** through the laying on of hands of an apostle (e.g., Acts 2:43; 5:12; 6:6-8; 8:18; 19:6; Rom. 1:11; 2 Tim. 1:6).

Such a *clamoring* for miraculous gifts produces chaos, as we will discover in 1 Cor. 14. Unity in diversity is attainable! The *hyperbolic* (Gr. *hyperbolēn*), or enhanced way to unity in diversity is **LOVE**. 1 Corinthians 13 is Paul's apostolic counsel to the Corinthians (and to us) on the **superiority** of *agape-love* over supernatural gifts. To have a supernatural gift and not have God-like-love made the gift less than useless. Making these gifts the test of spirituality in Corinth (as today) gave rise to jealousy, division and confusion!

Love is not self-defining. Don't trust your feelings or instincts. Don't trust what others sing or write about love if it doesn't harmonize with the Bible. If you want to know what love is and does, read the Bible. Love does not compromise truth. The truth of God (the Bible) reveals and defines love and unity. The body (church) of Christ must have love and unity. It is not his body if it doesn't!

### QUESTIONS:

1. Why would Paul have to admonish Christians to have *love*? 12:31b--13:3 What was his clue that they weren't loving?
2. What is love? 13:4-7 Is it an attitude or an action? or both? How does one acquire this virtue?
3. May a Christian love *without* feeling like doing so? How do you know?
4. What does Paul mean by, "love does not rejoice at wrong...but in right"? 13:6
5. If love believes *all* things, 13:7), should we believe the Koran, the Book of Mormon?
6. Why were miraculous gifts destined to pass away? 13:8-12
7. What is the "perfect" that was to come? 13:10 (cf. Jas. 1:21-25).
8. When did the church see in a mirror, dimly? (cf. Jude 3; 1 Jn. 4:1-6; 2 Pet. 1:2-4; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; Jas. 1:21-25).
9. Why is love **superior** to faith and hope? 13:4-13

"To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything and your heart will be wrung and possibly broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no one." ---C. S. Lewis, in, *The Four Loves*.

"For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments."  
The First Epistle of John, 5:4.

Love is a gift, take it, let it grow  
Love is a sign we should wear, let it show.  
Love is an act, do it, let it go.

## LESSON TEXT: 1 Corinthians 14:1-40

Prepared by Paul T. Butler

### INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

“On the front row of the balcony, one gray-haired woman...(is) dancing on the platform. Looking like a geriatric cheerleader, she crisscrosses her arms in front of her and chops wildly at the air above her head. When she finally falls to the floor and thrashes about for five minutes, her fellow worshipers bust into applause.” (*World magazine*, 12-20-97)

After 4 months of investigative journalism, the *Pensacola News-Journal* published 36 stories about the “charismatic revival” in a huge charismatic church in Pensacola, FL. “The *News-Journal* charged that Mr. \_\_\_ and Mr. \_\_\_ essentially choreographed some spectacular parts of the revival, showing people how to be ‘slain in the spirit’ and berating them if they did not fall to the floor when touched. Reporters charged that Mr. \_\_\_ had acknowledged in an interview that he had lied about important parts of his past in order to increase the ‘impact’ of his autobiography....(and) charged that Mr. \_\_\_ feathered his own nest with revival proceeds...(and) that the first revival service...contained objectionable conditioning and training.” (*op.cit.*)

Hank Hanegraaff, in his book, *Counterfeit Revival*, charges that these preachers are New Age prophets in Christian clothing and their movement is “built on emotionalism and mind control rather than on solid scriptural teaching.”

Hanegraaff concludes, “Pure personal experience has a very, very, very bad track record when it comes to providing truths on which people can base their lives...What we’re seeing is more people moving from faith to feeling and from facts to fantasy.” (*The Lookout*, 2-15-98). That has been the essence of the ‘charismatic movement’ from its inception.”

1 Corinthians 14 is **not** a promise for miraculous gifts to **all** centuries of the church! It is simply an historical, apostolic admonition to Corinth concerning decency and order in worship. The church at Corinth had **some** members who had **some** miraculous powers. Their misuse and abuse of these powers is the subject. *The crucial*

*issue is edification---instruction---decency!* Edification cannot take place without instruction. The obsession for the miraculous produces and perpetuates *spiritual immaturity*. It also signals a faith so weak as to border on unbelief! (cf. 1 Cor. 14:20-25 with Isa. 28:11-12).

### QUESTIONS:

1. Why did Paul emphasize seeking the gift of **prophecy**? 14:1-5
2. How do we know Paul is talking about knowable, human languages when he says tongues? 14:1-12 (cf. Acts 2:5-11).
3. Why didn't the speaking in other languages edify? 14:6-19
4. Why does Paul quote Isaiah 28:11-12 in this discussion? 14:20-15
5. Who is the outsider? 14:25 Who is the unbeliever in Corinth?
6. Name the rules Paul gave for the exercise of miraculous gifts. 14:26-32
7. Whose spirit was in control during the exercise of "charismatic" gifts? 14:33
8. What does Paul mean by decency in use of miraculous gifts? 14:40
9. After studying this chapter, do you think modern, alleged exercise of miraculous gifts is in harmony with the apostolic revelation from Christ?
10. What is to be our guide about miracles and the possession of "spiritual gifts?"

“What was once relegated to the ashrams of occultists, you can now experience at the altars of many huge churches...This is all about human experience overwhelming biblical truth...”

---in *Counterfeit Revival*, by Hank Hanegraaff

“Whatever you cannot understand, you cannot possess.”  
---Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe

The most valuable gift of a man or woman  
to this world is...a noble life

## LESSON TEXT: 1 Corinthians 15:1-58

Prepared by Paul T. Butler

“Jesus loves me, this I **know**, for **the Bible tells me so...**”

---Anna B. Warner (1820-1915)

### INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Some of the Corinthians were dealing with the gospel *existentially*. They had gotten the Gnostic idea that the origin of the gospel was in *their feelings*. Paul corrected that sharply (1 Cor. 14:36). They looked at the gospel **not** as a revelation of **objective facts** received through Paul's preaching, but as something they could invent to suit their own whims or opinions.

That same *existential* nonsense is pervasive throughout the world today in both those who call themselves believers and those who claim to be unbelievers. **Existentialism** is a revolt against objectivity. It is rooted in introspection, subjectivism, and focuses entirely on the feelings. It determines the worth of knowledge according to the way one feels about it, not in relation to **objective fact and revealed truth**. Today it is called postmodernism or deconstructionism.

Each individual is his or her absolute. Truth, for the postmodernist “becomes” at any given moment what **he/she** decides it is to him/her. Applied to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, it becomes a subjective resurrection of Jesus in one's feelings, and only when one has “felt” Christ's resurrection.

The gospel Paul delivered to the Corinthians was the actual, historical, objectively-factual death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The resurrection he preached to them was a matter of empirical history. He listed the eyewitnesses to it. *This is where the gospel begins. This is its basis.* It happened; whether people feel like it did or not---no matter how it makes them feel, it happened!

Our faith in Jesus Christ rests **solely** on the historicity of his resurrection. If his resurrection is not an empirical fact, everything else he claimed is fraudulent or mythological. That fact rests solely upon the authenticity, credibility, and accuracy of the texts of the Bible. The gospel is not true because it works---it works because it is true!

### QUESTIONS:

1. What were the terms or the words in which Paul preached the gospel to the Corinthians? 15:1-2
2. What is the evidence Paul cited for Jesus' resurrection? 15:3-11 Is there any evidence contrary to this?
3. Name the *other* lines of evidence (besides his appearances) for Jesus' resurrection.
4. Isn't there some value in practicing Christianity even if Christ was never raised from the dead? 15:12-28 Are there people who do so?
5. What corrupts good morals? 15:29-34
6. Why do people say, “How are the dead raised?” 15:35-41 What is the answer? 15:42-50
7. Do you expect to recognize in eternity people you have known here? 15:51-57
8. What of this life do you expect to take with you to heaven? 15:58

*Rudolf Bultmann, the existential theologian said that the disciples' believing in Jesus' resurrection led to their seeing it. The book of Acts says that their seeing the risen Lord led to their believing. PTB*

“The Gospels do not explain the resurrection;  
the resurrection explains the Gospels.”

John S. Whale

“Belief in the resurrection is not an appendage to  
the Christian faith; it is the Christian faith”

—John S. Whale

## LESSON TEXT: 1 Corinthians 16:1-24

Prepared by Paul T. Butler

### INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

The Corinthian Christians had a problem with **giving**. Who doesn't? Earlier Paul had written to them the need for a contribution to their suffering Jewish-Christian brethren in Judea. Now he writes to set forth apostolic directions on how best to collect that contribution. Between this letter (1 Cor.) and the next (2 Cor.), the church in Corinth had some misunderstanding and misgivings about this. In 1 Cor. 16:1-4 Paul sounds as if he is **ordering** the people to give, whether they want to or not. Some may have taken offense at his bluntness, so he wrote 2 Cor. chs. 8-9, to explain that all giving must be done willingly, as each has purposed in his own mind, and not out of coercion. However, "**ordering**" is a scriptural motive for Christian giving. Paul used the Greek word *logeias* (lit. "something counted, a collection") to describe what he had **directed** (16:1, Gr. *dietaxa*, "given orders for, as in the military") the churches of Galatia to do. Now he **commands** (Gr. *poiesate*, imperative mood verb) the church at Corinth to take up offerings (NIV translates the verb, "Do what I told the Galatian churches to do"). **Then he tells them how to do it!**

They started to do it, but then they stopped (2 Cor. 8:10). So he wrote 2 Cor. to hold before them the example of the Macedonians. Jesus taught the same two principles. First, Jesus taught that he has every right to give his servants orders about the conduct of their stewardship. He is the King, we are the stewards (Matt. 17:24-27). Second, the obedience of the servant needs to be done under an attitude of willingness and cheerfulness. Obedience that has to be coerced is resented and only done in a rebellious spirit. That is elder-brother-obedience (Lk. 15:25-32).

First Corinthians reveals that the problems which plague the church of Christ do not change much over 2000 years! It also reveals that there is not one problem plaguing the saints that cannot be solved if Christians will trust in the Christ of history and give themselves in servanthood to others.

*"As the purse is emptied, the heart is filled." ---Victor Hugo*

### QUESTIONS:

1. Do you store up *constantly*, mentally and literally, what you intend to give to the Lord's work? 16:1-2a
2. Do you deposit regularly what you have stored up? 16:2b
3. Are there reasons for systematic giving? What reasons? Remember the OT system of sacrifices and offerings!
4. Does our congregation try to get contributions by pressure tactics? What tactics does it use?
5. Does it make a difference about methods if we get what we need?
6. Should the congregation be concerned about the administering of collections? How? 16:3-9
7. What does our congregation think about ministerial salaries? Amounts?
8. What other ways may a congregation support its teaching/leading ministerial staff? 16:10-20
9. Do you agree with Paul, "If anyone has no love for the Lord, let him be damned?" Why? 16:21-24

"A bone to the dog is not charity. Charity is the bone shared with the dog, when you are just as hungry as the dog."  
---Jack London

"The world will never be won to Christ with what people can conveniently spare."  
—Bernard Edinger

"I have held many things in my hands and lost them all; but whatever I have placed in God's hands, that I still possess."  
—Martin Luther