Through the Bible with Les Feldick, Book 26

LESSON ONE * PART I

THE WISDOM OF GOD VERSUS THE WISDOM OF MAN

I CORINTHIANS 1:1 - 2:7

In our last lesson we finished Paul's letter to the Romans. Now we begin a study of Paul's two letters to the Corinthian Church. Turn to II Timothy 3:16. This is an introduction to Corinthians.

II Timothy 3:16,17

"All scripture (Genesis through Revelation) is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect (brought to a place of maturity), thoroughly furnished unto all good works,"

Now turn to I Corinthians, so that you can see what I'm trying to bring out. Here in Chapter 1 we find this epistle of the Apostle Paul, and I've come across this statement that out of all the manuscripts in museums, libraries, and what have you, every one of them may have the New Testament in various order. In other words, it isn't always in the order we are used to. It isn't always Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts. Some of the other books are also out of order but this is what got my attention, "The epistles of Paul are always in the order that we have them in our Bible today." Now that just shook me up. You know I'm always lifting Paul up somewhat over the rest of the writers, because I feel he is next to Christ Himself, as being the greatest human being that ever walked this planet. And I just think that this puts the frosting on the cake.

Whereas all these other New Testament books may be jumbled up in various places, Paul's epistles are always in this order, and the amazing thing is, this is not the order in which they were written. In other words Romans was not the first letter that Paul wrote, but rather the Thessalonians were. There were several other letters that were written before Romans, so the order we have them in the New Testament is not the chronological order that they were written, but rather as the Holy Spirit saw fit to put them into our New Testament for their doctrinal sequence, and this is what should be studied first. Look at II Timothy again:

II Timothy 3:16
"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction,..."

So I think that Romans is indeed the Book that is profitable for doctrine, and the next word is profitable for "reproof" which Corinthians certainly is, and then the next word is profitable for "correction," and that would apply to the Book of Galatians. And so it's so beautifully laid out. For as long as I've been teaching I've always tried to help people understand that this Book is not just a bunch of Jewish myths, this is not just a bunch of stories that were concocted around a camp fire, but this book has been intrinsically put together by the work of the Holy Spirit. And so it is indeed right that we study Romans, the Book of doctrines. Now I'm not going to teach these other letters of Paul verse by verse as I did Romans. But nevertheless we're going to look at them in the order that they are now in our New Testament and which we feel should be read in our study. So let's look at the Corinthian letters as "reproofs." Why a Book of reproofs? First turn to Chapters 7 and 8 of I Corinthians, and we'll be looking at verse 1 of each chapter. This will give us the reason for Paul writing the Corinthian letters. Most people don't catch what is being said.

I Corinthians 7:1

"Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me:..." What do you suppose they wrote? Questions. They had questions about things in the Corinthian Church, things they didn't know how to handle. They wrote to Paul delineating these questions, which gave rise to this epistle. Another question they must have had comes up in Chapter 8 verse 1 (and here's the other dilemma).

I Corinthians 8:1

"Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge...."

So what do you suppose they had also asked? What are we supposed to do with this meat that has been offered to idols? Can we eat it, or can't we? And so that, too, prompted some of the things that will be covered in this letter to the Corinthian Church. Now again for sake of introduction - and you've heard me say it before - of all the churches that Paul and his helpers, Barnabas, Silas, and whoever, dealt with, none were as carnal and filled with problems as this Corinthian Church. Never lose sight of that because that makes such an impact on some of the things that Paul brings out in both Books of Corinthians. They were a Church that was beset with all kinds of problems. And that was why they had sent the letter asking Paul for help on these matters. They were a Church as we'll see later in Chapter 5 that was beset with gross immorality. And again as you read the Corinthian letters always think: what was the setting? What were the circumstances?
Corinth was probably the most immoral, wicked, corrupt city in the Roman empire. Corinth was a double seaport, and if you have a map in the back of your Bible just look where Corinth is. It jutted out into the Mediterranean Sea, and so it was really two seaports. The one to the East that took care of the Eastern Mediterranean trade, and the Western side took care of the trade to Rome, and Spain, and the other end of the Mediterranean. Now you can just about imagine that a city for that day and time it was rather large, but certainly not what we call a huge city today, but nevertheless the city's population was probably thirty to forty thousand. But it was a city that was just rampant with all of it's commerce, and sailors from all parts of the world, but it was also rampant with pagan worship. There was a great temple dedicated to one of the Greek goddesses that sat above a promenade above the city of Corinth. And at the very height of Corinth this temple up on the hill to which they worshipped the Athenian goddess, had thousands of prostitutes who were operating as the goddesses of the temple. You have to realize that their whole society was programmed to this, and so it was just part and parcel of their religion to be involved in immoral practice with the prostitutes of the city.

And so into the very midst of the gross immorality, and this great activity of commerce and trade, comes this one lone man. And every time I think back over Paul's travels and his journeys, and all of his problems, I am amazed that Christianity ever survived. And I have to sit back and wonder why God didn't put the Gospel (Ref. I Corinthians 15:1-4) in the hands of angels, or at least in the hands of several hundred people. Why depend almost primarily on one man? It's an amazing feat that physically he was downtrodden, beaten, he had physical problems, he was not a specimen of health, and yet in spite of all these things, the man persevered. He established churches every place he went, which brings us to Christianity as we know it today. So I think that's enough of an introduction to the city of Corinth, and the Books of Corinthians. So now here comes Paul to that wicked city of Corinth with the Gospel of the Grace of God. You see, anything but Grace would have never succeeded, but it was only by Grace that God began to save these wicked Corinthians, but remember the spiritual life is a parallel with the physical. You do not get born into the family of God a full mature spiritual person. We all come into a salvation experience as "babes in Christ."

I remember years and years ago reading about an evangelist (back when people traveled by train) who, when he would come into a city, could tell what houses had babies in them. Well how do you suppose he could tell? By the diapers hanging on the clothes line. There were no washers and dryers in those days, any more than there was air travel. Well it's the same way with the spiritual. We all had to begin as babes in Christ, and, consequently, there are going to be failures. We know that no infant comes into this world trained to go to the bathroom, and it's also the same with infant
believers. We can't expect them to all of a sudden be mature, and to have the same spiritual discoveries that we have had as "older" Christians.

So as you study Corinthians keep this in mind that these were folks saved out of abject paganism, idolatry and immorality, and there is going to be a time of nourishing, and growth. But only by the Grace of God. Now here's the point I want to make: every last person that's been saved by the Grace of God, at Salvation, experiences all of God's Grace the moment they believed. But we have a long way to go in our growth, so what do we do? Peter puts it so applicably in his little epistle, "But grow where? In Grace?" No, we don't grow into Grace. You don't just begin to grow and finally appropriate the Grace of God. No, all of God's Grace has been poured out on us the moment we believe, and from that position "In Grace we grow, and we grow, if we do as God intends." But always remember that Grace is not Law, and so, since we're under Grace and not under Law, nothing is forced upon us. That's the beauty of Grace. Remember every individual is left with that free choice. There has never been the kind of freedom exercised as when you become a believer. That's when you understand true freedom, and that, of course, is what Paul is constantly saying, "Be not entangled again in the yoke of bondage, don't come under the heavy yoke of legalism, you've been set free from all that." But as I've also said many times, "Grace is not license." We are not given the freedom to live as we please simply because God has saved us by His Grace.

**1 Corinthians 1:1a**

"Paul, called to be an apostle..."

That's almost identical to the opening of his other letters. In other words the first thing that Paul had to establish to whomever he wrote was the authority that was connected to his apostleship. Soon we're going to see that one of the big problems the Corinthians had was division because some said they followed Apollos, some followed what Peter said, and others were followers of Paul. And there were some (like what we hear so often today) saying, "Well I don't care what Paul says, I'm going to do what Jesus said." Well Paul was up against the **same** thing, but he had to establish the fact that now for believers in this age of Grace, he is the authority through whom God is speaking to the whole human race. So Paul is always defending that apostleship. And especially to the Jewish people because they thought he was a renegade to Judaism, he had turned on his background. And on top of that since he hadn't had any experience with Jesus in His earthly ministry or with the Twelve disciples, then he must be an impostor. So always appreciate the fact that Paul never had any contact with the earthly ministry of Christ or His disciples, and, consequently, Paul receives all his revelations from the ascended Lord after the finished work of the Cross. That is what gives him his power.
**I Corinthians 1:1**

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

Sosthenes was the fellow that was co-labouring with Paul so he puts his name in here as well. I stress that whatever portion of Scripture that you read, always determine to whom was it addressed? That doesn't mean that if it was addressed to you then you can throw it aside, but it does have an impact on what it is saying, and how it is being said, because of to whom it is said. Here you see Paul is not writing to the Nation of Israel, as Isaiah or Daniel would, or the other Old Testament writers, or even as the Twelve as they were ministering to the Nation of Israel. But now Paul is addressing this epistle to the assembly. And I like the word assembly better than Church, because that's what the Greek word `ecclesia' really means - "a called out assembly." The word `church' is more or less a coined term I think, and is not really in the original Greek. So `assembly' is far more explanatory as he says:

**I Corinthians 1:2**

"Unto the church of God which is a Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours;"

So, in verse 2 he gives the graphic description of every believer. Everyone at Corinth, everyone in area around Corinth, but also right on down to us at this day and time. It is still the description of the overall assembly of believers who are called, saints, and who call upon the name of Jesus Christ. Now verse 3:

**I Corinthians 1:3,4**

"Grace be unto you (I think that must have been one of Paul's favorite words. He's always referring to the Grace of God), and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ;"

And again, as I've emphasized for all the years we've been on television, very few Church people, professing Christians, comprehend the Grace of God. Most are under the impression that God is still demanding, that God is just up there being the rough Law-giver, and if we don't succumb to His commands and His laws, then we're in trouble. Well if that were the case, then that wouldn't be Grace. The vilest sinner is still the object of God's love and attention because of His Grace.
I Corinthians 1:4-6

"I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; That in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you;"

What kind of a congregation do we have here? A congregation of carnal people. These people are not spiritual giants, and we're going to see that a little later in the Book. Now what does it mean to be a carnal Christian? Well, it's the very opposite of a mature spiritual Christian. So here Paul has these people recently converted out of paganism, still having their hang-ups with their immoral practices (they didn't think there was anything wrong with them because, after all, their families and their generations before them had been doing them). And so it was very hard to break from the past, but in spite of all their hang-ups and problems, where are these believers? In Grace. Now verse 7:

I Corinthians 1:7a

"So that ye come behind in no gift;"

In other words, all the gifts God was ready to give were just as available for these carnal Corinthians as for the more spiritual Philippians. Now that's why the little letter to Philippi doesn't have all the corrections and reproofs that Corinthians and Galatians have. They were the epitome, the joy of the Apostle Paul. And I think even the Thessalonians were that kind of people. But in Corinth, though beset with all these problems and hang-ups, God was still ready to pour out what was available to all spiritual types of people. Now in spite of all their carnality, and moral weaknesses, what does Paul say they're waiting for?

I Corinthians 1:7b

"...waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ;"

Now what does that tell you? That in spite of their weaknesses, and failures, and many time their gross sin, was the Lord going to forget about Corinth if He came? No. Now the next verse throws a curve at a lot of people. And this is for some a hard pill to swallow, but look what it says. It's hard for me to comprehend it, but I have to come back and say, listen, this is what God's Word says. Don't forget this setting, we've got this carnal city with immoral practices still rampant in the Church, so let's look at verse 8, and this is speaking of the Rapture of course.

I Corinthians 1:8
"Who shall also confirm (to be locked in) you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ."

To be blameless is beyond my comprehension. Here the Apostle Paul, by inspiration, is telling these carnal Corinthian believers that if The Lord should suddenly come, so far as God was concerned, they would be blameless. On what basis could God do that? The finished work of the Cross, the shed Blood of Christ. I always have to go back to Revelation Chapter 12 when these things come to mind. And I imagine old Satan was working double-time so far as the Corinthians were concerned. Revelation Chapter 12 again is a portion of Scripture that is hard for many to swallow, but it's The Word of God, and we're not going to walk around it or compromise it. And we notice that at the mid-point of the Tribulation there's going to be a great war in Heaven. Satan and his angels are going to be fighting against Michael and the other angels. Finally, Satan and his angels are defeated and cast out:

Revelation 12:10

"And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: (there are only 3 1/2 years left before Christ returns to set up His Kingdom when this takes place) for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night."

So what's the Devil doing now? He is accusing them before God every time a believer sins. But what's the comfort we can come back with? We find the answer to that in I John (but remember that this isn't license to go ahead and do these things just because I know I have an Advocate). Old Satan is accusing us, and I'm sure he had a heyday with the Corinthian believers, but even Corinth had this as their backdrop.

I John 2:1

"My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:" Now that's our comfort, we have an Advocate Who proclaims that our sins our under the Blood.
LESSON ONE * PART II

THE WISDOM OF GOD VERSUS THE WISDOM OF MAN

I CORINTHIANS 1:1 - 2:7

Now let's pick up right where we left off in our last lesson, and let's review verse 7 and 8 before we pick up with verse 9. Remember in our last lesson we explained that this assembly of believers here at Corinth had been saved out of abject idolatry, paganism, mythology, the worship of the gods and goddesses, and along with that they were grossly immoral. They had no concept of what we would call Biblical morality, but as these people were saved out of that kind of background they weren't immediately transformed into spiritual giants. They had a lot of problems, hang-ups, and failures, and in spite of that Paul teaches here so clearly that if the Lord were to come right then, all of those believers would be taken rather than just a few of them. Now I know there are a few that teach the out-calling of only the spiritual believers, and that the carnal believer would be left behind, but I can't find that in my Bible, and I think these verses make it so plain that even the carnal believer, which of course most of the Corinthians were, will be taken up when the Lord comes, and they will be considered blameless, as we saw in verse 8, because they're under the Blood of Christ.

I Corinthians 1:8

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

Now verse 9. It's not because the Corinthians were faithful, or that you and I are faithful, but Who is? God is! I'm always teaching that when I teach the Covenants. Way back in Genesis 12, where we have the Abrahamic Covenant given by God to Abraham. A Covenant that Israel broke over and over and over, but did that annul the Covenant? No, because a covenant is something that originates and ends with God, and He will never break His Covenants, and it's the same way here. When God calls a person His own, and we become part of the elect, He will never give up on us. We may fail miserably, but as the verse says here, God is faithful, He will never forsake us or leave us.

I Corinthians 1:9

"God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord."
And that of course is the same for us today as it was for the Corinthians. If we've entered into a genuine salvation experience then we are His and He is ours. Now let's pick up some of the problems they were having. We're going to deal with them as Paul dealt with them himself.

**I Corinthians 1:10a**

"Now I beseech you,..."

The word beseech is not a dogmatic, legalistic commandment, but rather the word beseech implies, "I beg of you." That didn't mean they had to or else, but on the basis of what Christ had already done, and remember this is just as applicable to us today as it was to the Corinthians. In view of all that Christ has done, common sense tells us that we should be obedient to His wishes, and so he says:

**I Corinthians 1:10**

"Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions..."

So that should tell you that that's one of the problems. There are divisions in this little assembly in Corinth. Now you want to remember these Churches that Paul writes to are not large congregations of several thousand believers. These were congregations that for the most part met in homes. I think maybe the Church at Ephesus may have had a separate church building. At least I feel they did, although I can't prove it, and maybe the Corinthians had a large enough congregation to warrant their own building. But for the most part all the Churches in the Apostolic age were just simply meeting in homes, which means there couldn't be more than 35 to 40 people involved. But however many were involved at Corinth they were to have the same mind, but they didn't. Now verse 11:

**I Corinthians 1:11,12a**

"For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren (believers), by them which are of the house of Chloe (probably where they met) that there are contentions among you. (Now here come the divisions) Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul (’Paul is the one that I'm going to pay attention to. Paul is the one who really has the truth, and I'm not going to have any thing to do with anyone else, because I belong to Paul,’ and some say); and I of Apollos;..."

Now we need to stop here and go back to the Book of Acts for a moment, because we need to see what kind of a man these believers were clinging to. And you see that's the
same danger today. Never get hung up on one man, because it's just not scriptural, and so here again these people were getting all hung up on either Paul, Apollos, Peter, or Christ. Now let's look at Chapter 18, and verse 24 to see what kind of man Apollos is.

Acts 18:24

"And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria (down in Egypt), an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus."

Now on the surface, what kind of man was Apollos? Well, he was a speaker par excellence, and he probably had the personality and charisma to go with it, and he could just literally electrify his audiences. Verse 25:

Acts 18:25a

"This man was instructed..."

Now remember Paul didn't have any human to instruct him. Paul never had anyone outside of his background under Gamaliel under Judaism. But in the Age of Grace, and doctrines of Grace, Paul's teachings came by revelation from the ascended Lord. But Apollos had been taught by a man, and so:

Acts 18:25

"This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, (But) knowing only the baptism of John."

In other words he was a Jew still steeped in the "Kingdom Economy" and knew nothing of the power of the Cross, and nothing of faith in the death, burial and Resurrection of Christ for Salvation. (Ref. I Corinthians 15:1-4) But Apollos was only continuing the message that John the Baptist, Christ, and the Twelve had been proclaiming to the Nation of Israel, and that was to believe that Jesus was their Messiah, repentance for their sins, and water baptism. Now verse 26:

Acts 18:26

"And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue (place for Jewish meetings): whom when Aquila and Priscilla (long-time converts of Paul. They had these doctrines of Grace drummed into their heads by Paul, so when Apollos comes to Ephesus, and knows nothing more than the Kingdom Gospel, what do Aquila and Priscilla do? I always say they took him home for dinner, and across that dinner table they just sort
of let Apollos know everything that he was missing.) *had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded* (detail by detail, they left no stone unturned so that it was clearly understood) *unto him the way of God more perfectly.*

Or more completely. Well what do you suppose they were telling him? Everything that they had learned from Paul, and what had Paul taught them? That the finished work of the Cross now made all the difference in the world. They were no longer under the Kingdom economy, they were no longer under the Law and temple worship, but now all that had been set aside because Christ had died, been buried, and risen from the dead. Now verse 27:

**Acts 18:27**

*And when he (Apollos) was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed*(and how?) *through grace:"

Do you see that? Apollos' whole mind had been opened up. So later, when Apollos came on the scene at Corinth preaching and teaching much the same thing that Paul did (but probably with a little more Jewish flavor, since he had been steeped in the teaching of John the Baptist, and so forth), many of the Corinthian believers now sort of glued to Apollos, and he was the one they were going to listen to, and not Paul. Now back to I Corinthians, and verse 12 again.

**I Corinthians 1:12**

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

So you see there was yet another group that was still hanging onto Cephas (Peter.) Now that should tell us something, what kind of people are in the Corinthian Church other than the pagan, Gentile Corinthians? Jews whom God had opened their heart and eyes to the Gospel of Grace, and they had come out of Judaism, and they were members of the Corinthian assembly. They were believers, but Jews. Now then if you know the background of Paul's Apostleship, and how he had persecuted those early Jewish believers back there in the Book of Acts, and how God saved him by Grace on the road to Damascus, then took him down into the desert, and revealed to him these amazing doctrines of Grace over a three-year period of time, it just sort of put a block between him and the Jewish people.

Just put yourself in their shoes. Here was one of their own, (Saul of Tarsus) taught at the feet of their most famous Rabbi, (Gamaliel) and yet when he comes back from his
revelations he tells the world, "You're not under the Law, you don't have to circumcise your children, you don't have to go to the temple, you don't have to sacrifice animals, because that's all been set aside." Well what do you suppose religious Jews thought? This guy is nuts. There's no way you can turn your back on our heritage. In fact, for the average Jew today, isn't that the same argument? Sure it is - this is our heritage, this is what we've been steeped in, and this is what we have held together for thousands of years.

So these Jewish believers, and there's no doubt they were believers, because Paul calls them "elect," but who were they more prone to adhere to? Peter. Even though Peter may not have spent a lot of time at Corinth, I'm sure he stopped by on his way to Rome, or whatever. Peter never had a ministry as I said over and over, among the Gentiles, according to the Scriptures, (Ref. Galatians 2:7-9) but nevertheless these Corinthian believers, whom I feel must have been Jews, still had affinity for Peter, because after all Peter was the epitome of the Jew who had been under the Kingdom economy. So it stands to reason that most of the Jewish people just had a hang up on Paul, he was just something that the Jewish people couldn't get over. But they were comfortable with Peter, and as a result there was division within that Church that adhered to Peter. There were those who adhered to Apollos, and of course there were some who were still true to the founder of their congregation, and that would be Paul.

Now there was one more, and who were those? Those who would say that they didn't have anything to do with Paul or Apollos, or Peter, but rather I'm just going to follow Christ. Boy don't you hear the same thing today? Sure you do. You try to open up Paul's epistles to people, and tell them, "Here's where it's at," and what's their first argument? "I'm not going to listen to Paul, I go by what Jesus said." Well bless their hearts, I know that they mean well, but they're out in left field, because you see what Jesus said he said to the Jew under the Law. And what Jesus revealed to the Apostle Paul was from the ascended glory after the work of the Cross. And that makes all the difference in the world. You see there's no direct communication between Jesus and sinful men, once He ascended back to glory, except through this man Paul. And Paul tells us over and over that he saw the Lord face to face, and that the Lord revealed these things to him.

Now someday when we get to the Book of Galatians we're going to teach that verse by verse, and for a moment let's turn over to that Book, and touch on a verse or two. I have to teach on the verse quite often because of the opposition that I run into from people who want nothing to do with Paul's letters. And there's more out there than you'd like to believe. And the thing that they will not recognize is that, "Yes, Paul never had a face to face confrontation with Christ in His earthly ministry, but he had quite a few of them after the work of the Cross." And so this is where we are. In fact I had a gentlemen who wrote me a short note the other day, and he was apologizing that
he couldn't get to one of our seminars, and he made a statement similar to this: "Why can't folks understand that before Christ died on the Cross, sinners approached God on the basis of animal blood. But on this side of the Cross we approach God on the basis of Christ's shed blood, which tells me that the Four Gospels really belong to the Old Testament." And he's right, everything in the Four Gospels is before Christ was crucified, there's nothing in the Four Gospels about faith in His death, burial, and resurrection for salvation. (Ref. I Corinthians 15:1-4) And it couldn't be because it hadn't happened yet. So this is all Paul knows, "Christ crucified," and we're going to see it a little later in I Corinthians 1:18, but here in Galatians 1 let's begin with verse 11.

**Galatians 1:11,12**

"But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me (do you see how he brings that in? This Gospel that originated with this man) is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." And then Paul goes on down to say in verse 16 that the whole purpose of God bringing this man into the world was:

**Galatians 1:16,17**

"To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; (Gentiles) immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood (so who's Paul referring to? Peter and the eleven): Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus."

And if you go over into Chapter 4 you will see the Arabia that he's talking about is Mount Sinai, and that's where I always make the point that God revealed the doctrines of Grace at the same mountain that He revealed the Law to Moses. And then in Galatians Chapter 2 verse 1 and 2. How anybody can misunderstand this I'll never know, because its as plain as English can be.

**Galatians 2:1,2**

"Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also. And I went up by revelation (Who led him? The risen Christ did. The Lord Jesus Himself instructed the apostle, "You go up to Jerusalem, go to this meeting with the Twelve, and with the Jerusalem leaders"), and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles,..."

Now why does he make, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that kind of a stipulation? Because that Gospel that Paul preached among the Gentiles was totally
different than what Peter and the eleven preached to the Jews. Oh it's the same God, don't ever lose sight of that, but now God is going to deal not just with Israel under the Law and Kingdom economy, but now He's going to go to the Gentile world as well as the Jew, not with the Gospel of the Kingdom, but rather with the Gospel of the Grace of God. And that Grace as I said earlier is something that very few people comprehend. And that is: how could a Holy, Righteous, God in His own Person come down among sinful men, walk among them, take on human flesh, and go to that Roman Cross to be tortured, crucified, to shed His blood, to be raised from the dead, and for what purpose? To save lost humanity, and that's all Grace, and yet we see multitudes of humanity going up and down our streets and highways, and yet how many of them ever stop to think of eternity? It just boggles the mind that few stop to think any more that there's a life to come, there's an eternity to be faced, and God has made provisions that every human being could spend it in His presence, if they would just simply believe the Gospel. But most will not, they don't won't to be bothered.

Now back to I Corinthians, where he says that some don't want anything to do with Apollos, or Paul, or Peter, but just go by what Jesus says. Well listen, they wouldn't get very far because the words of Jesus were confined to the Jew under the Law. (Ref. Romans 15:8 and Matthew 15:24) But now as He speaks to the Apostle Paul of course then Grace takes it's pre-eminence. Now verse 13, and Paul says, "How can you divide yourselves this way? Does God have this little group over here, and another one over there and deals with each one individually?" No way, and that's why I like to reach across denominational lines, but I won't compromise in order to have unity. But oh, God knows that in every group there are people that He wants for His own, absolutely there are, so Paul says:

_I Corinthians 1:13,14_

"Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? (Paul says, "how dare you people say that I'm the object of your faith, how dare you say you're going to glory because you're a student of Paul. I wasn't crucified for you.) or were ye baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius;"

Because what was the danger? Well they were getting puffed up and saying, "Well I was baptized by Peter, I was baptized by Apollos, I was baptized by Paul." Paul tells them, "Don't you ever do that with my name. because I thank God that I baptized none of you for that very reason." And then Paul comes back on a second thought and says well maybe I did baptize the house of Crispus and Gaius, but other than those, Paul put no importance on the water baptism because of the dangers that are so evident. And it's the same way today. My, the dangers that are involved in some of these things that tend to divide the believers. And then verse 17:
I Corinthians 1:17

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

Now what's he saying? Well in plain English Paul says, "We're going to put priorities on these things. First things first, and what in the world is the use of all the various kinds of baptisms if they know nothing of the Gospel, because the Gospel has to open the door. It's the Gospel that made these pagan Gentiles finally come out of their gross immorality. It was the Gospel that made them new creatures in Christ. It was the Gospel that transformed the Jewish believers from legalists to people of Grace. And it's the Gospel that Paul is constantly referring to throughout his letter, and especially in I Corinthians 15:1-4.

I Corinthians 15:1-4

"Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. 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;"

Now that's Paul's Gospel, and our Gospel and we must believe that for our salvation. So this is the primary thing, it supersedes anything else in all of Christendom. Then of course other things follow in their rightful place. Naturally we are to grow in grace. We are to grow in knowledge of the Word. We are to grow in our works and our activities for the Lord's business. Absolutely we're to be givers, and to be witnesses, and this is why we're left here. Because otherwise, would to God, that the moment that we're saved, He'd take us out of here. It would be far better. When Paul said that after seeing the things in glory that eyes have not seen, nor ears heard, the things that were prepared for those that love Him, I have to think we've got some glorious things awaiting us. It's going to be so glorious. Joy unspeakable, righteousness, music (I think), like mortal ear has never heard and it's all awaiting us once we enter into His presence.
Now back to I Corinthians Chapter 1, and we'll look at verse 17 again. Here Paul is admonishing the Corinthians to forget about their divisions concerning who they're following. Always remember the central theme for all of us, whether we're rich or poor, Gentile or Jew, black or white, makes no difference. We're all subjects of God's Grace which brings us not to a water baptism, but to the Gospel, and Paul tells us:

*I Corinthians 1:17a*

"For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: ..."

Remember when John the Baptist was commissioned to Israel? What was he commissioned to do? Well, to baptize. The Scripture makes it so plain that John baptized with the baptism of repentance.

*Matthew 3:1,2*

"In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea. And saying, `Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'"

*Matthew 3:6*

"And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins."

*Matthew 3:11*

"I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance:..."

Now that was the mission of John the Baptist. But Paul comes along and refutes that now and says; "God didn't send me to baptize, but instead to preach the Gospel, that Jesus died for your sins, was buried, and rose again." And the last part of verse 17 that we didn't cover in the last lesson reads:

*I Corinthians 1:17b*

"not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect."
You and I can talk until we're blue in the face, and that won't get anybody, but it's when the Holy Spirit opens the heart that results take place. Do you remember I so often go back to the Book of Acts where Paul met Lydia up there in Philippi?

Acts 16:14

"And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul."

Well this is what Paul is saying here in verse 17. Paul didn't come with the wisdom of human mentality, or come with intellectual degrees behind his name, but rather he came with the simplicity of the Gospel into this pagan, ungodly city. And it was that Gospel that transformed those Corinthian people. Now verse 18 as one of those choice verses that is so appropriate today.

I Corinthians 1:18a

"For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness;..."

Do you see what that says? To the lost world all around us, and again I go back to the hustle and bustle of freeways and highways, but to that lost mass of people around us, this Cross of Christ is so much foolishness. I think I've used this next illustration before, but it's such a good one that I'll use it again. I had this one gentlemen that came to our class for a long time, and he came to my place one evening. I had been bailing hay all day long, and it was late at night about 10 P.M., and when I came in there he was waiting for me. So I took him into the kitchen and I put on a pot of coffee, and the first thing I asked him was, "What's on your mind?" And I'll never forget, and I wish to God that more people would ask the same question. He said, "Who in the world is Jesus Christ?" A good question, because that gave me the wide open opportunity to not only tell him Who Christ was, and is, but to show him from the Scriptures all that had been accomplished because of Who He was.

A lady told me just the other night, and this just shakes us to our toe nails. She said, "Les, I was in Church all my life, and until I came to your class, I never knew why Christ died." Now think about that, and she's not alone. We've got millions out there sitting in the pews. Oh they have a mental comprehension that, "Yes, Jesus of the Bible was crucified, and yeah I can go along as my creed says that He was raised from the dead." But most of them don't really know why, they have no affinity to the fact that when He died, He died for them. And this is what this lady said: "When I suddenly realized that He died for me then that made all the difference in the world." So that's the preaching of the Cross, and the world out there wants nothing to do with
it, because it's foolishness to them. That somebody died 2000 years ago? My land, thousands and thousands of people were crucified by the Romans. That wasn't a singular event, but it was a singular Individual Who's crucifixion did make a difference, and has impacted the world ever since. So reading verse 18 again:

**I Corinthians 1:18a**

"For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness;..."

Most don't want to preach that any more, but they would rather help people with all their problems, or to have a better family life, and that's all well and good as far as it goes, but that's not the preaching of the Cross. And when you preach the Cross all these other things fall into place. Now verse 19.

**I Corinthians 1:19**

"For it is written (Old Testament), I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent."

Now of course that's looking toward the end-time when Christ will return and set everything straight. And it won't be based upon the intellectual, or academic, or scientific achievements, but rather it will be based on His absolute, righteous rule. So all these things will come to their end. And now verse 20. You see he's smacking these Greek philosophers right head on:

**I Corinthians 1:20**

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

Now for a moment let's go back to Romans Chapter 1, and compare some scripture. Now here of course I think Paul is reflecting all the way back to the Tower of Babel when all the false religions of this world began.

**Romans 1:21,22**

"Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations (they began to philosophize, higher thinking), and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools," Now back to I Corinthians, verse 21, and this is another good verse:
I Corinthians 1:21

"For after that in the wisdom of God the world by (its) wisdom knew not God,..."

Now look at most universities today, and I say most. They teach evolution, and when you can teach and believe evolution then you force God out of everything. Now that's the pitfall of evolution, because if evolution is true then there is no need for a Creator, no need for God, no one to account to, and of course that's the basis of most of our problems. But this is exactly what they have done. By their own thinking they have brought about all these so-called theories that leave God out of the picture, so again he says:

I Corinthians 1:21

"For after that in the wisdom of God the world by (it's) wisdom knew not God (they have pushed God out. Evolution and secular humanism has no room for God, and that's the core of our problem, but), it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching (of the Cross in verse 18) to save them that believe."

It's an act of God that opens the understanding that the One who died 2000 years ago was the answer to the sin problem. He is the One Who can impart eternal life, and that's what he's talking about here, that through the foolishness of preaching, the preaching of the Cross will literally transform those who believe. Faith + Nothing! Now here in verse 22 you basically have the two categories of the human race. Jew and Gentile. In those two we have them all covered.

I Corinthians 1:22,23a

"For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom (the Jews want signs, and the Gentiles say, `Give me highly educated philosophers'); But (the flip side is we don't pay any attention to either one of those, but) we preach Christ (not the Jesus of Nazareth walking the highways of Palestine, not the Jesus Who's walking on the water, not the Jesus Who fed the 5000, not the Jesus Who raised Lazarus, but rather the Jesus who was what?) crucified."

And that's where it all begins for us today. Oh it's the same Jesus, but it's by virtue of Him having gone to the Cross, and being raised from the dead that now we come into the picture. Now completing the verse:

I Corinthians 1:23
"But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, (and indeed He was, because they were still looking for signs, and that almost makes me smile, and it should make you smile. How many more signs did they need? Didn't He give them all kinds of signs? Sure He did, sign after sign, and miracle after miracle, and still they couldn't believe. And the Greeks, what about them?) and unto the Greeks foolishness;"

You remember what they called Paul on Mars Hill? A babbler. Now imagine, here comes this man who had already seen multitudes saved out of pagan idolatry, had established these little Churches all throughout Asia Minor, now coming down the coast of Greece, and he comes to Athens, and by now I'm sure this man is pumped up and primed with the power of God. I'm sure Paul spoke at Athens probably as strongly as any place he had ever been, and those stupid philosophers called him a babbler. Do you get the picture? They call him a babbler. Now let's back up a moment to verse 22. Why does Paul make this kind of statement that Jews require a sign?

I Corinthians 1:22a

"For the Jews require a sign,...."

We know that since there were those who adhered to Peter's teaching then there must have been a Jewish element. Now as you go all the way back to the onset of God dealing with the Nation of Israel, how does He always prove to those people that He is whatever is taking place? Signs! Absolutely, and I'm always reminding people that when Moses and Aaron went into Pharaoh, and in order to get his attention what did they do? Hey, they threw the shepherd's rod on the ground, and what happened? It became a serpent. But here's where we have to wake up and be careful. What did Pharaoh's magicians do? The same thing. And though the power of Satan their shepherds' rods became serpents, but the comforting thing is what happened next. The serpent that Moses and Aaron had, swallowed up the others thus showing that God was still supreme.

All you have to do is just follow Israel throughout her hundreds of years of history to find over and over God doing the supernatural for them. One that comes to mind is Elijah up there at Mount Carmel, confronting the prophets of Baal, and Israel was at a crossroad. So he built up the altars, laid out the sacrifices, with instructions to carry water and soak the sacrifices, and the prophets of Baal couldn't get their god to respond. But Elijah called on God, and fire from heaven fell and it licked up the water, and sacrifices. What was that? Supernatural. In that instance Israel had an awakening, but over and over God performs signs and miracles for benefit of the Jew. And then when Christ came in His earthly ministry the sole reason for His performing the signs and miracles was to convince Israel of Who He was.
All right, now Paul is bringing that into the New Testament account for us to understand that the Jew mentally was still, "Show me a sign, and maybe I'll believe." The Gentiles on the other hand are not hung up on signs, but rather they are hung up on intellectual philosophy. And Paul says, "I don't adhere to either one of them. I'm not going to come showing signs, wonders, and miracles, I'm not going to come here and philosophize, but rather I'm going to preach Christ crucified, and risen again. Do you see how simple it is? And that's all it takes. The other night I taught as I usually do, didn't make an invitation, didn't even stress the Gospel per se, but after we got home that night we found out that a young lady was saved. And it's not me, but that's the way God works.

I think of a little anecdote that I read years and years ago. These people had an elderly Grandfather, who was so belligerent toward spiritual things, they could never get him to go to church. He wouldn't listen to anybody that tried to witness to him. But finally one day as he was way up in the nineties and they knew that he wasn't going to live too much longer, they finally got him to go to church with them, and lo and behold the preacher preached on the genealogies way back in the Old Testament. So and so was born of so and so and he died. So and so was begotten by so and so and he died. You know what I'm talking about. And all the while this family is sitting there wondering why of all days doesn't our pastor preach salvation instead of Old Testament genealogy? And you can understand that. Well, they took the old man home and the next day what do you suppose got to him? "And he died, and he died, and he died." And then it hit the old man that he too was about to die. So the old fellow asked for the plan of salvation, so you see, we never know what God will use, and sometimes it's something that we would never dream of. But here Paul is saying that the basis of it all is preaching Christ crucified. Now verse 24.

_I Corinthians 1:24_

"But unto them which are called (now the called of scripture are the elect, the saints, the believers, and they are all one and the same), both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

Now one commentator that I read sometime ago on Corinthians said, "The main theme of Corinthians is wisdom." The wisdom of God sat apart from the wisdom of men, and I can agree to that especially in Chapter 2 where Paul stresses that it doesn't matter how much earthly wisdom we have, it's only the wisdom from God that makes us something that God can use, and there's no doubt about it. Now verse 25.

_I Corinthians 1:25_
"Because the foolishness of God (in man's eyes God is being foolish, how can we say that? Well, man thinks God is foolish when He says He can save a person from the most gutter type existence, and can make him a saint. That's foolishness to mankind, but what does the Scripture says? God's foolishness) is wiser than men (God's foolishness is still wiser than the greatest philosopher, or educator.); and the weakness of God is stronger than men."

Now we know that God isn't weak is He? But some of the ways He does things the world would call weakness. And I imagine that it's based on the fact that even in the Old Testament, and in Christ's earthly ministry, that if someone misuses you, and he strikes you on the cheek, what do you do? Turn the other cheek. Well that's weakness in the eyes of men, but in God's way of doing things that's stronger than men. Now let's look at verse 26 and 27:

**I Corinthians 1:26a**

"For ye see your calling, brethren,..."

Remember these Corinthians are carnal, they've got a lot of problems, but he says they are brethren, and they had a calling. Every believer has a calling, and that doesn't mean that you have to be a preacher or pastor, or teacher, evangelist, or missionary, but there is something that God wants you to do. He has a plan for your life, and I think it's up to each of us to seek it out. Here is the amazing thing, out of all the multitudes that have been on this earth before, and even today, we know that God doesn't use the ones that we think He should use. Isn't that amazing? Because:

**I Corinthians 1:26b**

"how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called:"

Have you ever stopped to think about that? How many intellectuals, highly educated, highly polished, what we would called apt, and appropriate for proclaiming the Gospel are really called for that purpose? Very few, if any. Because God doesn't use those kinds of people, God can only use that which in the eyes of the world is nothing. In the short time we have left, I want to take you back to Moses as a prime example. Here Moses had become the second man in Egypt, which in those days was the greatest nation in the then-known world. He was second to the Pharaoh, he had all the power and authority, I think over everything. He was in charge of it all. And Moses thought that he could go and lead the children of Israel out of slavery, but what happened? God had to send him to the back side of the desert to be a smelly what? Sheperder, and sheep in the eyes of the Egyptians were an abomination. And yet it
was into that place of abomination that God had to put this servant to bring him from his lofty position, and bring him down to nothing more than a low sheep herder. And out of that circumstance of being a nobody, God can use him.
LESSON ONE * PART IV

THE WISDOM OF GOD VERSUS THE WISDOM OF MAN

I CORINTHIANS 1:1 - 2:7

Now let's get right back into I Corinthians, and hopefully we can finish Chapter 2 today. We left off in Chapter 1, and verse 27 where Moses had to come to the place as a lowly sheep herder, before God could use him.

I Corinthians 1:27

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

Do you get that? In other words, when Paul came to Mars Hill he was just a weak vessel in the eyes of those philosophers. He was a babbler, yet Paul shook them up, and Paul is remembered to this very day. When you get over there, they don't refer to those philosophers, but rather Paul. And so God was the winner once again. Now verse 28, and we're continuing on with that same thought. God uses for His glory the base things of the world, and things which are even despised, and ridiculed.

I Corinthians 1:28

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

Now I think the average reader just reads that without getting the impact of it. What does Paul mean when he says that God will use the things that are not, to confound the things that are? Well it's that same line of thought. The very things that the world isn't even aware of, and they're nothing so far as the world is concerned, they're nothing in the eyes of the successful world, but yet those are the very things that God uses then to confound the high and the mighty. That's just His way of doing it. Now verse 29 is the reason for all which seems contrary to life's logic. Why shouldn't God use someone who has all the talent in the world? Why shouldn't God use someone who has a tremendous IQ? Why shouldn't God use someone who has a whole background of wealth? Why didn't God use Moses when he was second in command in Egypt? Well this verse 29 gives it all.

I Corinthians 1:29

"That no flesh should glory in his presence."
No human being will ever glory or brag in God's sight, because God won't have it. So consequently, he will not use people with seemingly all the right credentials. Because then when they're successful, what would they be prone to do? "Oh look what I did."

I always have to remember the first time Iris and I were in Israel in 1975, and Israel had just come out of the six-day war which was in 1967. In that seven or eight-year period of time they had already made tremendous headway. They didn't have the super highways that you see there today, but nevertheless they had a lot of blacktop roads, new hotels, and the nation was prospering. We came out of the hotel dining room one evening, and a gentleman approached us, and said, "You're Americans aren't you?" He spoke perfect English, and so come to find out he had been raised, and educated in Boston, but had immigrated to Israel. So he said, "What do you think of our little country?" And I said that it was unbelievable, and amazing what God has done. Do you know what his answer to that was? "God didn't have a thing to do with all our accomplishments. We did it."

Well you see that's typical, they may think God didn't have anything to do with it, but He did. They may think even today that they've accomplished it, but without the Sovereign God they never would, and it's the same way with America. America wouldn't be where we are without the Grace and blessing of God, but the point here is, God seldom uses gifted, intelligent, wealthy, human beings because they would be prone to brag. Come back to Romans Chapter 4, and we find even Abraham, the great man of faith who waited years and years for the promises to come to fruition, yet it was faith + nothing. It wasn't that Abraham had accomplished so much, it wasn't that Abraham was a great individual, but look what Romans 4 says:

**Romans 4:2**

"For if Abraham were justified by works (by what he could accomplish), he hath whereof to glory (or brag); but not before God."

No one is ever going to brag to God, "Look what I've done." God will never have it, not even with a man like Abraham would He allow him to come to the place where he could brag, "God, do you realize all that I've done for you? God do you realize that I was patient, and waited, and waited until you finally gave me that son?" No Abraham couldn't do that. In fact while he was waiting he failed miserably, he fell flat on his face. So Paul in the same way, even though he had accomplished a lot in Judaism, yet by the time God is ready to send him out to the Gentiles three years after his conversion, do you know what he is? He's a nobody. He's no longer high up in Judaism, he's no longer held in high esteem by the Jews as the student of Gamaliel. Paul is just a nobody who is has been brought down to nothing. Now let's look at another one in II Corinthians Chapter 12. Here's Paul own account, and we know in
various other verses he describes his speech as being contemptible. He wasn't an orator like Apollos. Evidently he was not a big tall handsome fellow that simply drew people.

I remember one of the men that had a lot to do with my own learning experience, he was a tremendous preacher, about six-foot-four, as handsome as handsome could be. He always dressed just perfectly, and he had a tremendous voice and delivery, and on top of all that, had a tremendous knowledge of the Scriptures. He was the first one to give to me what I've passed on to you over and over, Whenever you read something in the Scriptures always ask yourself first, "To whom was this addressed?" He was a great servant, and I've always held the man in high esteem, but he's one of the very few. Now look what Paul had to put up with? Paul had an experience, and wasn't quite sure it had all happened, but he knows it happened.

**II Corinthians 12:4**

"How that he (Paul) was caught up into paradise (the heaven of the heavens), and heard unspeakable words, which is not lawful for a man to utter." In other words, he had actually heard the angelic conversations, he actually saw the very throne room of heaven.

**II Corinthians 12:5,6**

"Of such an one will I glory (it was such a thrilling experience that it was all he could do to keep from bragging about it, because Paul was human.): yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities. For though I would desire to glory (It was all Paul could do to suppress that feeling of wanting to share with others what he had seen and heard, but he knew he dare not because God told him not to. On top of that God had to do something physically to Paul so he would never forget he was not to share.), I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me.

In other words, it's just like many other things concerning the Scriptures. If Noah's ark could be discovered, and laid out there for public scrutiny, and there wasn't any doubt that it was Noah's ark, what would mankind do with it? They would make it a shrine, and worship the silly thing. See? And here Paul is saying the same thing. If I were permitted to share what I saw and heard in that experience people would be falling at my feet trying to worship me. So he says, "I dare not," and in order to keep Paul humble, what does God do?

**I Corinthians 12:7a**
"And lest I should be exalted above measure (in other word unless I should come to the place where people would try to worship me, because of what I've seen and heard) through the abundance of the revelations (do you see that?), there was given to me a thorn in the flesh,..."

Now I imagine that everyone of you at one time or other has had a thorn, and they just pester you, until you can finally get rid of it. Paul was given a constant pestering thorn in the flesh as a constant reminder, "Paul don't you repeat these things that you've heard and seen, don't you get puffed up, don't you try to reveal to the world all that I've shown you."

**II Corinthians 12:7b**

"...the messenger of Satan to buffet me,..."

Does God ever inflict discomfort or pain Himself? I don't think so, but who does God permit to do it for him? The Devil himself. Do you remember Job? God didn't afflict Job, but who did? Satan did, and God limited him. God said, "You can touch him, but you can't take his life, you can do this, but you can't do that." Well it's the same way here. God didn't put the thorn in Paul's flesh, but he did permit a messenger of Satan, and here again is the reason.

**II Corinthians 12:7b**

"....lest I should be exalted above measure."

In other words Paul is saying, "This was all done to me to remind me that I'm not who I'd like to think I am. I'm still just a nobody." And you see that's what every one of us are. In ourselves we are a nobody, but the flip-side is, "In Christ we become somebody, absolutely we do." Okay, now back to I Corinthians.

**I Corinthians 1:30**

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

What more could any man or woman ever hope for? Now here again the world thinks this is foolishness, the world thinks to have the assurance of redemption is just so much foolishness. The world certainly doesn't want any part of sanctification and holiness, that's just not their bag. I think of a dear lady who started asking her neighbors to come to a Bible study, and their reply was, "Hey, wait a minute, we're
not into that stuff." Well that's typical, and I told her not to be shocked. But now verse 31:

**I Corinthians 1:31**

"That, according as it is written (Old Testament), 'He that glorieth (or brags, or boasts, then let him glorieth in one area), let him glory in the Lord.'"

Because without Him we're nothing, absolutely nothing, none of us are. But in Him and His power none of us have any idea what we can accomplish. We can shake this old world to its boot straps if we would just step out by faith, and do it. Now let's move on into Chapter 2, and here we come to this concept that one commentator mentioned concerning the Corinthians, that it was based on the various wisdoms. The wisdom of this world set up against the wisdom of God. Now Paul again is using himself as an example, because he is the prime example.

**I Corinthians 2:1,2**

"And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified."

In other words, Paul didn't come to Corinth to the Bema Seat, which in Corinth was sort of like the town square, and where all the philosophers would get up on the stage and extol their philosophy. Paul didn't come with all the knowledge of the Greek classics: Homer, Plato, and all these. No, that didn't count any thing to Paul, he didn't even rehearse all of his knowledge of the Old Testament even though he could have, but I don't think that in Corinth, this wild, wicked, Gentile city, God even let Paul use his Jewish background. But Paul comes with only one message, and it's the message that's almost forgotten today. Very seldom do you hear it plain and simple that the Gospel is: "**Christ died for the sins of the world, that He died for me and He died for you,** (Ref. I Corinthians 15:1-4) Oh it's circumvented, they come close.

I remember years ago I went to a funeral of a neighbor lady, and the only reason I wanted to go was I'd heard this particular church had a tremendous preacher, and I wanted to hear for myself. He had a tremendous sermon that he brought to that whole huge church full of people, many of whom I'm sure had never heard the Gospel. He had a tremendous opportunity of letting hundreds of people hear the simple message of Salvation after that great eloquent sermon. But just as he came to the threshold of the plan of Salvation, what do you suppose he did? He dropped the ball, he just simply dropped it. I came away crestfallen, and thought how in the world could a man such as this, known to be a great preacher, and all he had to do was preach Christ crucified,
and he blew it. And listen, that's happening all too often. I don't say all, but all too often.

I'll never forget years ago when a gentlemen that I was instrumental in bringing out of almost the same kind of background, came up one day and said, "Les, if you could just heal people you'd have thousands coming to your meeting." Now I know that, but you see that's not what the Apostle Paul did. Paul didn't come announcing a great healing meeting. Paul didn't come saying, "Hey, we're going to philosophize, we're going to deal in the classics today." But rather what did Paul do? He just pointed the finger at them, and said, "You're sinners. Christ died for you, He loves you. Believe it. And what happened? Hey, he had an assembly of believers! Oh, they were carnal, they had a long way to go, but Paul calls them brethren, and as we saw in the first lesson, when you get to verses 7 & 8, if the Lord would have come that day they would have all gone to be with Him. Now verse 3.

*I Corinthians 2:3*

"And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling."

Remember I was telling you about a little lady awhile ago? She said, "I would go to the door and knock, and my knees would be shaking, and I was shaking with fear." But you see that was normal, so was the Apostle Paul. He lived in constant fear of how he would be received. What will they do with my preaching? What are they going to do with me? And Paul lived to find out what they did to him in lots of instances. They beat him, they threw him in prison, they stoned him, and left him for dead. But Paul never quit preaching that simple Gospel. Now verse 4.

*I Corinthians 2:4*

"And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power:"

There is another place that tells us that his speech was contemptible.

*II Corinthians 10:10*

"For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible.

In other words, Paul didn't use the most perfect Greek grammar. I don't know, but there was something about it. He was not a polished orator like Apollos, or like some of the other Greek philosophers. And Paul had to overcome that. Paul didn't but the
Spirit of God did, and it's the same way with every one of you. You may drop a word to someone, and may think that it will never amount to anything, but all we have to do is plant a seed once in awhile, and it will accomplish something. Oh you might not know about it in this life, but you will in the life to come. Now verse 5:

*I Corinthians 2:5a*

"That your faith..."

Paul wasn't too proud of the Corinthians' works yet, but he was proud of their faith. And you know I can identify with that. I meet people now that have heard our program, they've become believers, and I don't know how far they've advanced in their Christian walk, but just to hear them give their testimony. I got this second-hand, but there was a dear lady not too long ago that told a friend that she had watched our program 15 minutes, and the Lord spoke to her heart and saved her out of a life that was anything but good. But you see this is what God will do if we'll just what? Stick our neck out? Some time you just have to put your neck out on the old chopping block, and that's what the Apostle Paul is referring to here.

*I Corinthians 2:5a*

"That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men,..."

Why am I emphasizing that? Because this is where too much of it is today. People are willing to listen to someone who seemingly has all the answers to the world's problems, or maybe they have all the answers to science and religion, but listen that's not where we put our faith. We put our faith in the Gospel, in the Word of God, and from that God will begin to expand our knowledge. Now finishing the verse.

*I Corinthians 2:5b*

"...but in the power of God."

Now again going back to our opening remarks in this Book of Corinthians. When these grossly immoral people were saved out of that wicked lifestyle, they were given all the Grace of God that they will ever have, but what was still ahead of them? Growth. They began as fledglings, but they were under the Grace of God, and in that Grace they're going to grow. And I'm sure that Paul finally saw the day when the Corinthian Church had a grown a long way. But at this point and time they're still down there embryonic, they are still just fledglings.

*I Corinthians 2:6a,7*
"Howbeit we speak wisdom..." Remember what this one commentator said? This Book of Corinthians is all hung up on wisdom. The wisdom of men versus the wisdom of God. I hope you're beginning to see that now.

"But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory."
Now with Bible in hand let's begin again where we left off in our last lesson, and that will be in I Corinthians Chapter 2, and verse 8. I would like to back up a couple of verses and remind you again that throughout this early part of I Corinthians, Paul is constantly bringing up the word "Wisdom." And it's usually in a comparison of man's wisdom, and God's wisdom. The Apostle Paul was probably more aware of the emphasis on man's wisdom than we can have any idea about, because just shortly before he came down to the city of Corinth he was at the very seat of psychological thinking which was Athens. And you remember up there at Athens as he confronted all those Athenian Philosophers, they subscribed to him the term, "Babbler."

Do you remember that when we were studying the Book of Acts? What would this babbler have to say? Well compared to the philosophers of his day it was really the other way around. Paul was the one who had the heavy stuff, and the philosophers were the ones who had the babble. And you know what? It isn't much different today. The world's heavy thinkers, and the think tanks, and all we read about, compared to the Word of God, they're nothing but babble. They try to envision what's going to happen, and how things are happening, and here the writers of Scripture knew it thousands of years ago. So as Paul now comes on the scene at Corinth, as we explained in the last several lessons, we find a city that was beset in idolatry, steeped in the mythological worship of the gods and goddesses, and along with that of course there was gross immorality. We think we're in a bad state of affairs today, but we're not yet as far as they were at Corinth.

Into the very midst of all that comes this apostle and he didn't come to them with oratory, or smooth talk. He didn't have a big advance team getting him ready for a big crusade, or anything like that. He just came into the synagogue first, and from there probably out into the busy market place, and he just simply began to approach people, as he says in this letter, "With the preaching of the Cross." And I've maintained for as long as I've been teaching that if pastors would forget about the gimmicks, and programs, and just simply start preaching the Word again, then I think they would find that their church would once again have new life, and began to grow because this is the way that God has ordained it. We need to back up a little bit to Chapter 2, verse 6, and again this hits the nail on the head.

I Corinthians 2:6,7a
"Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect ('perfect' in the King James means mature. So these Corinthian believers, even though they were carnal, yet they had enough of the basic fundamentals of Paul's Gospel that Paul could refer to them as mature); yet not the wisdom of this world (does he bring to Corinth or to us today?), nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought:"

"But..."

Here's the flip side again. Paul says that he didn't come to you with the wisdom of this world, but the simple Gospel of the Cross. And you know the simple Gospel of the Cross hasn't lost its power one iota. We have heard in just the last few months of people who have just watched a portion of our program, not even a whole program, and the Lord has entered their lives, and transformed them and just totally changed the direction of their life. Now that's not Les Feldick, but rather that's the power of the Word of God, and work of the Holy Spirit. And anyone of you can experience the same thing as you share the Gospel (Ref. I Corinthians 15:1-4) with those you come into contact with. So Paul tells us that he didn't come with the wisdom of this world:

**I Corinthians 2:7a**

"But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery (or Secret),..."

The word `mystery' or `secret' is a Pauline word, and I like to use as much Scripture as we can because this is a Bible study. So let's turn to a verse that we've used over and over to follow up on this word "mystery or secret." And we'll find that in Deuteronomy 29:29, and it's from this verse that I think Paul is constantly using that same word. It's mystery in the Greek, but it's also secret. So back here in Deuteronomy we see that very word `secret' as being a part and parcel of God dealing with not only Israel, but the whole human race.

**Deuteronomy 29:29**

"The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed (and are no longer a secret) belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law."

Now of course that was Moses writing to Israel, but you see the same thing applies to us today. God has seen fit to keep things secret until such time in His Sovereign Grace He saw fit to release it, and reveal it. Which of course is this whole Pauline doctrine, it had been kept secret until revealed to Paul. The Old Testament knew nothing of what we call, "The Gospel of the Grace of God." The Four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John know nothing of Paul's Gospel, "That Jesus died for your sins, that He was
buried, and that He was raised from the dead, and you must believe that for your Salvation." So Paul uses the words over and over, "Behold I show you a secret or a mystery." Now back to I Corinthians Chapter 2, and this is exactly what Paul is referring to. That the wisdom that God had now given to this apostle, the revelations that have now been given to this man had been kept secret. And now they are coming out into full view, and full understanding:

I Corinthians 2:7a

"But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery (Paul had the privilege of having all these secrets revealed to him by the risen Lord.), even the hidden wisdom..."

You see when Abraham first had his encounter with Jehovah, and if I'm not mistaken the Hebrew name that God ascribed to it was Jehovah Olam. And the word Olam as you come all the way up through the Old Testament can be used in various other settings. For example King David refers to the Psalms, "Why O LORD have you hidden these things." Well what do you suppose is a Hebrew word for hidden? Olam. And so way back there in Genesis we already realize that God in His Sovereignty does keep things hidden from human understanding until it's His time to reveal it. And remember Paul is constantly referring to this fact, that these things revealed to him were indeed hidden in the mind of God. And again I always have to take folks back to Acts Chapter 2 where Peter is preaching to the Nation of Israel concerning their having crucified their Messiah.

Acts 2:23

"Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain;"

So was God surprised when Israel rejected the Messiah? No. Was God surprised when Rome crucified Him? No, because it was all predetermined back in eternity past, and the same way with these truths. This wasn't just God changing His mind all of a sudden, and saying, " Well I guess I'll do it a different way." Oh no, this was all in a predetermined Sovereign plan of the ages that through this man Paul, God would reveal these hidden wisdoms. Now continuing on in verse 7.

I Corinthians 2:7b

"...even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our (my) glory:"
Now turn with me to Galatians Chapter 1 so that we know what Paul is talking about. And we've looked at these verses quite often, and I'm going to keep repeating, because that is how people learn. And here in Galatians is the Apostle Paul's own account of how these revelations came to him. And let's begin with verse 11. And remember Paul is writing here to a Gentile congregation.

**Galatians 1:11,12**

"But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man." Do you see that? In other words he's not just falling into someone else's footsteps, and taking up their material, and passing it on. But rather Paul is starting with something totally new. Now verse 12:

"For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it (by man, so how did he get it?), but by the revelation of Jesus Christ."

Now stop and think, where was Jesus Christ when He revealed these things to the Apostle Paul? He was already in glory. This isn't during His earthly ministry, but rather after our Lord's death, burial, and resurrection and ascension to glory. And now He is revealing all these truths to Paul from glory so he can take it out to Jew and Gentile alike.

**Galatians 1:13a**

"For ye have heard of my conversation (manner of living) in time past in the Jews' religion,..."

And remember by the time Paul comes on the scene, the Jews' religion had been watered down with man-made laws and rules. I hope everyone understands that when Israel was living under the Law even during Christ's earthly ministry that was a far cry from the pure Law of Moses. By the time that Christ came to the Nation of Israel it wasn't just the ten commandments that made up the Law but hundreds of rules and regulations that now comprised the Law of Judaism. Now when you do that to anything that God has left for the human race, it becomes nothing more than religion. And that is what Paul is alluding to here, that he had been steeped in the Jew's religion. Now continuing on with verse 13:

**Galatians 1:13b**

"...how that beyond measure I persecuted the church (or assembly) of God, and wasted it:" And that was of course referring to those Jewish believers of Christ's
earthly ministry, and also the ones that Peter and the eleven were ministering and preaching to over in the Book of Acts. Now verse 14:

**Galatians 1:14**

"And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the (Word of God? No, but rather) traditions of my fathers."

And you know what? People in Christendom are not one bit different. If people could come and say, "Les I'm steeped in the Word, I wouldn't have any problem with that, but they don't. They call, and come with their various ideas of the tradition in which they have lived for the last many, many years. Paul was no different, he was steeped in the traditions of the fathers.

**Galatians 1:15a**

"But (the flip side. Now as he comes out of the traditions of the fathers) when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb,..."

In other words, Saul of Tarsus was on God's mind way back in eternity past, and at the appropriate time Saul's mother conceived, and the baby in her womb was all part of God's preordained plan, and that's what he says. It was God who formed him in the womb, it was God Who brought him to birth.

**Galatians 1:15b**

"...and called me by his grace,"

Now you all know Paul's background as the persecutor, as the one who hated Jesus of Nazareth with a passion, and yet God saw fit to save that man, not because he deserved it, or because he had earned it, but rather because of "Grace." Now verse 16, and what was God's purpose?

**Galatians 1:16a**

"To reveal his Son in me (now of course he's speaking of the crucified, resurrected, and risen Christ), that I might preach him among the heathen (or the Gentiles);..."

Paul was commissioned back there in Acts Chapter 9 to preach to the Gentiles, and never forget this. I have a young man out in North Carolina who picked up our program several years ago off the satellite, and the first thing he did was order all the
tapes and books, and he just became a rabid student. After he had gotten it down solid from Genesis to Revelation he wonders why with all this new knowledge why God doesn't give him a chance to use it. And I told him to be patient, and he called the other night and was so excited, because he had became a HAM operator, and told me that he had a whole class of men on the shortwave studying the Word, and he is just thrilled that he can unload the Scriptures over the shortwave. Now finishing the verse. Paul had the Son revealed in him to preach to Gentiles, and:

**Galatians 1:16b**

"...immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood."

Now what does that tell us? Well, logically from the human standpoint old Saul was up there in Damascus, and the Lord has just totally made him His own. And having brought him off his high horse of Judaism, what would have been the logical thing to do? To go back to Jerusalem and look up Peter, and the eleven, and say, "Hey fellows, you were with the Lord for three years now fill me in. You certainly know a lot of things that I don't know." But you see Paul makes the point by inspiration that he didn't confer with anyone. Why? Because God wanted to keep him as far from the Twelve as he possibly could, because he doesn't want the revelation that he's going to give to Paul to get mixed up with what the Twelve were teaching and understood. And to make sure that we understand what Paul is saying the next verse qualifies it.

**Galatians 1:17**

"Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus."

God took him to Arabia, and I think it was Mount Sinai. Just as surely as God took Moses up there to give him the Law for Israel, I believe He took Paul up there to reveal the doctrines of Grace. Well anyway, the Apostle makes it so plain that all of this that had been given to him, and which comes out in his letters, was by revelation. He didn't go to some seminary in Jerusalem taught by Peter, James and John. He didn't go back and pick up their notes and do some research. But instead God took him to the desert (and I think alone), and there, if I understand my scriptures correctly, for three years the Lord revealed to this man these tremendous doctrines of Grace which you will find no where else in your Bible. Now maybe that is sufficient to bring us back to I Corinthians Chapter 2. So this is the wisdom that Paul refers to as having been revealed to him as "The Apostle to the Gentiles." Now then this wisdom had been revealed to this man, how that Christ was the Son of God, He was the Messiah, the King of Israel, but His own people rejected Him, and crucified Him. But it was all
part of God's eternal plan for the ages, that it had to be that way in order to purchase the salvation of every human being that would respond.

*I Corinthians 2:8a*

"Which (this wisdom) none of the princes of this world knew:..."

Now this word `knew' is more than the casual word for, "Yes, there was a fellow that came out of Nazareth," and so forth. No, they did not know Him as the Son of God, the Messiah of Israel. Had the leaders of Israel, had that High Priest, had those Pharisees known Who Jesus of Nazareth really was, would they have ever cried for His death? NO WAY! Pilot came close to recognizing Who Jesus was. He said, "I can find no fault in this man." And on top of that his wife had had a dream not to touch this Man. Pilot came close to seeing it, but he didn't, and so Pilot also put his stamp on the crucifixion. And so this is what Paul is now alluding to, that the princes and leaders of that then-known world did not know Who Jesus of Nazareth was. And consequently they went ahead and crucified Him:

*I Corinthians 2:8b*

"for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."

These people had the wisdom of men, they had the wisdom of religion, but they did not have the wisdom of God. Now verse 9: So now after comparing the wisdom of men with the wisdom of God he says:

*I Corinthians 2:9*

"But as it is written (Old Testament reference), `Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.'"

Now I know that in our present day Christendom we hear almost nothing of the lake of fire, the eternal doom, but you know it's gotten to the place where we don't hear much about heaven and if we do it's in some real divinity terms. We just hear it as some place we'll go when we die if we're saved. But listen, this verse gives us again a whole train load if we will just think on it. There has never entered into the thoughts of man - he can't even began to comprehend the things that God has already prepared for those who love Him. You know I've been emphasizing in my classes here in Oklahoma over the past many years, as a believer get excited about your eternity. Get excited about what's ahead of us. This old world hasn't anything to offer us! Even
though we here in America have it so good, but it's nothing compared to the glory
Paul says that one day will be presented to us.

Those of you who have traveled know there are areas in our country that are beautiful
almost beyond description. I love the mountains, and make no apology for it, and if I
could live my life over and could make a living out of scenery I think I'd be living out
in the Rocky Mountains. But those mountains just give us a little glimpse as they are
so eternal, they are so much the work of the fingers of God, and I just can't help but
feeling a little closer to Him as we drive through those tremendous mountainous areas.
But even that beauty is nothing, Paul says, compared to that which is still coming.
And always keep that uppermost in your mind, because this old world is nothing but a
pig pen compared to that which is coming.
Now to pick up where we left off in our last lesson in I Corinthians Chapter 2. We had just commented on verse 9 so we're ready to go into verse 10. But before we do, let me state that as usual we have people here today from many different denominations, but that's not important because we're just here to teach the Word. And after all, God is not going to have a special set of requirements for one group, and other requirements for another group, there is only one Word, and as Paul says in the Book of Ephesians:

Ephesians 4:4-6

"There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism (Ref. I Corinthians 12:13), One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

So we trust as we teach we can reach into the hearts of whoever you are, and whatever your background, and get into the Book. So now let's get back to our study in I Corinthians, Chapter 2, and let's read again verse 9 where we had stopped.

I Corinthians 2:9

"But as it is written (Old Testament), eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

And then verse 10 starts with the word "But." So that's the flip-side again, and if it's not been revealed to the heart of man, to whom have these things been revealed? To the believer. We do have a concept of what eternity holds in store. We do know that there's a great city with streets of gold, in which one day we are going to live. We do know that there's a glorious reign of Christ (1000 year reign) in which we will take part. We do know that there are all of these good things awaiting us, but for the unbelieving world, they have no idea. They don't know what they're missing, and they certainly don't want to know where they are going. So they just don't know. Now verse 10.

I Corinthians 2:10
"But God hath revealed them unto us (the believers) by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."

The Holy Spirit is the one Who communicates these things of course from the Word of God. He also searcheth the deep things of God. And again I'm concerned because what I hear from people all across the land is that they are not getting in-depth teaching from the Word. It's all so shallow, and I know that too much Sunday School material, as good as it may be, just doesn't get into the deep things of God. And Paul is admonishing here that we have to let the Holy Spirit take us into the deep things of God's Word. Now verse 11.

**I Corinthians 2:11**

"For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him?..."

Now that goes into the secular world doesn't it? How can a child function in the secular world if he isn't taught the things he needs to know to function? And you know that even today we're bringing kids out of high school and college that can't read or write. They can't fill out an employment form, or write a check, so what's happened? They haven't even been taught the rudimentary things of the secular world, and they can't function. Now bring it into the spiritual realm, is it any different? No! And this is what Paul is going to be dealing with as soon as we get to Chapter 3. This was one of the Corinthian's problems. Remember I told you in our first lesson in I Corinthians that the Church at Corinth had more problems than any of the other congregations that Paul dealt with? In fact let's look for a moment at Chapter 3 so you will know what I'm talking about.

**I Corinthians 3:1a**

"And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual,..."

In other words, they hadn't gone into the deep things. Granted, they hadn't had that long of an opportunity, but we can reflect on the Thessalonians and how Paul had been able to teach them with all things from the rudimentary to the very deep things, and they had grasped it, but the Corinthians didn't. Now reading verse 1 again.

**I Corinthians 3:1**

"And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual but as unto carnal (believers who have not come out of the fleshly experience, and are still under the control of the old Adam rather than the Holy Spirit. However, in Romans 8 when
Paul speaks of `carnal' he is speaking about an unsaved individual. But here Paul is speaking of believers who are saved, but are still so weak spiritually that he speaks of them), even as unto babes in Christ."

I Corinthians 3:2a

"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."

You don't give that new-born baby solid food, you have to start with milk, and it's the same way with the believer. Now I think that the Lord has given me patience with new believers. I don't expect them to all of a sudden comprehend all the deep things of God's Word. They don't have to, but you know what I look for? I want growth. I tell my classes if you aren't more steeped in the Word now than you were a year ago than I've failed, and you've failed. God expects growth from His children. But the Corinthians (and this is why Paul is so uptight), were still so steeped in the flesh. But always remember Paul calls them believers, don't ever lose sight of that. They've been born-again, and placed into the Body of Christ, but they are still so fleshly minded.

Now back to where we were in Chapter 2. Now verse 11:

I Corinthians 2:11

"For what man knoweth the things of a man (our system of secular education), save the spirit of man which is in him (in like manner)? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God."

In other words you cannot know the deep things of God unless the Spirit of God reveals them to us. And the Spirit can't reveal these things until we become a Child of God. The unsaved person can't comprehend these things, the Bible is closed to them. But once we enter into a salvation experience the Book opens up. There is nothing that thrills me more than when someone writes or calls, and says, "Les, it's just like you turned on a huge light bulb." I didn't turn it on, the Holy Spirit did! And after that these things become so understandable.

I Corinthians 2:12a

"Now we have received (past tense, and he's not only speaking of himself, but to believers everywhere.), not the spirit of the world,..."
the preaching of the Cross. That's all Paul knew, "Christ crucified, and risen from the dead." Now continuing on with verse 12.

**I Corinthians 2:12b**

"but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God."

Oh, the Creator, Sovereign God is the One Who reveals these things to us, and we have to look at it in that light. We are not attaining this knowledge by the energy of the flesh, but rather as the Holy Spirit works through the Word, and reveals it freely. Now verse 13:

**I Corinthians 2:13**

"Which things also we speak (the things that are of the Spirit of God), not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual."

Now what does comparing spiritual things with spiritual mean? Your whole eternal destiny. Are we going to spend eternity in this glorious place that Paul has alluded to? Or is it going to be the opposite? Well how are we going to know? You and I can't look at someone and say, "Yeah, they're a Christian," because we don't really know. That's something God must discern. But I've always maintained that I know what I am, you know what you are, and how do we know that? By lining ourselves up with the Word of God.

Now I learned years and years ago when a young lady came bouncing into one of my home Bible classes, and said, "Les Feldick, do you teach such and such a heresy? And I said, "Well, that's what I teach, but I didn't realize that it was heresy." And then she lambasted me for a few minutes, and finally I said, "Now just wait a minute. On what basis do you think you're going to go to God's Heaven?" She said, "I've done this, I've done that, and I've done that." I said, "Well that's great, can you show me from the Word that will take you to heaven?" She said, "Well no, not really except Jesus did say, `Suffer these little ones to come unto me, and forbid them not.'" I said, "Is that it?" She said, "Well I think there's a verse that says, `Go into all the world and baptize them.'" I said, "That's it?" She said, "Well yeah, that's pretty much it." I said, "In other words you are basing your whole eternal destiny on bits and pieces of just two verses?" I had her backed into a corner, you know that I did.

Then I said, "Now let me tell you why I have the hope that I have," and I showed her verse after verse, after verse, and this was not only for her benefit, but also for the
benefit of the whole class. And we just compared Scripture with Scripture. Well by now all the wind was out of her sails, and do you know what she said? "If I had a salvation like that then I guess I could be as sure as you are." It's sad isn't it? But yet that's where multitudes are tonight, they have settled on something that is just bits and pieces here and there, and they really don't know where that is. I maintain that you have to know what you are, where you're going based on comparing Scripture with Scripture and then you're on solid ground. Let's look at a verse in II Peter Chapter 1 for a moment. And we just want to give you an example of what we mean by comparing Scripture with Scripture.

**II Peter 1:19**

"We have also a more sure (or certain) word of prophecy (I think here Peter is not telling the future, but rather just to speak forth the Word of God); whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts;

And I think the Day Star that is referred to here is that Day Star in the Book of Revelation that Christ is the bright and Morning Star. He is going to appear in all of His glory at the very beginning of the millennium that's back there in Revelation which will be the end of time, and human history as we know it. He is going to be the Bright and Morning Star, and I think that is what the Holy Spirit is implying here from the pen of Peter. Now verse 20.

**II Peter 1:20a**

"Knowing this first (he says you had better get one thing straight), that no prophecy ..." Or as The Word is sent out. Prophecy here is not telling the future. Remember the gift of prophecy in the early Church was gifted men who simply gave forth the Word of God. Now completing verse 20:

**II Peter 1:20**

"Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture (or the Word being sent out) is of any private interpretation."

Now I know this verse is a little hard to understand. When you speak of something private, what do you speak of? That which pertains to one person. That which is yours, that's your privacy. All right, now carry that over into the Scriptures. Nothing that God has sent forth to us, the human race, is all wrapped up in just one verse. See this is why a lot of people get hung up on Bible study. They'll say, "Well, why didn't God make it a little plainer, or more simple?" God knew He wasn't dealing with third
graders. For the most part God is dealing with adults, and so He knows we have the ability to search the Scriptures. And how are you going to search the Scriptures? By comparing scripture with scripture. And when you compare Scripture with Scripture from Genesis to Revelation you can't be on a more solid rock. And that's all I beg people to do, just search the Scriptures, don't go by what I say or what someone else tells you. And so Peter is making it so plain. In other words he is saying, "Don't build your eternal destiny on one verse, or you're going to end up in the wrong place. But rather build your eternal destiny on a series of doctrines and teachings that fit from cover to cover." Now verse 21.

II Peter 1:21

"For the prophecy (or again the speaking forth of God's Word) came not in old time (Old Testament writers) by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved (or inspired) by the Holy Ghost."

You know I've read skeptics, and scoffers, and they will attribute especially the Old Testament to nothing more than stories that came up around the old ancient camp fires of Israel. And as they began to compare stories, and after generations and generations of verbalizing, then someone came up with the idea of writing some of this stuff down. And so that's how they got the Old Testament. Well that's ridiculous. Peter says nothing, even in the Old Testament, of men dreaming it up. None of this came by men going out and doing some research on this, but rather as the Holy Spirit caused them to write. Moses wrote, David wrote, Elijah wrote, Jeremiah wrote, and then of course when you get into the New Testament it's the same thing.

Now if the Holy Spirit is the Author of this Book, then you know that there is no confusion. See that's the first thing that the scoffers say, "Well, it's a Book of contradictions." No it isn't! Everything fits so beautifully if you will just compare Scripture with Scripture. Now for a moment let's go all the way back to the Garden of Eden, and that would be in Genesis Chapter 3. Now we're going to compare Scripture with Scripture. And here Eve is being confronted by the serpent, the Devil, and now verse 3, and we find Eve saying:

Genesis 3:3

"But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said (now with God saying it that puts it in concrete doesn't it?), 'Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it (that of course Eve added), lest ye die.'" Now I always call this the very first law of man's dealing with a Holy God, and if he is going to disobey the revealed will of God, it's sin, and he's going to die of his sins. A spiritual death as well
as physical. Now let's compare some Scripture with that in the Book of Ezekiel, Chapter 18 and see what Ezekiel says.

**Ezekiel 18:4**

"Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die."

Now what did God tell Eve back in Genesis 2? He said to Eve, "The day thou eatest thereof thy shalt surely die." Now here in Ezekiel He says basically the same thing doesn't He? "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." Now to compare Scripture with Scripture let's turn to Romans Chapter 3, and we will find that Paul will not disagree with Eve and Ezekiel. Let's look at verse 9 first.

**Romans 3:9**

"What then? are we (Jews) better than they (the Gentiles)? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin;" In other words every Jew, and non-Jew that has ever lived has been guilty of disobeying the revealed will of God, and that is what? Sin! Do you see how that all fits? He goes on through these verses, and we find a horrible description of the human race. And then the conclusion of course is wrapped up in Romans 3:23.

**Romans 3:23**

"For all have sinned (everyone), and come short of the glory of God:"

Now remember my definition of sin is real simple. It isn't just an adulterer, or drunkard, but rather anyone who has disobeyed the revealed will of God. Now that's sin in any of it's colors, and Paul says, "All have done that!" Everyone of us are guilty of having gone against the revealed will of God. Now just in four different scriptures I've been able to show you that all have sinned, and now to look at it further let's turn to II Corinthians Chapter 5. So now all have died spiritually, and all will die physically. I'm just doing this to show you how to compare Scripture with Scripture, and then there is no compromising it because it all fits.

**II Corinthians 5:14**

"For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead:"
Do you see that? I remember one of my pastors years ago saying, "Folks do you realize that we're living in a world of dead people?" Now that kind of slaps us in the face for the moment, but that's exactly true because we are living in a world full of spiritually dead people. Now read on.

**II Corinthians 5:15**

"And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again."

Now turn with me a little further to the Book of Ephesians Chapter 2, and we will look at a well-known verse. And that should be sufficient for this line of thought on comparing Scripture with Scripture.

**Ephesians 2:1**

"And you hath he quickened (or made alive, spiritually, as a result of their salvation), who were (past tense) dead in trespasses and sins:" How did we get to that point? We were born in it. Adam, the federal head of the human race plunged everyone of us into that kind of a state, and so we're born spiritually dead.
LESSON TWO * PART III

FOR WE ARE LABOURERS TOGETHER WITH GOD

I CORINTHIANS 2:6 - 3:9

Now let's get right back to where we left off in the last lesson, and that will be in I Corinthians Chapter 2, and verse 13. We get such a thrill when we receive letters and phone calls from people who tell us that, for the first time in their life, they are enjoying Bible study. Well, that's as it should be, and I think the number one criteria for understanding the Scriptures is to separate God's dealing with Israel from His dealing with the Gentile Body of Christ. That answers most of your questions right up front.

Now to get back to our study, and remember the whole theme of this Chapter 2 especially, is comparing the wisdom of men against the things that are of the wisdom of God. And we must also understand that this Book is a closed book to the unbeliever. He cannot comprehend it, it's beyond him, it goes over his head, but for even the new believer, it just becomes so understandable, and of course we grow in our understanding as we grow in our Christian experience. Verse 13:

I Corinthians 2:13

"Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual."

And remember that's what we looked at in our last lesson, how that all the way from the Book of Genesis to the Book of Ephesians we have one continuing premise, and that is that man in his natural state is spiritually dead. He's died by virtue of Adam's original sin. Now we begin verse 14 with our flip side word again.

I Corinthians 2:14a

"But (even though we as believers can understand the Scriptures, and we can compare Scripture with Scripture) the natural man (the unsaved person) receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God :..."

The unbeliever cannot comprehend the deeper things. They may be able to understand the story of Bethlehem, and maybe some of the other things, but when it gets down to the deep doctrinal aspects of the Word of God, it's a closed Book to them. For example when it comes to end-time prophecies they can't understand it. Now
basically, why doesn't the natural man comprehend these things? He doesn't want to, and why doesn't he want to?

_I Corinthians 1:14b_

"...for they are foolishness unto him:..." 

I think most of you are aware of that. Your unsaved neighbors think that there's something a little bit wrong with you to go to a Bible study on a week night. Oh it's all right if you go to Church on a Sunday morning, because that's normal, but go to a Bible study on a week night? Hey, there's something wrong with you. That foolishness! Well that's the unsaved world's opinion. So consequently, since all of this is foolishness to the unbeliever:

_I Corinthians 1:14b_

"...neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." 

In other words it's just like a layman like me trying to converse with a medical doctor. Our languages are just not the same. Have you ever been in the midst of two or three doctors, and try to comprehend what they're talking about? If they are talking "shop" can you and I get anything out of that conversation? No, because they're talking a language all their own. Of course you can bring me in with a bunch of farmers, and you try to understand all that we're talking about, and you wouldn't be able to understand that either usually. But we're all like that. When we talk shop of that which we live and breathe, someone from another discipline can't understand what we're talking about. Now just think how much that is magnified then when we bring it into the realm of the "spiritual versus the natural."

I always have to go back to poor old Paul when he came up in Athens to Mars Hill, where those philosophers called him, "The Babbler." But even today there's a bronze plaque dedicated to Paul there. You don't find one of the other philosophers. Paul the babbler is still held in high esteem, and tourists coming to Athens are constantly reminded of this man, and not the philosophers of the Greeks. So Paul is bringing out that all the things that he taught were inspired by the Holy Spirit of God, and not the natural intellectual aspect of men's thinking, and what a different that makes. But you know it hasn't changed a bit today. The media is always expounding on the think-tanks, all the great intellectual minds, but how much do they ever put of the Word of God on national television? None. Why? Because to them this is foolishness, it has nothing to do with everyday man, but if they only knew, it's the other way around. Once you get an understanding of the Word of God, then you get an understanding of almost everything. Now verse 15:
I Corinthians 2:15

"But he that is spiritual (he that has been regenerated by the power of God, he that has believed the Gospel for salvation (Ref. I Corinthians 15:1-4)) judgeth (or discerns) all things, yet he himself is judged of no man."

Now the reason I used `discern' is I'm not a grocery shopper, my little wife takes care of all that, very seldom do I get into a supermarket. But I know that the once or twice in the forty-plus years we have been married that I have gone with her, that as we went down the aisle, we pick and choose. Well to a certain extent we're judging aren't we? "This isn't what we want, but this is." But I prefer the word `discern.' We have that capability of discerning, and we can compare. Now that's exactly what Paul is talking about. We have that ability as believers to discern. "Is this scriptural or is this something that man has thought of?" I've been warning my classes here in Oklahoma, and most of you have heard me say this over and over. We see this in Matthew Chapter 24 when those Twelve disciples approached Jesus:

Matthew 24:3

"And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, `Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?'"

Jesus didn't say to look for globalism, and look for the Anti-christ, but rather He said:

Matthew 24:4

"And Jesus answered and said unto them, `Take heed that no man deceive you.'"

Now just add to that in your own thinking, if Jesus said, "Don't be deceived," what is going to come on the world in the closing days? Mass deception! In other words they're going to use the Word of God, but they are going to be deceptive as they use it. For a moment let's go back to the little Book of Jude, and this is exactly how the world thinkers operate. And this is why the little Book was written to prepare us to not be deceived by all this good-sounding stuff. And I'll admit it sounds so good. In fact, I just finished reading a good book about a gentlemen that had got sucked into the "New Age Movement." And he went into very high echelons of it, and became a well-known author, and suddenly the Lord opened his eyes, and saved him, and fortunately brought him out of it. But you'd be amazed at how this New Age stuff appeals to seeking minds. And here we have it in verse 10 of the Book of Jude.

Jude 1:10,11
"But these (speaking of false teachers who are going to be deceptive in the closing days) speak evil of those things which they know not (these people are going to ridicule, and scorn the truth of God's Word, and they are going to have their own Bible so to speak.): but what they know naturally (from the energy of the flesh), as brute beasts (in other words their thinking does not go any deeper spiritually than an animal. And that's why their behavior almost becomes animalistic), in those things they corrupt themselves."

**Jude 1:11a**

"Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain,..."

What was Cain's major problem? He rationalized from the human side, and as he rationalized, remember Cain said, "Well surely God won't expect me to go beg, borrow, or barter for an animal from my brother Abel. I'll just bring God what I've grown by the sweat of my brow, and surely God will accept me." So you see Cain rationalized, and so do these people. Listen to these New Agers, read some of their stuff, and every bit of it is rationalization from the human side. That's what it is, and it sounds so good. Now reading on in verse 11:

**Jude 1:11b**

"...and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward (now those of you who were with me back there in the Book of Numbers, who was old Balaam? He was a false prophet, and he was after money, that was all that motivated him: "What's in it for old Balaam," and it's the same way with these false teachers, they are motivated by materialism), and perished in the gain saying Core."

And what happened to Core? He introduced strange fire into the altar, and what did God do? The earth opened up, and swallowed them. But what was their premise? They were going to institute something that was foreign to what God had instructed. Now reading on down:

**Jude 1:12**

"These are spots (now he's talking about false teaching) in your (love) feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear (now look at the description of these false teachers): clouds they are without water (they are like clouds in a drought that come, but all of a sudden they're gone, and that's what these false teachers are. My, they get people pumped up, and they think they're really getting into something, but it never satisfies that inner longing, that inner peace.), carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth (before it's ready to eat. It looked
so good coming along, and all of a sudden it's not worth eating), without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots;"

**Jude 1:13**

"Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame (I'm sure most of you have visited the sea shore at least once in your lifetime. And as those waves come breaking in what does it leave on the sand as it backs out? Foam, nothing pretty about it at all, and that's exactly what these New Agers do.); wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever."

Now all of that is exactly what Paul is referring to, and now if you will come back to I Corinthians again, and we'll look at verse 16:

**I Corinthians 2:16**

"For who (in the secular world) hath known the mind of the Lord (how many of these intellectual, the philosophers have known the mind of God? Almost zero), that he may instruct him? But (and there in the last part of this verse is the flip-side where Paul is bringing you and I back into the picture. What do we have?) we have the mind of Christ."

You see we are to think differently, our whole attitude, our whole mindset is totally different from the unsaved world. Now I've always told my classes, my own kids, and everybody that I have an opportunity, to become a believer doesn't make you some kind of an odd ball with a halo over your head, but rather the true believer is the common, ordinary good parent, good citizen, good church member, he is the person who is operating according to God's precept. And yet I think our lifestyle is such that the world can recognize us everywhere we go. At least they will sooner or later. Now let's go into Chapter 3:

**I Corinthians 3:1a**

"And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual,..."

Remember these people are believers, and if you don't believe me come back to Chapter 1 for a moment.

**I Corinthians 1:2a**

"Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints,..."
These are believers, they're in the Body of Christ, and even though they have all these hang-ups and shortcomings, and failures, they're still Christ's, they're His own. Now if that isn't enough, come on over to Chapter 12, and remember Paul is still talking to the same people in Chapter 12 that he talked to in Chapter 1. Paul hasn't changed the direction of his approach, and look what he says in verse 13:

_I Corinthians 12:13_

"For by one Spirit (that one and only Holy Spirit) are we all baptized (notice he says we are 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."

So you can see that Paul's not picking out just a few of the more spiritual at Corinth, but rather he's addressing all of them. Now what kind of people were most of them? Look now at Chapter 3 again, and we have that answer.

_I Corinthians 3:1_

"And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal (or fleshly), even as unto babes (but where are these babies) in Christ."

Now don't you forget that, because it's awfully easy to say, "Well these people weren't even believers." Oh yes they were. They were in the Body of Christ, but they're carnal, they've got a long way to go. Remember a month ago in our last taping, I told you the reason that Paul wrote these two letters to the people at Corinth was because these believer had questions. Number one, "How were they to handle the marriage relationship?" And the other big question they had was, "How are we going to handle meat that had been offered to idols?" Now these were all hang-ups of these people mostly because they were so carnal, and that's why Paul had to address it. Now verse 2:

_I Corinthians 3:2_

"I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it (bear what? Strong meat. They couldn't any more handle meat than an infant could handle solid food.) neither yet now are ye able."

Isn't that a sad commentary? I mean let's face reality. We don't know how long after these people were saved that Paul is writing this letter, but it was probably a year or two. And they haven't gone any further in their spiritual experience than what they were at the beginning. They are still babes in Christ. I'm sure that it just tore the Apostle Paul up. Why can't these Corinthians begin to grow? But listen! Look at us
today. How many professing Christians today are in the same state. They have nothing that they can handle of the meat of Scripture. They're not ready for it, they're still down there on the milk of the Word. And I think it's a sad commentary today as it was then, but nevertheless this is the way it is. Now verse 3. Why can't they grow?

_I Corinthians 3:3a_

"For ye are yet carnal:..."

Remember the word carnal here refers to believers who are still controlled by the flesh, rather than by the Holy Spirit. I shared with our class last night that God, through the Word, divides the whole human race into three categories. First in two, they are the Lost and Saved, but the saved He divides into two more categories, giving us a total of three. The believers are divided into the Spiritual, and Carnal. So you have spiritual believers, carnal believers, and unbelievers, and those are the three segments of the human race as God sees us. Now the Corinthian believers for the most part were carnal believers, they were not growing as Paul expected them to. How did they show they're carnality? The first thing he deals with was:

_I Corinthians 3:b_

"...for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions,..."

They had their pet people that they want to follow, and that's the first thing Paul is going to have to deal with in Chapter 3. Now we were talking about some of this in our Wilburton class last night, and I shared with them this very same thought. Divisions! In other words, even though their congregations weren't up in the hundreds and thousands like so often we think of churches today, yet I would make a guess they didn't have over 50. Because this Church met in the house of Chloe, and I don't know how rich she was or how big a home she had, nevertheless it was small enough in size that they could meet in a home. Yet even in that little congregation there were divisions, and I will just give it to you quickly as we close this lesson. There were four divisions: there were those who followed Paul, those who followed Apollos, those who followed Peter, and those who followed Jesus Himself. And it just played havoc in the Church, because there was no unity. They couldn't get anything done because of the constant bickering, and their bickering was all centered on an individual man. And many churches are caught up in that same problem today. Don't set your eyes on man, set your eyes on the Word of God, set your eyes on the Crucified One, the One Who died for you, and rose from the dead.
LESSON TWO * PART IV

FOR WE ARE LABOURERS TOGETHER WITH GOD

I CORINTHIANS 2:6 - 3:9

Now let's just look at a quick review as Paul has been comparing the wisdom of men with the wisdom of God, and yet these Corinthians are still so carnal that they are not cashing in on this fountain of wisdom that is theirs for the taking. It's the same way for us today. Every believer can just simply get into the Book and feast on it, but most won't, and what's their excuse, "Oh, I can't understand it." Yes, you can, it's not that difficult, and of course my first premise is, the first thing you do is separate that which was for the Jew or Israel, and that which was for the Gentiles. Now that doesn't mean you throw aside that which was for the Jew or Israel, but rather compare Scripture with Scripture. In the light of the fact that God dealt with the Jew under the Law, and He's dealing with us today under Grace. And they are two totally contrary principals. Law and Grace will not mix, but always be aware that the Apostle Paul is crying out against legalism in any shape or form because we're not under the Law, we are under Grace.

Now then to these Corinthian believers, for the most part pagan Gentiles recently converted out of their mythology, and idolatry, but they aren't growing. They are stagnated in their infancy, spiritually. Looking at the beginning of Chapter 3 again for a review.

I Corinthians 3:1-4a

"And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. 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. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul;..."

Remember, Paul was the one who came into that idolatrous city and preached the Gospel, and had a nucleus of believers, and naturally they would stick to Paul. But after Paul had gotten these congregations off the ground, naturally God used other men. He didn't leave it with Paul alone, and one of these other men that God had chosen was a man by the name of Apollos. And we pick Apollos up in Acts Chapter 18. Now Apollos doesn't come to the Corinthian Church immediately, he comes first to Ephesus which is across the Aegean Sea on the western shore of Turkey.

Acts 18:24
"And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man (here was a guy who came with all the outward appearances of somebody who was magnetic, someone who could hold a crowd, he could literally spellbind people with his speech), and mighty in the scriptures (Old Testament), came to Ephesus.

This eloquent, well-mannered, gifted man comes to the Church at Ephesus. Now verse 25:

Acts 18:25

"This man (Apollos) was instructed (or had been taught by other people), in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John."

Now how much of Christianity did Apollos know? I'd say none! Because the Gospel of the Kingdom that was preached by Jesus and the Twelve was still basically Jewish. It was connected with Temple worship, connected to the Old Testament Covenants, connected to the promise of the coming Messiah. So here comes Apollos, and he knows nothing of Paul's Gospel that had been revealed to Paul by the ascended Lord: that Jesus died for your sins, was buried, and rose again, and that's what you believe in your heart for salvation. (Ref. I Corinthians 15:1-4) Apollos only knows the Gospel of the Kingdom that had been preached by Jesus and the Twelve, and by John the Baptist. That gospel was repentance and water baptism, and believing that Jesus was the Christ. Now that's all that Apollos knew, but remember God always has the right person at the right time available. So who takes Apollos aside, and says, "Now wait a minute, Apollos, you're a great speaker, and we love to sit and listen to you as you open the Old Testament, but Apollos you're missing something." And I suppose Apollos thought of these lowly tentmakers, "What are you trying to tell me?." But I admire Apollos because he listened. Great man that he was, he sat down, evidently, and listened to the two lowly tentmakers, Aquila and Priscilla. Now let's see what they tell him.

Acts 18:26

"And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly(actually, or more completely.)."

In other words, Priscilla and Aquila were in a position to tell Apollos something that he did not know. Now let's back up in Chapter 18, and let's see where they got their knowledge.
Acts 18:1-4

"After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth; And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome); and (Paul) came unto them. And because he (Paul) was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought (worked): for by their occupation they were tentmakers. And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks."

Now as time goes by, and as Paul, Aquila, and Priscilla are spending some daily time with their occupation, what do you suppose Paul constantly talked about? His Gospel that he had received from the risen Lord. That's all he could talk about. You know I'm always thrilled when we can stop and visit people that have been acquaintances only through the program, and they have invited us to stop as we did in the last week or two as we traveled to Oregon to see Iris' sister. And for 48 hours do you think we talked about the weather or politics? No way. I mean it was constantly talking about the things of the Word. Well that's as it should be, and it's the same way with these three people. All they talked about was Paul's revelations concerning now the Christ Who had died, and had been buried, and rose from the dead, ascended back to glory and commissioned this man Paul to take the Gospel of the Grace of God, not just to the Nation of Israel, but to the whole world. So now Paul has just unloaded on these two people, and he has gone his way. Now do you think Priscilla and Aquila forgot all that they had heard? When Apollos comes, and knows only the baptism of John what do these two people do? Well as I've said before, I think they took him home for dinner. And as they sat across that dinner table those two people unloaded on that eloquent man, and now let's look at verse 27 and 28 in Chapter 18 again:

Acts 18:27,28

"And when he (Apollos) was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace: For he (Apollos) mighty convinced the Jews, and that publicly, shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ."

Now when you come back to I Corinthians Chapter 3, this is the same man who now has followed in Paul's footsteps, and he is now at the congregation in Corinth. And he is again holding forth with eloquence, and a capability of opening the Scriptures, but of course he had to be in agreement with Paul's Gospel, so there wasn't any doctrinal differences, but it was personality. Now as we have shown before, Paul was not the kind of a man who simply drew people to him by his appearance and speech, but it was quite the opposite. Paul gained his converts strictly through the working of the
Holy Spirit. I don't think Paul physically had much to offer like Apollos did, and so now what do these believers in Corinth do? Some by virtue of the fact that Paul brought them out of their idolatry and immorality, naturally had an adherence to him. But Apollos, with his magnetism and charisma, also had his followers. Well that's understandable because people are still doing the same thing today. I've seen churches just totally fall apart when a pastor leaves. In other words that church has been loyal to the man instead of the Word of God, and the Christ Whom they worship. So always remember that you don't put your eyes or hang your heart on a man, but rather let your eyes be centered on the Word of God, and on the Christ Who bought us.

We have another group, and they are the ones that adhered to the Apostle Peter. I've said over the years that I've been teaching, that I did not believe that the twelve per se had a ministry among the Gentiles. Now that doesn't mean that they never had an opportunity to greet some of these believers, and I'm sure Paul would have been the first to give Peter the opportunity to speak to the believers at Corinth, But I do not believe that Peter was instrumental in bringing these people out of paganism, and bringing them to salvation, but nevertheless you have this group at Corinth that are going to cling to Peter rather than Paul or Apollos. So as I have mentioned before, I believe these were the Jewish element of that Church. I think there were believing Jews in all these early congregations, and it naturally follows that since Peter had been steeped in Judaism, and had been located at Jerusalem, that he was the one that they more or less had an affinity for. Because after all, he was connected to their background, and so with all that going for Peter we have this group of people that followed him. And all this caused a division, and I suppose it was a rather stark division or Paul wouldn't have considered it a problem.

Just like today, and I run into it constantly, when I teach that our Church Age doctrines come from the pen of the Apostle Paul, and I can show from Scripture where Paul says:

*I Corinthians 11:1*

"Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ."

*I Corinthians 4:16*

"Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me."

*Philippians 3:17*

"Brethren, be followers together of me and mark them which walk so as ye have us (me) for an example."
II Thessalonians 3:7

"For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us:..."

Romans 11:13

"For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles,..."

I Timothy 1:16

"Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting."

People rebel when I show them these Scriptures, and say, "Les, there's no way I'm going to follow Paul because I only follow Jesus." However, they fail to realize that Paul was inspired to write these verses from the Holy Spirit Himself. And it was the same thing here, let's look at it in I Corinthians 1:12:

I Corinthians 1:12

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

Now why do you suppose they were doing that? They felt that Jesus was the One Who had brought all this to pass. It was Jesus Who had instituted the work of the Cross and so forth, but Paul tells them you can not have these divisions. Now back to Chapter 3, and verse 5:

I Corinthians 3:5,6

"Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave (the measure of faith) to every man? (Now here Paul says how it really works) I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase."

And that's the same way today. You don't always have to see the fruits of your witnessing, and testimony. You don't have to be one that sees a person saved. All you have to do is sow the seeds. You and I sow the seed, someone else may come along and add to their understanding, and maybe even a third person will come along and bring them along a little further, but regardless how many of us may be involved in the salvation of an individual, Who is final cause? God is. He is the One that gives the increase, and never lose sight of that. Now verse 7:
I Corinthians 3:7

"So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase."

And that's what we have to understand: the whole focus here is on God that giveth the increase. Now verse 8:

I Corinthians 3:8

"Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour."

I can't take credit for someone's salvation when someone else has had a part in it, even if I'm the only one, I can't take credit. Why? I didn't save them, but rather God did. So this is the role of every believer. We sow the seed, and sometimes it only takes a couple or three words. Maybe it's just a little statement that makes someone sit up and take notice about eternity - hey you've sown the seed, and maybe something else will happen, and all of a sudden that person will be generated, and get a hunger, and then God moves in, and He finishes that work of salvation. Well, I really don't have time to do the next part justice, but I guess we might as well try. Now in the light of everything we've seen thus far in Corinthians, God is going to bring us now, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit through the pen of the Apostle Paul, this whole idea of works in the life of a believer. Now verse 9, and remember Paul has just said he planted, Apollos watered, maybe somebody else had a part in it, but God gave the increase. Now with that thought resting on your mind come into verse 9:

I Corinthians 3:9a

"For we are labourers together with God:...."

Right about now I wish I could bring in one of these little portable beehives. A gentlemen down at Wilburton, Oklahoma has one, and there may be others around. You can set that beehive inside your house, and run a little inch pipe outside, and those bees will start coming in that pipe, and they will build up their honey, and you can sit there at the table and watch them work. It's one of the most interesting things you could ever see. The people that put these together mark the queen bee so that you can watch her every place that she goes, and how those little workers will kick out those who are lazy. You can just watch all that right in front of your eyes. Well, here's exactly what we see here. Just like a hive of bees, busy with all their workers, and they all have their unique little role to fulfill. Some do nothing but clean house for the queen, but they are all part of the hive, they're all working for the same purpose. Now
Paul says that's what we are. We're labourers, not as individuals, not just for your local church, although there's nothing wrong with that, but that's not the end result. The end result is that:

**I Corinthians 3:9b**

"...ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building."

Now as I teach this I hope you will read the next few verses before the next program rolls around, and envision yourself as being a worker building a wall maybe of brick. And then you will see that God is going to give you six different materials to work with as you build in that segment of the wall which is part of God's building. And everyone of us are involved in it. Some of us may just never get out of our rocking chair, others may accomplish great things, but we're still just like those bees in the hive, we're all working together for a common purpose. Of course the analogy breaks down because God doesn't kick out the lazy workers as the bees will. But nevertheless, we are working everyday toward the same end, and that is to bring glory to God to fulfill or fill up the Body of Christ, and remember, when the Body is complete, and the last person is brought in, what's going to happen? The Lord's going to take us out in the Rapture of the Church (Ref. I Thessalonians 4:13-18) He's going to deliver us out of this evil world because the Body is now complete. So the whole concept as we read verse 9 again:

**I Corinthians 3:9**

"For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building."

Now we will start with verse 10 in our next lesson, but remember, as workers, every believer, whether we're carnal like the believers at Corinth were, or whether we're spiritual giants like maybe some other great men of God, it doesn't make any difference. We are all working for the same end, we are all working for the same purpose, and that is to bring everything to God's end, and that's why He's left it in the hands of mortal men. Why didn't He put the Word of God in the hands of angels. He wanted people just like you and I to labour just like that honeybee.
LESSON THREE * PART I

PAUL THE WISE MASTERBUILDER; JESUS CHRIST THE FOUNDATION: I CORINTHIANS 3:10 - 4:2

Now for the beginning of our study we are going to pick up where we left off in our last lesson and that will be in I Corinthians chapter 3, verse 9. I've been emphasizing throughout this whole study of the Book of Corinthians (both letters really), that they were in response to questions from the congregation at Corinth. And remember that these believers at Corinth had come out of the most ungodly pagan, immoral background that you can imagine, and so it took them quite a while to get everything sorted out, and as a result of that Paul makes it very plain that the Corinthians were so carnal. They were not a spiritual Church like Ephesus or Philippi, but rather they were a Church that was beset with all kinds of problems. Now the first problems we noticed were their divisions, as some wanted to follow the teachings of Paul, some Apollos, some Peter, and yet others, Christ and His earthly ministry teachings. So this was causing a division in the Church, and Paul had to address it, and as he addressed that, he was constantly having to defend his apostleship.

In his early ministry he always went first to the Jew, to the synagogue where at least he would have a halfway civil hearing, and when the Jews would reject his message then he would go out into the Gentile areas, the marketplace, and whatever. But wherever he went there was that constant slur on the man, that he was an impostor. he wasn't a true representative of Judaism, and he was a renegade Jew. He always has to come back and defend his apostleship and the fact that he is God's man for the hour, and we're going to see this especially now in verses 10 and 11. But now beginning in verse 9, after straightening up some of the problems Paul comes to these Corinthians, and always keep in mind that they're carnal, but nevertheless they were still co-labourers with the apostle. That puts us in the same place in the fact that "We are also co-labourers all of us together to bring to fruition the eternal will of God." And that of course to bring the "Body of Christ" to its completeness to where the Lord can take it unto Himself, and yet then be able to pick up where we left off with His Covenant people, Israel, after He Raptures out His Church. Now reading verse 9:

I Corinthians 3:9a

"For we are labourers together with God:..."
a wealthy person who already had things going. Well, we as believers have something even better than that, we are hooked up with the Creator God Himself. And we can just feed on all these promises day in and day out, and lots of time God doesn't necessarily do it the way we think He should. But nevertheless He's Sovereign, and in control, and even if we're a little bit on the carnal side as the Corinthians were, that doesn't cancel out the fact that we are still labourers with God, and I hope this study encourages those of us who are not spiritual giants.

I shared with my class last night that years ago I read a little book on true spirituality by the great Chinese Bible teacher, Watchman Nee, and this book on true spirituality just sort of made me feel so far beneath a man like him, and the thought came, "Who was I to even try?" And I almost got discouraged through the reading of it, but I think this is why Paul writes now to these Corinthians that they not become discouraged. Oh yes, they're carnal, they're still "Babes in Christ" but Who are they laboring with? The Eternal, Sovereign God. God wants to use every last one of us whether we're weak babes, and maybe a little carnal, or whether we're farther up the ladder, and more spiritual than even the average. So looking at the verse again:

I Corinthians 3:9

"For we are laborers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building."

Now do you see where the possession lies? All the possessive term is with God. He's the Owner of everything, not just the cattle on a thousand hills, but rather He owns everyone of us. And of course He owns us by virtue of the redemption price of His shed Blood, and we will always preach that to people because it's the "Preaching of the Cross" that gets people into this position, and nothing else will do. So as believers in the finished work of the Cross, yes God is our partner, God is our Overseer, He is the One that oversees everything that we say, think, and do. So we are His workmanship, as it says in the Book of Ephesians. We are His husbandry, and we are God's building. Now we're going to stay with that word "building" rather than the husbandry aspect because when we get down to verse 12 we are going to be dealing with building materials.

But let's put that on hold for a moment because I want to come into verse 10 where Paul brings out something that just shook me up many years ago when I discovered it in that verse. I remember a man in one of my classes had been plaguing me with a particular question, and it was after I had taught the early chapters of Acts. This individual was highly educated, and came to me one evening after class, and said, "Now Les, after hearing you teach, and hearing you say over and over be just as careful what is not in the Scripture as what is in the Scripture, I'm suddenly beginning
to wonder did the Church begin at Pentecost? Because there's no Church language in these early chapters." Now remember, I was raised traditionally like most people are, and told him I had never heard such a thing. "Well," he said, "You're the one who got me to study, you should be able to see that." I said, "I know what you're driving at, but I've never really caught it," and I hadn't. But with him egging me on I began to search these things, and almost every week he would ask me, "Well, what do you think?" And I would tell him that I hadn't decided yet, and then finally the Lord, in His own time, showed me verse 10. Now I don't say that if you don't agree with me that you're out in left field, or doomed, or anything like that, but I just maintain that if you see it the way it's meant to be seen, then this Book is just going to open up like you've never seen it open up before. Now look what Paul says in verse 10:

*I Corinthians 3:10a*

"According to the grace of God which is given unto me,..."

Now always remember when Paul speaks in the first person of himself he's not bragging, but rather he is writing by inspiration of the Holy Spirit: every word, even when he commends himself, is Holy Spirit inspired. Don't forget that. Now reading on:

*I Corinthians 3:10a*

"According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon...."

Now I always ask my classes here in Oklahoma when we teach this verse, when any of you are building a home or building, and you need a contractor, when does your major contractor come into the scene? When the home is half built? No. When you first begin to lay plans to build that contractor comes right into the picture with you, he's the one that goes out and stakes where it's going to be built, and he's the one who lays the foundation. Right from the beginning he is involved, and that's the role of a masterbuilder. He is not someone who comes on the scene when the building is half built just to finish it up, but rather he's going to be there from day one. That's what the apostle is claiming to be, that he is the masterbuilder, and he's speaking of course of the Church, the Body of Christ. Now completing the verse:

*I Corinthians 3:10b*

"...I have laid the foundation, (He's been there from day one overseeing this building, which is the Body of Christ) and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed (Following in Paul's footsteps) how he buildeth thereupon."
Now you might say that's not enough to convince you. Well then, let's turn to the Book of I Timothy, Chapter 1, and verses 15 and 16. When you start studying all these verses, things start following, because that's the way the Holy Spirit works. In this passage I couldn't help but see this is a verse that I'd heard sermon after sermon where the preacher would use "chief of sinners" as making Paul (formerly Saul) the worst reprobate that had ever lived. Yes, he was awful, I mean let's face it, he had persecuted those Jewish followers of Jesus of Nazareth. And do you remember why Paul was going to Damascus when he was struck down by the light? He was going to arrest those Jewish believers because he thought that to stamp out anything connected with Jesus of Nazareth was doing his God a favor. He was a religious nut, and that's all there was to it. He was a fanatic who was trying to stamp out anything that would oppose Judaism. And we find that he regretted doing this, as it comes up through his letters how he persecuted those early Jewish believers.

For the most part Christendom has taken this verse as the "chief of sinners" that Paul was the worst that was ever saved. He was bad, there's no doubt about that, and it was the Grace of God to the extreme that saved Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus, we know that. But that's not what verse 15 says. Now look at the verse with me.

I Timothy 1:15

"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief."

Now most of Christendom takes that word `chief' to make Paul the worst, but that's not what the word `chief' means. The word in the Greek is `Protus' and now let's look up where that term is used in other Scriptures. The first place I want to show you is in Luke Chapter 22. Remember this is the same Greek word that is used in I Timothy 1:15, and Jesus is speaking here:

Luke 22:26

"But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve."

Now look at that verse. Would it be fit to imply that Jesus was talking about somebody intrinsically bad, awful, and wicked? Of course not. But what was Jesus talking about? He that is the most prestigious among you. In fact I looked up "Protus" in the dictionary, and it means prestigious. Someone who was in leadership, someone who was at the head of the line. That's what the word means, it doesn't mean the worst. So Jesus is saying let him that is the most prestigious, the one that is at the head of everything, let him go to the bottom of the ladder. Now the next
reference I want to take you to is in the Book of Acts chapter 14. And remember this is the same Greek word, 'Protus' Here in this passage Paul and Barnabas have come into Lystra, and they have performed a miracle, and so these pagans thought they were one of their pagan gods.

Acts 14:12

"And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker."

Does that mean Paul was the worst? Does that mean that he was vile? Does that mean he used awful language? No, he was the most important of the two. He was the chief speaker rather than Barnabas. Now I'm just trying to show you how the word is translated in all these other areas, and why have we twisted it to mean something entirely different? Now let's go on to Acts chapter 28, and verse 7. This is what I call Bible study, this is the only way we can learn, you just compare Scripture with Scripture, and don't just take what I say, but rather search the Scriptures. Now reading on, and this was just after the shipwreck where Paul and all that were on board made it safely to this little island called Melita.

Acts 28:7

"In the same quarters were possessions of the chief man of the island whose name was Publius; who received us, and lodged us three days courteously."

Was this Publius a wicked man? Is that what the Scriptures are trying to tell us? Of course not, but rather Publius was the head honcho on the island. He was probably the governor, and consequently he was the chief of that island. Now let's look at one more. Let's turn to Romans Chapter 3, where the word 'chief' is an adverb, and so it's a little different form of Greek, but the same root.

Romans 3:1,2

"What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way (They had all kinds of advantages, they were the Covenant people, they had the Temple, they had the very blessing of Jehovah God upon them, but): chiefly, because that unto them (The Jews) were committed the oracles (Word) of God."

So that wasn't the worst thing about the Jews, but rather the most prestigious thing about the Jews was that they had the Word of God. Now coming back to I Timothy again, let's look at that word 'chief' in that light. Remember it's the same word we
have been comparing. We have no right to put anything evil or wicked on the word `Protus' that I can see.

**I Timothy 1:15**

"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief."

Or the leader. Paul says, "I am the head of the line. I am the first to be saved by such Grace." And I admit that it took the Grace of God to save that rebel who was trying to stamp out every instance of the name of Jesus of Nazareth. So God saved him by Grace. The verse does not imply that Paul was the worst, the most wicked, the most vile of all sinners. But instead Paul is the head of a line of sinners who would be saved like he was. And even though I may have never persecuted someone, or put people to death, yet I was just as great a sinner in God's sight as Saul of Tarsus was, and so were you. Everyone of us was just as vile in God's sight because the picture in Romans chapter 1, and another one in Corinthians, is not pretty at all. And Paul tells us that some were such as you, and some were such as us, but always remember the chief, the head of the line was saved first. And now down through the ages here we come being placed into the Body of Christ. Now come into verse 16, and this verse just makes it so plain and makes all the sense in the world. Now I never read commentaries, but once in a while someone will give me one, and when I look at them these writers skip over verses like this. They just pretend that these verse are not even in the Bible. I know why they do that, because they don't want to stick their neck out like I'm doing today, because when you stick your neck out and say, "Hey, this is the way it really appears in Scripture," the traditionalist is going to disagree. And that's their privilege, I don't mind that a bit, but I have to teach it this way and it just thrills my heart.

**I Timothy 1:16**

"Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first (Now first has always meant the same thing. It means at the head of the line.) Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting."

Now what's a pattern? The first. If you're cutting cloth, or lumber, you don't make a bunch of things and then decide that you draw up a pattern. The pattern comes first. Do you see the connection now? Paul was the chief of sinners, a sinner saved by Grace. He was at the head of the line. He was number one. He was the pattern for all other sinners saved by that kind of Grace, especially Gentiles that will be following after him. He was the first to be placed in the Body of Christ. Now looking at the last of the verse again:
I Timothy 1:16b

"...for a pattern to them which should hereafter..."

Paul doesn't say that is retroactive all the way back to Pentecost. But from that point onward from his conversion on the road to Damascus, from that point on God is going to be calling people into the Body of Christ which is a revelation given only to Paul. Watch all the rest of Scripture, and I don't care whether it's the Four Gospels, the Book of Acts, or in the Old Testament, there is no such thing in any other Scripture except in Paul's writings that uses the term, "The Body of Christ." Let's look at the verses again so we don't miss the point.

I Timothy 1:15,16

"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. (Remember, not the worst but the first, since Paul was going to play the role of being the Apostle of the Gentiles.) Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting."

Now with that I think we can come back to I Corinthians Chapter 3, and maybe this term, "Masterbuilder" will, I trust, make a little more sense. And like I said, Paul is always defending his apostleship, that he was the one that brought the Gospel to the Gentiles. He was the one that the ascended Lord had revealed to him all these mysteries. And in one of our classes we will cover all the mysteries given Paul. Paul is the only one that claims to have had revealed to him the mysteries. Now as we come back to I Corinthians let's look at verse 10 once more:

I Corinthians 3:10a

"According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder,..."

Now what's the other word tied to `wise' that Paul has just been drumming into our minds these first three chapters here in I Corinthians? Wisdom. He's always comparing the wisdom of God as over against the wisdom of this world. And how that the wisdom of this world knows nothing of the wisdom of God, and here in this verse he's still sticking to that term `wisdom.' As a masterbuilder with wisdom, is a way it could have been put. Now looking at the verse again:

I Corinthians 3:10a
"According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation,..."

Now you all know about buildings. The foundation is the heart of your building isn't it? Whether it's a home, or commercial building or whatever. If you have a rotten foundation then you will have a rotten building in short order. But when the foundation is solid and secure the rest of the building is apt to be the same. Paul is making that same analogy here. That unless our faith rests upon the foundation which he laid, which is Christ crucified, was buried and was risen from the dead (Ref. I Corinthians 15:1-4), unless that is our foundation, we're hopelessly lost, and the world just can't accept that. You know they call that exclusivism, and it is exclusivism, because there is no other Name given among men whereby we must be saved. It is Jesus Christ plus nothing, and faith in that finished work of the Cross. And so that's the foundation that this man claims to be laying, for Jew and Gentile alike, but it's going to end up primarily for the Gentile because the Jew is just going to reject it. So don't lose sight of this fact that this man claims in Romans 11:13:

**Romans 11:13**

"For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles,..."

And now to this Gentile Church he writes, *"I have laid the foundation, (and that foundation is Jesus Christ of Nazareth) And another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon."*
LESSON THREE * PART II

PAUL THE WISE MASTERBUILDER; JESUS CHRIST THE FOUNDATION: I CORINTHIANS 3:10 - 4:2

Now let's get right back into our study of I Corinthians, and we'll begin with verse 11. But before we do let me share with you a conversation with a gentlemen on the phone about denominations. I told him, "Some day when you stand before the Lord's throne, whichever one it is, He's not going to ask you whether you were obedient to your local Church or denomination, but rather have you been obedient to the Word." And of course that's all that's going to amount to anything for eternity, and that's what I keep hammering home at people, "What does the Book say?" I don't tell you what my denomination teaches, I don't tell you what someone else says, we're just going to try to discern what the Word says.

Now I don't claim to have all the answers. I don't claim to have any special revelations, and I think I do teach the same as many of our fundamental men, but the only difference is, "I make it in language that common people can understand." We're not coming up with something way out in left field or far different from the main stream, but we do want to make it understandable so that anybody can sit down for an evening and study their Bible, and it is the most enjoyable thing that you can do. Again, the other evening I took my Bible, and was going to review a few things, and the first thing that I knew I was just chasing references, and three hours had gone by just like that. I find there's no contest between Bible study and anything else in this world. Now let's begin our study again.

I Corinthians 3:11

"For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

We have a lot of cults and religions who have come on the scene even in the last several hundred years who claim to have had further revelations. They claim their prophet came later than Jesus, and consequently he has revelations that Jesus didn't have, and so forth. But listen, that's not what this verse says, this verse says that when Paul laid the foundation for the Church, which was the Finished Work Of The Cross, then that's it." No one can add to that. I've told my classes that if you're reading a book, and I don't care how good it is, and all of a sudden that author comes along and says, "I had a special revelation the likes of which no one else has ever had," just close that book and pitch it in the nearest fireplace or waste basket because that's the only place it belongs. This Bible is complete, everything that we need to know is between these two covers. Now this isn't all that we would like to know, I
know there's a lot of things that you and I still ask about, and God hasn't seen fit to reveal it, but **everything we need to know is in this Book.** A couple of years ago one of our major news magazines, had a cover story of all the great men down through history who made an impact on civilization. And they had the Apostle Paul as one of them because he was the founder of Christianity, and I just couldn't believe it. As a rule they say it was Jesus Who was the founder of Christianity, but no, Jesus didn't find it, but rather Paul. **But he founded it on Jesus Christ, of course.**

Jesus never promoted the fact that He had died, and shed His blood. He couldn't do that because it hadn't happened yet. The Twelve certainly didn't understand it because they had no idea that He was going to die and be risen from the dead. We haven't looked at that in a while so let's go back to the Book of Luke, Chapter 18. Sometimes we need to look at some of these older references that we haven't used in a long time to refresh our memories, and it also helps those who have just tuned in recently. And if you think Jesus and the Twelve preached our Gospel, the Gospel that Paul tells us in I Corinthians 15:1-4 saves us, **"if we believe that Jesus died for our sins, was buried and rose again,"** then you had better think again. How could they? In the first place He hadn't died, and in the second place He certainly hadn't been raised from the dead, and in the third place his earthly teaching was confined to Israel (Ref Matthew 10:5-6). Now look what Jesus says in this passage.

**Luke 18:31-34**

"Then he took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, 'Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. For he (speaking of Himself) shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: And they shall scourge him, and put him to death: and the third day he shall rise again.' (Christ knew it would happen) And they (the Twelve) understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken."

Now isn't it obvious, because at His crucifixion did they just stand there and say, "Hey, don't worry, He's going to be raised from the dead?" But what did they do? They scattered like a bunch of quail, and as far as the eleven were concerned it was all over. He didn't bring in the earthly Kingdom for them, He was dead. And I remind you now, "Where were those disciples on resurrection morning?" Well they certainly weren't at the tomb waiting for Him to come out. Were they? No. But the disciples didn't know, so how could they preach a Gospel based on death, burial, and resurrection? They couldn't because it hadn't happened yet.

Now this Apostle Paul as he defends himself over and over, this is all that he knows. **"How that Christ died for the sins of the world, and that He arose from**
the dead victorious. And by His life and death we're justified from all things." That's the foundation of the Christian faith, it's the foundation for anyone who is going to go to an eternity in the presence of God. To trust anything short of the finished work of the Cross, I'm afraid that those people are doomed to a lost eternity. I've told people over and over that I don't point the finger at anybody. I'll never look at someone and say, "Hey, you're lost." That not my prerogative, because I can't look on anyone's heart, but I can say, "That if Jesus Christ and His finished work of the Cross isn't the foundation of your faith, then you're on pretty shaky ground."

Now let's look at verse 12. Here Paul has involved us in a building process, he's the masterbuilder, he's started the foundation. Now a general run-of-the-mill believer has been building on that foundation for almost 2000 years, and all these believers down through the centuries have been building on this foundation. We are building on this foundation, and we are adding to that building. Now usually when I teach this I liken us to building a wall, laying the mortar, laying the brick, and being meticulous on how we are building, because, after all, our section of the wall is going to be examined by those fiery eyes of the Lord Jesus some day. Now as we embark on our Christian walk, God gives us six materials to build with. Isn't that amazing that He tells us what we can build with. We can use gold, silver and precious stones or we can use hay, wood, and stubble, or a combination of all six, and that is what we as believers are all doing. Now one of the first things I have to remind folks of is this: do you find gold or silver, or precious stones laying just right outside the front door? No! To get them, usually you have to go up into the rough country, and it takes hard work. None of these first three come easy, but hay, wood, and stubble are everywhere, and that's what most Christians are building with because they are too lazy to get up and go out and work for those hard to get materials. Now let's look at it.

I Corinthians 3:12

"Now if any man build upon this foundation (Remember, Christ has to be the foundation, we have to have faith in His finished work of the Cross before we're even given opportunity to add to His building. So the materials we are going to use to build with are) gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; "

I Corinthians 3:13a

"Every man's work shall be made manifest:..."

Not the person who is working for his salvation, because that is impossible, but the one who has salvation and is now working for rewards. Now this is a graphic difference from what most of Christendom teaches. Most of Christendom has the idea that you work to obtain salvation somehow or other. But listen, you work absolutely
none for salvation, it's all of Grace by faith + nothing, it's free! But once we've entered in to that glorious salvation experience then God expects us work for rewards.
And what's the purpose of working? To enhance His work, to enhance the Kingdom as we so often say, and to bring honor and glory to His Name. He's still the Sovereign God, and we are still nothing but His little worker bees. We are to work for rewards.
Now turn to I Corinthians Chapter 9, and verse 24, and of course Paul here is making an analogy with something that everyone understood. Sometimes he makes an analogy of a Roman soldier, in Ephesians 6 for example. Other times he will make an analogy to a farmer, or business man, but here he is going to use the analogy of the Olympics. He's going to talk about people who are running in a race.

I Corinthians 9:24

"Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? (And that would be the winner. So Paul says as believers working in this building process, now bring it into the analogy of a foot race) So run, that ye may obtain." (Not your salvation, remember, you've already obtained that by your faith.)

We are to enter this race with the idea of winning this race. Who would ever enter a race not wanting to win, the mentality has to be, "I want to win." Now verse 25.

I Corinthians 9:25a

"And every man that striveth for the mastery (trying to be first in this race) is temperate in all things...."

Now what's temperate? Trying to maintain a balance. Don't go way off to the right or way off to the left, but rather maintain a middle balance. This will work even in disciplining your kids. You can't over-discipline or you will have a bunch of rebels, but on the other hand you can't under-discipline or you're also going to have a rebel, but just maintain that middle-of-the-road temperate idea of discipline. It's the same way in business, you show me a man who is covered up with inventory, he doesn't even know where things are, and I'll show you a man who won't be in business long. But on the other hand you show me a man in business whose shelves are bare, and you try to buy something, and he tells you he'll have to order it for you, then he won't be in business very long either. So you just have to maintain that temperate balance. Now it's the same way in running the Christian life. Don't go off on the deep end to the right or left, but maintain that balance. So in order to prepare for this foot race they didn't all of a sudden become gluttons in order to build up this energy level, they didn't all of a sudden spend all their time sleeping so that their body could rest, but they just maintained a balance, and it's the same way in our Christian experience. We have to maintain a balance in everything we do. Now looking at verse 25 again:
**I Corinthians 9:25**

"And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things; Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible."

Do you know what a corruptible crown meant? Back in Paul's day they didn't give the runners a gold, silver or bronze medal, but rather they received a wreath just made of leaves. Well, by the time they went home from the race that wreath had wilted, and then all it was good for was to put between the pages of a book. It was corruptible, it died, but we don't work for something like that, but rather we work for an incorruptible crown. And what a difference that makes. If only the human race could get a glimpse of the eternity that is waiting for us who believe. We would just say, "What is seventy years compared to eternity?" It's nothing, and yet even believers are so tied to this world, and are so blinded by the glory of the world that we get our priorities all mixed up. But Paul says to run to win the prize (not for our salvation, we've already got that), but that we might have the rewards that are going to go with our salvation. This is all the way through the Scriptures. Let's go to the Book of Genesis for a moment to Chapter 15, and drop down to verse 8, and here God is dealing with Abraham. And Abraham is already a believer. He was a believer when he left Ur of the Chaldees years and years previous to this, but now God is promising him a territory of land.

**Genesis 15:7**

"And he said unto him, I am the LORD that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it."

In other words God is saying here, "Abraham I'm the One Who saved you, I'm the One Who declared you a righteous man, and I'm going to give you this land to inherit it." Now look at Abraham's response in verse 8.

**Genesis 15:8**

"And he said, 'Lord GOD, whereby (how) shall I know that I shall inherit it?''"

Well, because God promised that he was going to be rewarded with a deed to this land of what we now call Palestine. This whole concept of working for rewards has been on the minds of believers from day one. They're not just looking at salvation per se, but it's this idea that we're going to receive rewards. Another good one was when Jesus, during His earthly ministry, promised the Twelve that they would someday reign and rule over the twelve tribes of Israel during the Kingdom Age. And remember, that was still on their minds even as Jesus was ready to ascend back to
glory there in the Book of Acts Chapter 1. I wasn't going to use this one, but I will anyway. Do you remember the person who was given ten talents and he went out and made ten more? And the one with five went out and made five more? The lesson was, "The one who hustled and went out and made ten more would get to rule over ten cities in the Kingdom Age." In other words, he's going to get rewards in eternity, and it's the same thing for us. I'm sure that's what it all boils down to, that our rewards are going to be levels of responsibility as we rule and reign with Christ. The person who's going to have nothing in the wall but hay, wood, and stubble is going to be there, as we will see in a moment, but he's not going to enjoy the benefits of reward. He's missed that, although he's going to be saved. Now let's turn to II Corinthians Chapter 5. Where does this whole idea of reward come to the full? **Immediately after the Rapture of the Church (Ref. I Thessalonians 4:13-18) and we're brought up into glory with the Lord Jesus, we have a great event in Heaven that's going to take place.** (This will take place during that seven years that the Tribulation is raging here on the earth.) **And here it is now, beginning with verse 8.**

*II Corinthians 5:8-10*

"We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, (Having died physically) and to be present with the Lord. Wherefore we labour, (in this building process) that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. (not for salvation, but for rewards. Now here it comes) For we must all (believers) appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."

That's not salvation being put in the balances, but rather "rewards." Now the words `judgment seat' scares people, and I think it's an unfortunate translation. The correct term out of the Greek was, "**The Bema Seat.**" Those of you who have been to the ruins of Corinth, that's one of the things that the guides like to show you. Well, all it is is a raised podium, and it was the seat of the judges where they would come to the various conclusions. Now in the Olympic games the Bema Seat was set at the finish line, and as the runners were coming by, the judge of the Bema Seat would sit up there and determine who was first, second, and third. There is nothing in the Bema Seat judgment in verse 10 that involves our eternal destiny. That has already been settled if you're at the Bema Seat.

But the Bema Seat will determine how much rewards are given. Now don't lose that as a believer. Yes, our salvation was settled the moment we believed, but we're not to just sit down in an easy chair and let life go by. We're to get busy, we're to work, and the reason we work is to bring glory to our God's Name, but also for our own personal benefit for rewards. Now I've always used this as an analogy: "**If I had the choice of**
being the Dallas Cowboys quarterback or a spectator sitting way up in the cheap seats, then I'd rather be the quarterback. Even if I did get my head knocked off once in a while, that would be fun, but is to sit way up there in the stands comparative? Hey, there's no comparison. "Well it's going to be the same way when the Lord brings us into His Kingdom experience. We're either going to be sitting on the sidelines, (oh, we're there, and remember there's no sin so there will be no envy or jealousy), but won't it be a lot more exciting to be involved in all of the activity? Of course it will be. But this is the whole idea of rewards. Remember, never confuse rewards with salvation. You don't work one ounce for salvation, that's a gift of God according to Paul.

Ephesians 2:8

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:"

But rewards? Yes, we work for them. Let's come back to I Corinthians Chapter 3, and move on. And here Paul explains graphically how these six materials are going to be sifted out in our section of the wall that as believers we are building.

I Corinthians 3:13a

"Every man's work (as a believer) shall be made manifest:"

I've defined that over and over as being put in the spotlight. It's just like putting a slide in your microscope. You don't see a thing until you turn on that bright light underneath it, and then all of a sudden all those little living creatures are manifested. Why? Because they're put in the spotlight, and it's the same way here. We're going to be put in the spotlight for our moment of time personally in front of the Lord Jesus at the judgment seat of Christ. Everyone of us believers will appear before Him personally. You say, "How can He do all that in seven years?" Just remember when we step out of time we step into eternity, and in eternity there's no sixty-second clock, so that's the difference. Unreal? I know it is, but there is no five minutes back or five minutes forward in eternity, it's all now. But whatever, we're going to come before the Lord Jesus personally, and He's going to examine our building work with His fiery eyes. Now reading the verse in its entirety.

I Corinthians 3:13

"Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it
is." Well what's the fire? Well it's those fiery eyes of the Lord Jesus as we have them described back in Revelation:

**Revelations 19:12**

"His (Christ's) eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself."

Now that doesn't mean that His eyes actually have flames flying out, but they are so penetrating. Have you ever looked at someone who seems to look right through you? Sure you have. Well that's nothing compared to the eyes of the Lord Jesus Christ when He looks at our life, and our reward status, and the wood, hay, and stubble is going to going up in a puff of smoke. The only thing left, if we have any, will be the gold, silver, and precious stones.

**Job 23:10**

"But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." Now back to I Corinthians.

**I Corinthians 3:14,15**

"If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, (that's the hay, wood, and stubble) he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved;..."

All the works of a believer can be burned up if he or she has done it for the wrong reason, but even if it's all burned up, he himself shall be saved as nothing can take away a true believer's salvation.
Now I want to pick right up where we left off in our last lesson, and that will be in I Corinthians chapter 3. We left off with verse 3 rather quickly so we'll rehearse that again, and remember, we've been studying about this whole idea of rewards. I can never stress enough that this is not salvation that we have been talking about, for salvation is a free gift. We don't work for it. But for our rewards we work.

*Romans 6:23*

"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

We have our salvation secure, but now we are to work to further God's work among the human race, as well as to gain rewards. In closing in our last lesson we had just looked at verse 15.

*I Corinthians 3:15a*

"If any man's work shall be burned..."

In other words, this hay, wood, and stubble shall be burned. And I suppose we can look at it this way: **the gold, silver, and precious stones are the things that are rightly motivated. In other words, we're doing it in our subconscious as well as our conscious. Our whole motivation is for God to receive the glory.** Now we're all involved in so many things that enhance the ego (the big 'I') and that will probably end up as nothing more than hay, wood, and stubble. And so we always have to remember that God looks at the motivation, "Why are we doing what we do?" And that boils down into every corner of our life. Why are you doing it? Are you doing it to be pleasing in God's eyes, to bring glory to Him? If so, then that is going to be reckoned as gold, silver, or precious stones, and those things do not come easy when you do it for the Lord's glory.

I've used this illustration more than once: "**The Christian life is like paddling a canoe up a roaring river.**" Always remember, the Christian life is never easy. It is a constant battle because we're up against all the forces of Satan, and all the designs of the world around us, but God has promised that we can do it. So our whole idea of Christian experience then is to gain rewards when we come before the Bema Seat, as
we talked about in our last lesson. Then Paul, in verse 15, makes it sure that even these carnal Corinthian believers who are not spiritual giants, but rather on the milk bottle, that even rewards are out there for them. So you believers today never give up, and say, "Oh well, I can never obtain any of this anyway so why should I try." And then also in verse 15 Paul maintains that even these people who have nothing in eternity as rewards, they will still be there nevertheless.

_I Corinthians 3:15b_

"...he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved;..."

I remember an old pastor friend of mine would put it this way; "They'll get there by the skin of their teeth." They'll be there but will have nothing to go along with it.

Now then Paul comes right into verse 16, which is tied to our lifestyle that's going to merit rewards or lack of it, by bringing up a completely new doctrine in Scripture. You don't find this in the Old Testament, you don't find Jesus teaching it, Peter and the eleven don't teach it, only Paul teaches it, and what is it? _"That God Himself is dwelling in this body."_ Now that's a concept that you have to take by faith, because you didn't feel Him move in, you don't feel Him moving around in you, but He's there because the Book says He is. Now let's look at it.

_I Corinthians 3:16_

"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"

Even these poor old carnal Corinthians were temples of the living God. To every believer, the moment he believes, the Spirit comes and indwells. Now usually when I teach young people (and that doesn't mean it doesn't apply to older folks), but I usually tell young people, "Now look, when you go to some ungodly place, you're not going to check God at the door. You take Him wherever you go. You cannot check Him wherever you think it's not fit for Him to be, so you'd better be careful where you go. Because this body is the temple of the indwelling Holy Spirit and He comes the moment we believe!"

_I Corinthians 3:16_

"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"
Now that's plain language. You don't have to be a theologian to understand that. The third Person of the Trinity, as we refer to Him - God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit - the third Person of the Trinity comes and indwells the believer. That's why God can know every thought. Now that's scary, isn't it? God knows our thoughts. God knows every place we go. He knows everything we do. Because He's here in our heart. Now in your mind's eye, if you will, go all the way back to when Solomon built the Temple in Jerusalem, which was going to be the dwelling place of God. When the Temple was complete, and they dedicated it, what happened? Well, the presence of God in the Shekinah Glory came right down into that Temple there at Jerusalem. The presence of God dwelt in that dwelling place, which was the Temple. Now that was just a foreview of this Age of Grace where, when God saves an individual, he immediately becomes a Temple, a dwelling place. And just like the Shekinah Glory came into Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem, the Holy Spirit comes into us. Not as visibly. It isn't manifested in much the same way, but according to the Book, this is what happens. And if the Book says it, we have to believe it. He is dwelling within us.

Now the question has come up and I think I answered it in my last newsletter, if I'm not mistaken. At the Rapture of the Church, and all the believers are taken out, does that mean the Holy Spirit is gone too? And you know, shortly after I'd sent my newsletter out with my answer, I was reading a well-known theologian and bless his heart (or mine), if he didn't answer it just exactly the same way. And that is; that just because the Holy Spirit goes out and finishes His role as indwelling the individual believer, doesn't remove Him from the earth. Because the Holy Spirit has always been the Omnipresence of God on the planet. You go all the way back to Genesis Chapter 1 and after the deluge of verse 2, when everything is under water, what moved upon the face of the deep? The Spirit! And so all throughout the Old Testament the Holy Spirit was evident, otherwise nobody could ever have knowledge of God. But He did not indwell the Old Testament believers like He does today. And the same way in the Tribulation - yes, as the indwelling Person of the Godhead, in the believer, that is going to end. But He's going to remain on the earth as the Omnipresence of God or else no one would be able to be saved during the Tribulation and we know they will be. So every believer then, in this Age of Grace in which Paul is dealing, is the temple of the Holy Spirit. Now verse 17. Here comes the doctrinal side benefits, or in some cases not a benefit.

*I Corinthians 3:17*

"If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are."
Here we have to be careful. When it says here that if we defile the temple, what it's referring to is defiling our physical bodies, then God will destroy it. Remember, the soul and spirit are pretty hard to separate, but the body, the third part of us, is not that hard to separate from the soul and spirit. So when God speaks of destroying the body, the temple then, He's not going to touch the soul and spirit. Let's look at a good example in I Corinthians Chapter 5. And we'll be coming to this down the road. We'll just jump in on a couple of verses because we'll be studying this in detail when we get to Chapter 5. But here the Church at Corinth had a terrible immoral situation, and Paul is writing to them and telling them that they have to deal with it. And how is Paul going to deal with this situation?

I Corinthians 5:4,5

"In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, (most of us would refer to it today as a business meeting) and my spirit, (Paul would be there in spirit although he was at Ephesus) with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver (now watch it carefully) such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, (not the soul and spirit) that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."

Remember the account of Job? Job had been so blessed, and so prosperous, and nothing bad ever happened to him, and Satan just couldn't stand it. You all know that account.

Job 2:1-6

"Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the LORD. And the LORD said unto Satan, `Whence comest thou?' And Satan answered the LORD, and said, `From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.' And the LORD said unto Satan, `Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movest me against him, to destroy him without cause.' And Satan answered the LORD, and said, `Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life. But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face.' And the LORD said unto Satan, `Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life.'"

Now Satan wanted to even take Job's life, but could he? No. That's where God drew the line. But here in I Corinthians Chapter 5 where Paul says to deal with this gross sin in the Corinthian Church, he makes it very plain to deliver one such as this to Satan. For the destruction of his flesh would not touch the man's spiritual relationship
with Christ. This man was still a believer, hard as that is to believe. But by destroying the flesh what would be taken from him? His physical life, and Paul speaks of that again in I Corinthians 11 when they were abusing the Lord's Supper Table, and what did he tell them?

I Corinthians 11:28-30

"But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. (Have died. God took their physical life here also, but not their spirit.)

And again that's exactly what we have here, in I Corinthians Chapter 3:17, that the person that defiles his body, he may suffer physical harm. I don't care how you do it, but when you in excess, abuse your physical body, sooner or later you're going to suffer the consequences. Look at the drug addicts. They may think they can handle their drug problem, but unless they are fortunate enough to be drawn out of it, and be broken of it, what's it going to do to their physical health? Utterly destroy it, and the same way with the alcoholic. Sooner or later that alcohol will destroy his liver, and his whole physical well-being. Well, we've come to the place now where medical science has proven that cigarettes do much the same thing. If you're going to harm the physical body with things that you know are harmful, your body is going to suffer the consequences.

And we're seeing it all around us. I saw on television several years back, the President of the American Hospital Association in an interview, and he said we need to stop doing things that harm our bodies. About 70% of our hospital beds are occupied by people who are there because of drinking, smoking, drugs, and venereal diseases. Our hospital beds are filled with people who abuse their physical body with things that we know are harmful. Now that's all the Bible is telling us. Nearly 2000 years ago Paul could write that if you do something that is harmful to the body it's going to suffer the results. Now come back to the text.

I Corinthians 3:17

"If any man defile the temple of God, (do something harmful to your physical body which is now the temple, the dwelling place of God) him shall God destroy; (In other words God will permit these ravages to destroy our physical health) for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are."
So as soon as a person becomes a believer he becomes responsible for taking care of this physical body. Paul teaches we are responsible for taking care of it. In fact, let's look at a passage in the Book of Ephesians. This is all so practical, and it was written way back in 62-64 A.D. It was way ahead of the times, but it's still a basic truth.

**Ephesians 5:28,29**

"So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; (no man in his subconscious ever hated his own flesh, but what is the normal thing for a person to do?) but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:"

So here is a basic fundamental premise, that if you are normal, and you have the right attitude toward life you're going to take care of your physical body. And then the spiritual admonition, as we're coming back to I Corinthians, is that it's not just your physical body, but it's the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. It's the temple of God on this earth, and we're to treat it accordingly. We're to take care of it, we're to feed it right, we're to rest it right, and we're not to abuse it. Now verse 18.

**I Corinthians 3:18**

"Let no man deceive himself (now that's a strong statement in our day and time isn't it? Because we're so deluged with all kinds of deception. The advertisers are masters at it. They can make anything look like a great deal, and it may be the worst thing you could ever do, but that's good advertising. But Paul is warning us, don't deceive yourself). If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise."

I think Paul, for the first time, is digressing a little bit, and he's addressing an unbeliever - that if he thinks he is wise in the things of this world then he'd better change his approach to life, and what is that going to be? Come back for a moment to Chapter 1, but first look at what verse 18 says again.

**I Corinthians 3:18**

"...If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise."

How does the unsaved person become a fool to become wise? Well back to Chapter 1, and verse 18.

**I Corinthians 1:18**
"For the preaching of the cross (that Christ died, was buried, and rose from the dead. That preaching) is to them that perish (the lost person) foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God."

In other words, the unbeliever has to recognize that he'd better go into what he thinks is foolishness, and out of that foolishness, that he thinks is foolishness, he can get the wisdom of God. It's that simple, and that's exactly what Paul keeps driving at. And that's why he's using this term, wisdom, wisdom, wisdom throughout these early chapters of I Corinthians. And how do we gain wisdom? By going to what we think are lost people with this foolishness, the Gospel, (Ref. I Corinthians 15:1-4) and then the power of God is poured out on us as His wisdom is as well. Now verse 19:

I Corinthians 3:19a

"For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God...."

You know something? The wisdom of this world, in other words, all the great philosophy and all the great literature, and the great works of art, when it's all shaken up and sorted out, what is it? Foolishness so far as God is concerned. It amounts to nothing. Old Solomon put it how? "Vanity, vanity, all is vanity." It's the same thing. Let's go on.

I Corinthians 3:19b

"For it is written, 'He taketh the wise in their own craftiness.'"

Now that, I think, comes out of the Book of Job also. And then verse 20.

I Corinthians 3:20

"And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise (the wise of this world), that they are vain."

Let's go back and see what David said about it in Psalm 94:11. I always like to show you that even though I'm an adherent of Paul's epistles, as the meat and potatoes for us today, that doesn't mean you cancel the rest of Scripture. No way! It all fits together.

Psalm 94:11

"The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man,..." Remember what I said on the last program? That God even knows our thoughts. He knows everything we think. And so..."
Psalm 94:11

"The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity."

In the final analysis they'll go up in a puff of smoke. They amount to nothing. For a believer to have a great education and have a brilliant mind, that's fine. That's Christ-honoring. But you see, what God is talking about, is when the unbeliever places all of his faith in his so-called wisdom of this world, it's nothing! Now for the believer to have this kind of education and knowledge, that's great. But this is what Paul is driving at. Let's go back to I Corinthians, if you will, and you remember I made the analogy that when Paul came to Mars Hill and came up against all those Athenian philosophers, he began to preach to them his foolish Gospel. When he began to tell them about the resurrection life and so forth, what did they call him? The "Babbler." To them it was just a bunch of babble. But in reality it was the other way around. Paul had kernels of truth. The philosophers had nothing but babble. See how the world has got it all upside down? Now then, just a couple of verses to finish this chapter, and we'll finish Chapter 4 in our next program.

I Corinthians 3:21

"Therefore (since all of man's wisdom amounts to nothing without God's wisdom) let no man glory in (who?) men. (none of them. The greatest minds on earth, and there's no use looking up to them, because in God's eyes, they're nothing but vanity.) For all things are yours;" That is in Christ. This is Paul's whole premise that when we're in Christ, then it makes all the difference in the world. Now verse 22 and 23. And Paul comes all the way back to his first controversy with the Corinthians believers, and that was their divisions. And so now what does he say? Let's bring it to a head.

I Corinthians 3:22,23

"Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours;"

Now that's the great glory of being in Christ. It's an unfathomable well of wisdom and knowledge. Some day, if the Lord tarries, we're going to get to the Book of Ephesians in this series. And there Paul actually makes a prayer for the believer, that we might be filled with the wisdom of God. And that we might know the height, depth, width, and length. I always ask my classes, how many dimensions is that? Well, that's four. But we live in three. So what does that tell you? That there's another dimension out there that we don't even know physically. But spiritually? We're already there. We're living in four dimensions.
LESSON THREE * PART IV

PAUL THE WISE MASTERBUILDER; JESUS CHRIST THE FOUNDATION: I CORINTHIANS 3:10 - 4:2

We'll be looking at the mysteries that are recorded in Paul's epistles - Romans through Hebrews. We'll see just how often Paul makes reference to the mysteries. Now the mysteries are a unique term, we have the word used in Matthew 13, when Jesus spoke of the mysteries of the Kingdom, but that was a different setting. But throughout Paul's epistles he is constantly coming back to this term, "The mystery." Now let's begin with I Cor. 4:1. Remember what Paul has been talking about throughout these first three chapters.

I Corinthians 4:1

"Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God."

Now underline that word `stewards' and `the mysteries.' The first thing we must do is define them. Remember back in the Old Testament when God was telling Abraham that he was going to be the father of a nation, with many people, and what was Abraham's answer? "How can I be, I don't have a son, all I have is this steward Eleazer of Damascus." Now what in the world was Abraham talking about? Well, he was a manager. Now our word `economy' really comes from the same root word that we get `steward.' And all it is is someone who is a manager of a household or who is in control of something. And then Paul tells us in verse 2 that if we're going to be the right kind of steward, or manager, then what do you have to be? Faithful.

I Corinthians 4:2

"Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful."

Say you owned a business and you were moving to another state; and you leave your business in the care of a manager or steward, what would you expect him to be? Faithful and honest. He has to be a good, faithful steward of what belongs to you. The amazing thing is that Paul has given to every true believer an understanding of the mysteries. But the problem is that most believers don't understand them. And so, I've just always made it a priority to try to help believers understand what are these mysteries that Paul is always referring to.
I've got this great big wagon wheel with all the spokes for an illustration. And within this wagon wheel are all the various mysteries that make up what I call this body of truth that Paul calls the dispensation of the Grace of God. And within this dispensation, or period of management, we have all of these Pauline doctrines that you won't find anywhere else in your Bible. We'll just take a run through the Scriptures during the remaining time we have in this lesson, and look at them. Now we'll start back in the Book of Romans where the first one is found and we'll just come right up through Paul's letters.

So, Romans Chapter 11, verse 25. And of course this the great chapter where Paul makes it so certain that God is not through with the Nation of Israel. There's a lot of literature that tries to say that He is, but the Book says that He is still going to return one day, and we think it's getting soon. He's yet going to fulfill everything He has promised to the Nation of Israel. Now here is one of the mysteries that was revealed to this apostle that no one else had ever dreamed of, and here it is:

**Romans 11:25**

"For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, (or secret, and this secret has been held in the mind of God until we come to this apostle) lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; (which a lot of Gentiles are tonight) that blindness in part (not forever, but they have been blinded for the the past 1900 + years) is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in."

The Old Testament understood that God would one day save Gentiles, but they had no idea that it would be without Israel. See the whole idea in Isaiah 42:6, Isaiah 49:6, Isaiah 60:1-3, Zechariah 8:22-23 and other prophecies, that once Israel became the
obedient vehicle, that "Kingdom of Priests," then Israel would evangelize the Gentiles. But kept in the mind of God a total secret was that He would go to the Gentiles without Israel. They rejected Him, and He displaced them from Jerusalem, and dispersed them into the nations of the world, and now He has gone to the Gentiles with the Gospel of the Grace of God. A mystery, a secret, kept in the mind of God, but now revealed. Now our next mystery is found in Romans 16:25 right at the doxology of the chapter. And whenever you see this word 'mystery' it's the same identical Greek word meaning secret (Musterion).

**Romans 16:25**

"Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my (Paul) gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation (or revealing) of the mystery, (secret) which was kept secret since the world began (or the ages)." So ever since the creation this had never been revealed that God would take salvation to the Gentiles by faith and faith alone. All the Old Testament was by way of Israel. Now the next one is in I Corinthians chapter 2:7, and here is where Paul has been dealing with wisdom. We looked at this not very long ago.

**I Corinthians 2:7**

"But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, (secret) even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our (my) glory:"

Now what was it? That Jesus was The Christ, and that secret in the next verse was that the princes of this world didn't know Who Christ was, for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory. Now I've told my classes for years and years that Israel should have known Who Jesus was because the Old Testament was full of Him. Israel could have known if they would have just simply studied their Old Testament, but Israel did not know. Now don't jump all over the Jews for their ignorance. America has had the Gospel (I Corinthians 15:1-4) preached, America has the Bible, I trust, in almost every home, and every library. Almost everywhere you go there are copies of the Scriptures, yet how much of America today knows that we are approaching the end-times? Very few.

There was a lady that told me recently that she saw in the supermarket a tabloid magazine that the headlines read, "Repent, The End Of The World Is Coming Next Week." Leave it to a tabloid, but you see they know nothing of Biblical prophecy, they know nothing of all the details that God has already laid out for us. But even here in America, with all of our Bibles, very few people know or understand that we're getting close. The Lord is about to intervene in human history. So in the Scripture we have just read, they didn't know and we're no different today. It was a secret that had
been kept in the mind of God until He revealed it to the Apostle Paul. Now we've already looked at I Corinthians 4:1 in the first part of this lesson, so now let's go to I Corinthians 13:2. Here's the love chapter, and it sits right between the two chapters where Paul is dealing with the gifts of the Spirit.

**I Corinthians 13:2**

"And though I have the gift of prophecy, (which was a gift that was needed at that time before the Word came into print, and it was a gift. Men had the gift of speaking forth the Word of God even though it was not yet in print.) and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing."

Now I think Paul is taking it beyond the mysteries given to him, because of pagan religion, and I'm afraid too many people don't understand this. In all of the pagan religions of the world, what do they speak of when they speak of the very inner sanctum of that religion? The mysteries, the secret things that the common initiate (I call them), never are aware of. But the big wheels, the guys who are really at the head of everything, the guys who get all the wealth accumulated, they understand those mysteries, and they're Satanic every time. If you ever have an opportunity to visit with missionaries from the still rather dark areas of the world where they are still in pagan practices, ask them if there is power in those pagan religions. You bet there's power. Not God's power, of course, but it's that whole idea of the mysteries of those religions. But Paul is, I think, including both when he says hypothetically "even if I could," it doesn't say that he does. Now let's go on to the next one, and that will be in I Corinthians 14:2.

**I Corinthians 14:2**

"For he that speaketh in an unknown (I prefer to leave it out.) tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries (or secrets that not everybody can understand. Still means the same thing. Those things that have been kept secret in the mind of God.)."

Now I Cor. 15:51. Here again is a truth that has never been revealed in Scripture. There is no hint of this in the Old Testament. Jesus never referred to it. What is it? The Rapture of the Church. It's not called that here, but the language is such that you know that's what it is.

**I Corinthians 15:51**
"Behold, I shew you a mystery; (what's this secret? That there will be be a group of believers who will not die physically. Look how he explains it.) We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed."

We're not going to go up to Heaven in this old body. We're not going to die if we are part of this secret when it happens, and are resurrected and get a new body. But we're going to be changed. A metamorphosis. Then Paul goes on to explain it further in the following verses.

**I Corinthians 15:52**

"In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we (who are alive) shall be changed (in a moment)."

It was a mystery (also found in I Thessalonians 4:13-18) that no one had ever understood until the Lord revealed it to this apostle. Some people get Matthew 24 confused with this secret, but Matthew 24 deals strictly with the nation of Israel, the Tribulation, and His Second Coming to the earth. So don't confuse those events with the Body of Christ which we are a part of. A good way to remember is that at the Rapture He comes for us in the air, and at His second coming we come with Him to the earth seven years later.

Now the next mystery is in Ephesians Chapter 1. I always stress when I teach Paul's letters that he had a progressive revelation even as the Bible as a whole does. So some of these things come out in greater detail in his later prison epistles than they do in the first one, and this is very obvious. Romans and Corinthians were the pre-prison epistles. These are the revelations that Paul got early on, but when you get over here in Ephesians, Colossians and Timothy, this is toward the end of his writing career, and he has a greater revelation than he did back here. Never lose sight of that when you study Paul.

**Ephesians 1:9,10**

"Having made known (that is speaking of Christ, and our position in Him) unto us the mystery (secret) of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times (in other words when everything is complete) he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:"

In other words Paul says, "This is a secret now revealed that is the hope of the believer, that when God brings everything to it's culmination, and we go into eternity,
we will be the objects of His eternal purpose." And what was His eternal purpose? His Mercy and Grace in saving lost sinners. The next mystery will be Ephesians 3:3, but in this mystery we almost have to start with verse 1.

**Ephesians 3:1-6**

"For this cause (in other words, everything that he wrote in the first two chapters) I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: How that by revelation (he didn't get it from other men) he (The ascended Lord) made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, [Well what's this particular mystery?]

"Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ;) Which in other ages (or past generations) was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles (remember Paul was not the last of the apostles, others followed after him during the apostolic age) and prophets by the Spirit; (and this is what this secret amounts to) That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel ("Gospel that saves" Ref. I Corinthians 15:1-4):"

Now remember, Israel never had a promise like that. Israel never had a promise that they would be joint-heirs with Christ. Do you know what that means? Everything that belongs to Christ now belongs to us believers also, as we are joint-heirs as Gentiles in this "Body of Christ." Now drop down for the next one to verse 9, and we'll almost have to start with verse 8. All of this is just a summarization, this is certainly not detailed commentary as I would like to teach on these mysteries.

**Ephesians 3:8,9**

"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; And to make all men see what is the fellowship (meeting of the mind) of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world (age) hath been hid in God,..."

Now what's Paul saying? Remember, he was talking earlier in this chapter that the Gentiles are going to be joint-heirs with Christ. And like I said, that's something that the Jews had never heard of in their Covenant promises. But you and I, as Gentile believers, have this prospect that when we go into the eternal abode then we will be joint-heirs with Christ. Now in verse 9, Paul wanted this mystery to be seen by all believers, not just the spiritual, not just the pastors, or theologians, but everyone. Now what I can't understand is why people can't see that this wasn't yet revealed during Christ's earthly ministry. Jesus never indicated that there would ever be this kind of a
consort between Himself and Gentiles. He only talked about Himself and Israel. But this was kept secret in the mind of God until it was revealed to this man. And now it comes out to the whole Gentile world, "Look at this glorious prospect of having a joint-heirship with Jesus Christ." Now let's look at the next one in Ephesians 6:19.

Ephesians 6:19

"And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery (secret) of the gospel." (As given to Paul in I Corinthians 15:1-4.)

Now that's what it says, and you can't twist it to mean something else. Paul is now proclaiming something that had never been revealed before - that Gentiles as well as Jews can be saved by believing on the finished work of the Cross. Enter into this glorious relationship with Christ that makes us a joint-heir with Him, not for just this life but for all eternity. What a glorious prospect. It should make the hair on the back of our neck stand on end to think that this is what's facing us. Not some great doom, and judgment. Not, I hope so, and maybe. But we have this assurance that this mystery is this fellowship that we as Gentiles are going to enjoy, and already do. The next one is found in Colossians 1:26, and again we also need to look at verse 25.

Colossians 1:25-27

"Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, (Gentiles) to fulfil the word of God; Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; (and what is the secret?) which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." Christ in a Gentile is something a Jew could never comprehend, but that's what the Book says.

Colossians 2:2

"That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery (secret) of God, and of the Father, and of Christ;" How few people will understand it. And if they do they won't recognize it, they won't acknowledge it. Now Chapter 4, verses 2 and 3:

Colossians 4:2,3
"Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving; Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds:"

**I Timothy 3:8,9**

"Likewise must the deacons be grave, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience."

**I Timothy 3:14-16**

"These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh: justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."