

Epistle of First Corinthians VIII

The Need for Trials—Chapters 3-4

Fred R. Coulter

I've been studying and re-studying and going over 1-Corinthians and part of 2-Corinthians. I want to pick up all the tell-tale clues as to what was happening in this church. I think we're going to be absolutely amazed. What it has really impressed upon my mind is how that we need to really keep ourselves in the love of God in everything we do.

Look what happened here in 1-Corinthians, Paul comes in and there are total pagans worshipping these demons. There are pagan temples everywhere, doing whatever they want to do. Yet, they're 'religious.' That tells you right away that he's going to have a whole lot of problems. What is the very first thing that any carnal person does when they hear about God and religion? *They try to compare that with what they've been doing to justify what they've done in the past as a good thing!* That is natural; that is exactly what has happened here.

The way Paul treats them in 1-Cor. 4, he really has to be very sarcastic with them; it's amazing what he said. But it's just impressed upon my mind how we need to, beginning:

1-Corinthians 3:11: "For no one is able to lay any other foundation besides that which has been laid, which is Jesus Christ"

—and to keep yourself in the love of God.

I tell you, I've had a couple of tough weeks with some of the things that I've been doing, and I'm so glad when the Sabbath comes, it just really impresses upon me how that the only thing that keeps my sanity is doing exactly that: *building upon this foundation of Christ!* Every one of us will kind of drift away in our thoughts and things like this and we'll be kind of slack in the things we need to do: in praying, studying, etc.

Next thing you know you'll be out there and you'll be confronted with a choice. I guarantee you'll be confronted with a choice as to what you're going to do. When you choose God's way and then look back upon the other potentials that those other choices presented, you think: how bad, how stupid, how dumb. ***God's way is right, all the way through!*** So, build on that foundation of Jesus Christ.

There are likened six different kinds of elements that you build with: "...gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay *or* stubble" (v 12). Let's go at these backward.

Stubble, hay and wood:

Stubble burns up very quickly. We know there are going to be trials, and that's what we're going to cover: the need for trials and why we go through them. I think it's very important that we grasp that. Not from the point of view that we can go around and bring trials upon ourselves.

I think there's even a psychology of bringing trials upon yourself. We don't want to get into that kind of pattern or anything. But if you build it with stubble, it's going to burn. Hay also goes very

quickly; wood a little slower. Wood is kind of deceiving. Wood kind of reminds me of what a Laodicean would be. The way I came across that was: We've been building some fires in the fireplace and saving on electricity. I've been getting some free wood going down to the lumber yard and getting these big blocks that they cut off and throw away because they're used for headers for windows and doors and they can't have any cracks or pitch and the knots have to be solid if there are knots in it, otherwise they have to discard it.

I'd split those up and stack them in. I'm a lazy fireplace fire-builder. We have a little gas thing, so I turn that on and just put the logs in there and it burns. This wood is such that you get it going, and the fire is coming out and it's burning down. When is it the hottest? When it starts *or* when it's almost out?

With these blocks you have to turn them over, because the fire doesn't come around like it does on logs. The coals are red hot on the backside and the heat is right there. I was thinking that this fire is going out, but if the fire were analyzing itself, it would say, 'I'm better off than ever before because I have more heat' when it's ready to go out! That reminds me of the Laodiceans. They're lukewarm and they think they're on fire and they don't realize that they are ready to go out. So, wood is very deceiving.

You can also have a nice finish. You can have a veneer. So, we can draw many parallels here. You can have a very fine piece of furniture—*looks like* a fine piece of furniture. You can have a very thin veneer of the most expensive wood in the world on it, yet, that piece of furniture would only be worth about as much as pressboard that it's glued onto. I'm sure you have some of that furniture at home. It's really nice looking furniture, but it's got a thin veneer and it's just pressed wood behind it.

Wood, hay and stubble can all be deceiving. Just to back up a little bit with hay. Someone dumped a big bale of hay right on the sidewalk at the front of our house. I was going to throw it away, but Delores said to take it out and put it out so the dogs could sleep on it. I was nettling out a place for the dogs to get in, and they got in there and stayed in there. When they came out it was warm. That hay is so warm and comfortable and nice.

Just draw that analogy with being a Christian. You get so warm and everything seems to kind of just nice and sung and wonderful, but you put a torch to that and WOOSH, it's gone!

Precious stones, silver and gold:

With precious stones we're dealing with something else. Precious stones actually get better when they are refined with heat. That's how synthetic diamonds are made, by putting them into real high-pressured heating and they are as good as the ones that they mine. That's how God makes those things in the earth.

I've been watching this thing on television *The Earth*. It showed what's happening with the earth and how the molten core of the earth is always moving and shifting, and when it comes up through these cracks and comes out as a volcano or as the plates are moving under the ocean. They actually have pictures now where they can see the volcanic material coming out and pushing the plates of the oceans and there's a big crack in many different places under the ocean. There are 20 of those where they have those plates. It's producing these very high quality and precious minerals and

stones. That's where they get the quarts and gold and silver; it all comes out of it. When you take gold, precious stones and silver and you refine it, it becomes better, more pure.

So, the analogy is that with a trial, if you're building gold, silver and precious stone you're going to have a better character through Christ.

Verse 13: "The work of each one shall be manifested; for the day *of trial* will declare *it*, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall prove what kind of work each one's is. If the work that anyone has built endures...

[building on Christ]

...he shall receive a reward. If the work of anyone is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but *he* himself shall be saved, yet as through fire" (vs 13-15).

{Note Rev. 3:14-21, about the Laodiceans; 'buy of Me gold tried in the fire.'} That's purifying their character.

Let's go through and understand about trials and see the things that it talks about in the Bible. Our faith is going to be tried and tested. They ran a survey and they found out that more and more people are leaving Christianity and going for these modern 'eastern-type' religions. Frankly, when you turn on the television and you look at some of these guys, like Oral Roberts, 'If I don't get \$4.2-million the Lord is going to call me home.' Laying a guilt trip on all these people out there that are watching him. I imagine a lot of people just took the switch and shut him off.

All of the gink-heads get on TV. It just seems that way. A person says, 'You want to know about Christ? Watch Pat Robertson.' That looks like the lottery spin. Watch him when they have the money-raising thing. They have it every day. It's just like a circus and you think, 'If that represents God, then other things I see out here are just as good.' So, people get turned off of God. Then someone with a strange religion says, 'I look at all this silliness of Christianity and we have a better religion.'

The Hindus have a new palace right down here and now that they have that one of their parts of their religion is that they can marry their wives early. They had a report in the paper and on the news that this man who is 60 married his third or fourth wife and his wife was only five-years-old. It is weird! It is strange!

We live in such a secular, materialized world that if you tell someone that you are really believing in Christ and following the Word of God, you are a strange thing, indeed! I know that things are going to get more militant. They're bound to. Look what's happening with these marches. They're not just marching out now because we want to have equal rights. They're marching for political power. They are marching for demonstration of who is in control.

The battle-lines are going to be drawn. I know that there's going to be a white backlash and black backlash that's going to take place. All I want to do is stay out of the middle, because you're going to get chewed alive. What is that Proverb? *He who enters into an argument with another and tries to stop two men from fighting is like walking into a dog urinating!* That's true. I'm going to stay out of the middle of it.

You read what's happening and you think 'they ought to do this; they ought to do that; they ought to do the other thing.' Then when you really think about it, you if you were elected or you could be in this office or if you could do such and such, you couldn't do any more than they can do. It's all a part of this world and you'd just be chewed alive.

Being a true Christian is going to, in time—and we're not too far from it—be a whole lot more difficult than it is now. We've gone through some trials, every one of us have had trials. But I tell you, when you read some of the things that the Jews went through, we haven't gone through anything. We haven't gone through a thing. We haven't even gotten to the sandbox, let alone graduating from kindergarten.

1-Peter 1:1: "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to *the* elect strangers scattered in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia; *who have been chosen* according to *the* predetermined knowledge of God *the* Father, by sanctification through *the* Spirit, unto obedience..." (vs 1-2).

{note John 14:15—'If you love Me keep My commandments'} That is a key when people say that you don't have to obey the Ten Commandments or keep the laws of God.

"...unto obedience and sprinkling of *the* blood of Jesus Christ: Grace and peace be multiplied to you. Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who, according to His abundant mercy, has begotten us again **unto a living hope**..." (vs 2-3).

The Greek there is 'zao'—*living*—not an empty hope; not a hollow hope, but a *living hope*.

"...through *the* resurrection of Jesus Christ from *the* dead" (v 3).

Every time I read about it or think about that, I just wonder what it's going to be like when the resurrection takes place—if I'm still alive—to be changed from flesh to spirit. About the closest thing that I can think of, to just kind of peak my interest a little bit, is to do this: When you're sound asleep and all of a sudden your body sort of shocks itself awake. All of a sudden you're wide-awake. It's almost as if someone took an electrical shock and zapped you. That's the closest I can think of what it would be like for the resurrection. Every time I read that I can't help but think:

- What were the thoughts of Christ when He was resurrected?
- What was it like to be God and be dead for three days and three nights and be resurrected?

When you just sit down and just think about it, and maybe just take something like that and kind of let that be the theme or your thought for the day and think about that off and on all during the day. And when your mind starts wandering, just wonder and think what that may be.

Verse 4: "Unto an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and unfading..."

The more you look at the banking system and what they do, and what's going to happen with the confiscation of property when the mark of the beast comes in, you talk about creating money out of nothing just by having reserves like the banks do today. Once the mark of the beast comes in, and it's all computerized, they'll just generate it out of a computer.

This inheritance that we have,

"...reserved in heaven for us..." (v 4),

no one is going to take; no one is going to undo. Think of it for a minute. "...an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and unfading..." That inheritance has got to be more than just you as a person in the form of a spirit being. That inheritance is reserved for you in heaven, but you are on the earth.

Again, this inheritance that God is going to give us is going to be part of the ownership, under Christ, of the Kingdom of God. That is going to be something! In your studies please see if you can find anywhere that those who are entering into the Kingdom of God after the first resurrection are going to have that kind of inheritance. I don't think you'll find it. It is fantastic! That's why God is calling just a few. It's so fantastic, yet, so simple! But so fantastic that God not calling the whole world to it.

Verse 5: Who...

[that's us]

...*are* being safeguarded by *the* power of God through faith, for salvation *that is* ready to be revealed in *the* last time."

It tell you, if we're not living in the last time, I don't want to be around when the last times come.

Verse 6: "In this you yourselves greatly rejoice...

[in the salvation, and in God's calling and the inheritance reserved for you]

...though for the present, if it is necessary, you are in distress for a little while by various trials...

[and temptations]

...In order that the proving of your faith..." (vs 6-7).

That's what it's for. There's a difference. We're going to see that Paul makes a difference. There are those things that we bring upon us that are trials, which God hasn't brought upon us. We do it because of our own stupidity or because of some other fault, and we have to go through the 'meat grinder' to learn.

The *trial of faith* is different,

"...which is much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is being tested by fire, may be found unto praise and honor and glory at *the* revelation of Jesus Christ" (v 7).

1-Peter 4:12: "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial among you *which is* taking place to test you, as if some strange thing *were* happening to you. But to the degree that you have a share in the sufferings of Christ..." (vs 12-13).

I'll just have to mention right here that I think I understand this Scripture a little bit more. I'm still not at the point of rejoicing at every trial that comes along, but I am beyond the point of complaining when I'm going through them. Are you to rejoice during the trial *or* after the trial? Most of my rejoicing is *after* the trial. In some cases quite a while after, when I understand. Then you think, 'Oh, God, You saved me! You intervened!'

Hebrews 12:1—this tells us the attitude that we need to have to rejoice or to joy in the trials:

"Therefore, *since* we are surrounded by such a great throng of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that so easily entraps *us*; *and* let us run the race set before us with endurance, having *our minds* fixed on Jesus, the Beginner and Finisher of *our* faith; Who for the joy that lay ahead of Him endured *the* cross, *although* He despised *the* shame, and has sat down at *the* right hand of the throne of God. Now meditate deeply on Him Who endured such great hostility of sinners against Himself **so that you do not become weary and faint in your minds**" (vs 1-3).

It is an attitude thing! When you are going through it you get weary! Have you ever had a trial that just *wears you down*! And you want to give up! That's a trial of your faith. "...so that you do not become weary and faint in your minds." What do you do when you come to that point? *You go back and you look to Christ! Keep in the love of God!* That's going to save an awful lot of problems. You're going to avoid an awful lot of things.

Verse 4: "You have not yet resisted to the point of *losing* blood in your struggle against sin."

I don't know anybody who has done that. I've fought sin! You've fought sin! But I haven't gone out there and either gnashed my teeth to the point of bleeding, or keep my hands or feet from doing something to the point of bleeding. I haven't been lashed with a whip. I haven't been strung up on a cross. No, I haven't resisted sin unto blood. Christ did!

Verse 5: "And you have already forgotten the admonition that He addresses to you as to sons: 'My son, do not despise *the* chastening of *the* Lord, nor grow weary of being reproved by Him....

[This from where our trials come]

...for **whom *the* Lord loves**..." (vs 5-6).

All too often we have in our mind what it is that we think love is—all up, good, fun, happiness, joy—and there's nothing else but that. That's the world's vision of love. God is love! That's what God is—isn't it?

But:

- is He going to punish the world?
- is He going to be angry?
- is He going to destroy sin and people?
- *Yes!*

But if you love God

"...He chastens, and He severely disciplines every son whom He receives" (v 6).

Likened unto scouring. You scour some pots, and you have to really scrounge it down. But when you get it scrounged down it's a lot better. Same way with a precious stone.

- What do you have to do with a precious stone? *Cut it, grind it, polish it!*
- What do you have to do with silver and gold? *Melt it out, purify it!*

Same thing! Here the analogy follows all the way through.

Verse 7: "If you endure chastening, God is dealing with you as *a Father* with *His* sons. For who is the son whom *the* Father does not chasten? But if you are without chastisement, of which all are partakers, then you are bastards and not sons" (vs 7-8).

You get to this 'good time' Christianity; no correction, everything is wonderful, *wonderful, wonderful!*

Verse 9: "Furthermore, we have had our fleshly fathers who chastened *us*, and we respected *them*; should we not all the more *willingly* be subject to the Father of spirits, and live *forever*? For in the first case, they chastened *us* for a few days in whatever way seemed good to them; but in the second case, He *chastens us* for *our own* benefit that we may be partakers of His Holiness" (vs 9-10).

If when we're going through a trial or correction, we keep that in mind so that we can be "...partakers of His Holiness" to be Holy as God is, then I think we can come to the point of rejoicing *during* the trial—though it's hard. I don't think I've quite come to that point, and I'm not begging for any trials. There are going to plenty in store down the line. They are going to be coming, so we don't need to go out and look for it and ask for it.

Verse 11: "Now truly, no chastisement for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous...

[and it is]

...nevertheless, **afterwards** it yields *the* peaceable fruits of righteousness to those who have been exercised by it."

We're to count it all joy when different things come upon us, that's how we're to do it.

1-Peter 4:13: "...rejoice; so that, at the revelation of His glory, you also may rejoice exceedingly."

I don't know how to quite draw an analogy concerning that, except maybe someone who runs a marathon, when they win and finish. They can look back on all the pain and suffering they had to go through in training, and they have to train something fierce; it's terrible. But when they make it, then there is joy. It's going to be the same thing for us when we are partakers of that joy. That's a good analogy how we're able to rejoice. When we go through a trial it reveals a flaw that needs to be gotten rid of, or needs correcting. That's good!

Verse 14: "If you are reviled for *the* name of Christ, *you are* blessed because the *Spirit* of glory and the Spirit of God is resting upon you; on their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. Assuredly, let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or an evil doer, or as an over lording busybody in other people's lives" (vs 14-15).

That was another problem in the Church—glorifying men and busybodies in other people's matters; going around telling everyone how to live. It says, 'don't suffer that way.'

Verse 16. Yet, if anyone *is suffering* as a Christian, he should not be ashamed; but let him glorify God because of this, for the time *has come for* judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it first *begins* with us, what *will be* the end of those who do not obey the Gospel of God?" (vs 16-17).

James 1:1: "James, a servant of God and of *the* Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes, which *are* in the dispersion: Greetings!"

This leads me to believe they knew where the ten 'so-called' lost tribes were. If you're going to send a letter to the twelve tribes, you have to know where the other ten are.

However, I do see how that part of the way the Jews have done, by taking everything that belongs to Israel and applying it to themselves, helps keep the other ten tribes lost to the general knowledge of the public. Almost every religionist you hear, anything you read: 'the Jews crossed the Red Sea; the Jews got the Ten Commandments from Moses; the Jews this... Then they say, we're Israelites. That keeps everyone blinded as to who Israel really is.

Here James wrote

"...to the twelve tribes, which *are* in the dispersion: Greetings! Consider *it* all joy, my brethren, when you are beset by various trials" (vs 1-2).

When I first read that my reaction was 'that's kind of dumb.' That shows you how completely removed from reality that I was as far as understanding about God's Word.

Verse 3: "Knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance."

That's the key! What are we to do?

He who endures to the end the same shall be saved! (Matt. 24:13).

So, the trying of your faith works endurance.

I know, and I'm sure you know, that after the things that we have gone through, we are able to endure a whole lot more, plus God has given us some wisdom so we can avoid some of the pitfalls. That's why we have these trials.

Verse 4: "But let endurance have *its* perfect work, so that you may be perfect and complete, not lacking in anything. However, if anyone lacks wisdom, let him ask of God..." (vs 4-5).

I've often wondered:

- Why did it change topics all of a sudden in this verse? We go from *trial of your faith* to *wisdom!*
- What is the wisdom talking about?
- Just wisdom in general?

I've heard many ministers use this as an opening verse for giving a sermon on wisdom.

- What kind of wisdom is this talking about?
- Wisdom in general?

No, *the wisdom of God to understand the trial!* That's so simple it's hard to believe that it was difficult to understand.

Verse 5: "However, if anyone lacks wisdom...

[to understand this trial]

...let him ask of God Who gives to everyone freely and does not reproach *the one who asks*; and it shall be given to him. But let him ask in faith, not doubting at all because the one who doubts is like a wave of *the* sea that is driven by the wind and tossed *to and fro*. Do not let that man expect that he will receive anything from the Lord. **He is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways**" (vs 5-8).

This was the problem with the Church at Corinth. "...**a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.**" Isn't that what the problems in the Corinthian Church were all about? Following people, and all these weird ideas?

- we're to *rejoice* when a trial comes
- we're to *ask for wisdom* to see our way through it
- What is God trying to do in all of this?
- What is God trying to accomplish in all of this?
 - because we've been given free moral agency
 - because we're to choose between good and evil
 - because we're to choose the right over the wrong

Remember this whenever there's a trial going on,

Jeremiah 12:3: "But You, O LORD, know me...."

Does God know us? *Sure He does, because we have His Spirit!* He knows where His Spirit is! Didn't Jesus say, 'I know My sheep and they follow Me'?

"But You, O LORD, know me. You have seen me and tried my heart toward You...." (v 3).

God is the One Who *tries the reins and the heart*.

Revelation 2:23 "...and all the churches shall know that I am He Who **searches *the reins and hearts***; and I will give to each of you according to your works."

That's why we have the trials: to *try our hearts* and *try our minds*!

Romans 5:1: "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through Whom we also have access by faith into this grace..." (vs 1-2).

Notice what Paul emphasizes there. Whenever you're going through a trial, just keep your mind on Christ, look to Christ, the Author and Finisher of our faith, and also the fact of God's grace. Keep your mind on that grace and faith that God can give you.

Especially the grace

"...in which we stand..." (v 2).

In other words, there's that grace all around us, covering us.

"...and we ourselves boast in *the* hope of the glory of God. And not only *this*, but we also boast in tribulations..." (vs 2-3).

Paul learned something—didn't he? James said to 'count it all joy.' Rejoice when God corrects you. Remember the background on the Apostle Paul {parts 1-2 this series} that 'I will show him what things he must suffer for Me.'

Paul went all the way from rejoicing and rejoicing to *glorying* in tribulation. That has got to take an awful lot of God's Holy Spirit.

"...realizing that **tribulation brings forth endurance**, and endurance *brings forth* [experience]" (vs 3-4).

Once you've experienced something, you can rely on that experience and you can see some of these things coming so you won't get into the same trap as before. You can see it coming!

"character, and character *brings forth* hope..."

[You have more hope in God.]

...And the hope *of God* never makes us ashamed because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, which has been given to us" (vs 4-5).

This how then we're able to go through the trials!

These Scriptures mean more to me now, and I have more understanding of these than I ever have before. As we live a Christian life and go through all these things, we can understand more of God's Word. Why is it that we're able to understand more of God's Word now than we did years

ago? *Because we've gone through many more different things!* We've had more experience. We can look back and say, 'Yes, I know...'

That doesn't mean we're not going to have more trials in the future; *we are!* That doesn't mean we're not going to grow in grace and knowledge and learn more things; *we are!* But I tell you, when you go back and read these Scriptures....

I was thinking when we went through the series in the book of Romans, going back and reading this section of Scriptures I have more of an understanding of what it means and more of feeling in my heart and mind than I ever did. We were still suffering through some of the wounds of the trials. We could understand it better than we did at that time, and each time we progressively learn, but I read some of these things now and it's just like Job said, 'Now my eye sees....' I understand!

1-Corinthians 3:16: "Don't you understand that you are God's temple, and *that* the Spirit of God is dwelling in you?"

We could give a whole thing about the temple of God: worshiping God in Spirit and in Truth.

Remember what happened when David finally got the Ark of God back from Kirjath Jearim. It was stolen by the Philistines when Eli, Hophni and Phinehas went out with the troops and try to win a battle and God wasn't with them. The Philistines took the Ark of God and then the plagues came on them. They finally sent it back and it came to Kirjath Jearim. David decided that he would go ahead and move it up to Jerusalem.

He did it the wrong way the first time, and he put it in a cart. Remember, Uzziah touched it and God zapped him and killed him. The lesson is that God doesn't need any help from a man. They were not doing it correctly.

Then David pondered the situation, and said that 'we did this wrong; get the Levites, the priests, and let them carry it, and do the singing and everything. So, they brought the Ark to Jerusalem and set it in a tent. It's going to be wonderful to meet David. There's so much about him. He's a warrior, a musician, king, politician, and a 'man after God's heart.' There he was strumming on his instrument of ten strings. I don't know what that would look like.

I've seen these things that kind of look like a miniature harp that's got a hole in it and you strum across the strings. Was it like a harp that you hold? Was it like a banjo that you play? I don't know what he was doing, but anyway, he was out there playing this, thinking and praising God. He said, 'God, I want to build You a house.' I want to build You a temple.'

Nathan came and said, 'David, God says, 'I dwelt in a tent and a tabernacle since the time I have been with the children of Israel. Where is the house that you will build for Me? I'm going to build one for you, David. I'm going to build you a house where your kingship—told him what He was going to do—shall never lack for a man to sit on the throne.' But He also said, 'David, I'm going to let you build a house for Me. But not you, I'm only going to give you the plans and let you get the material, but your son will build it, because you're a bloody man.'

So, God supposedly dwelt in that temple. But where is it that God wants to reside the most? *In His own children! We are the temple of God's Holy Spirit!* Sometimes we don't feel like it—do we? I

mean, we go around in this carnal world, and right now during Sabbath services we can feel it. Yes, we are the temple of God's Holy Spirit. Maybe tomorrow you won't feel necessarily that you're the temple of God's Holy Spirit.

Nevertheless, that is true! There's a tremendous responsibility because not only is God's Spirit with us, but because of that we carry the name of God and we represent God.

1-Corinthians 3:16: "Don't you understand that you are God's temple, and *that* the Spirit of God is dwelling in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God shall destroy him because the temple of God is Holy, which temple you are" (vs 16-17).

Ephesians 2:20: "You are being built up on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being *the* chief Cornerstone in Whom all the building, being conjointly fitted together, is increasing into a Holy temple in *the* Lord; in Whom you also are being built together for a habitation of God in *the* Spirit" (vs 20-22).

Paul relates to this several times.

1-Corinthians 3:18: "Let no one deceive himself...."

That's the easiest thing to do. When you get a pet idea, or you get a pet thing... Have you ever had a pet project that just really consumed your mind? You can deceive yourself on that, and you can think that this is the greatest thing that has come along since whatever. That's the first thing we do is deceive ourselves.

"...If anyone among you thinks *himself* to be wise in this world..." (v 18).

Quite a statement! We're here at Eureka Federal Savings. Suppose we had the president of Eureka Federal Savings here? We would say, 'Mr. So and So, in the world you're really something, but in this room you're stupid.' I'm saying it a little more bluntly than Paul did. He'd get mad! He'd say, 'I'm smart! I'm educated! I have all these degrees!'

"...If anyone among you thinks *himself* to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, so that he may be wise *in God's sight*" (v 18).

- if you don't know God
- if you don't know the plan of salvation
- if you don't know why Jesus Christ came
- if you don't know why He had to give His life and was resurrected

What good is all the knowledge in the world? *It isn't!*

Verse 19: "For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God for it is written, 'He entraps the wise in their own craftiness.' And again, '*The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain*'" (vs 19-20).

All you have to do is watch this program *The World of the Rich and Famous* with Robin Leech—a perfect name for him, *Leech*. Look at some of the things that they have, and you see some of the

houses that they built—the rooms, and the things that they have done—and it is really ludicrous sometimes. Sometimes they're quite inspiring, and you think that they had all the money to do that and I can't repair the back screened door, because I don't have enough money, or whatever. "...the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain."

Verse 21: "Therefore, do not let anyone boast in men...

[enough said, we don't have to belabor the point]

...for all things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or *the* world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come—all are yours; and you *are* Christ's, and Christ *is* God's" (vs 21-23).

That introduces 1-Cor. 4. Now we're going to start getting down to the nitty-gritty. Let's begin: 1-Corinthians 4:1:

"So then, let *every* man regard us as ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Beyond that, it is required of stewards that one be found faithful. But to me it is an insignificant matter that I am judged by you, or by man's standard; and neither do I judge myself. Now, I am not conscious of anything against myself, yet I am not justified by this; for the one Who is judging me is *the* Lord" (vs 1-4).

There are two things here that are important to realize. I have seen someone take this Scripture and twist it. There are people who deal in Scriptures deceitfully—we've seen that. If you come up to someone, because of their adulterous behavior or because they're lying or cheating, and they hide behind a 'religious' cloak and they say, 'How dare you question me or judge me, I am God's minister.' That's not what Paul is doing here. That's not what he's saying here.

God is going to judge him, but what they were doing is judging him over every little itty-bitty thing. We've seen that happen. Have you ever had someone do that to you, judge you over every little, itty-bitty thing?

Verse 5: "Therefore, do not judge anything before *the* time; *wait* until the Lord comes, Who will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the motives of *all* hearts; and then shall each one receive praise from God."

That is **IF** you do it right. If your heart is right, if your counsel is right, then you will have the praise of God.

Verse 6: "Now these things, brethren, I have applied to Apollos and myself for your sakes; that in us you may learn not to think *of men* beyond what is written, so that no one among you is puffed up on behalf of one *of us* against the other."

That's what happens. Vanity gets involved and then you're striving one against the other.

Verse 7: "For what makes you superior *to others*? And what do you have that you did not receive?...."

I get the feeling that they were combining some of this Greek mysticism in the Christianity there. But just think if what came out of Corinth continued to develop—which I'm sure it did—then you have exactly what you have in the world of Christianity today; just a hodgepodge and a mish-mash of everything.

"...But if you also received *it*, why are you boasting as if you did not receive *it*?" (v 7).

That's so true. I had one man tell me, 'I don't have to study my Bible, I know it.' He's making all these wild assertions. It's a good thing it was only a passing acquaintance, because I didn't have to endure it beyond that. So, I just kind of rolled my eyes and looked off to the side.

Verse 8: "Now you are satiated. Now you have been enriched....

[Paul is making fun of them]

...You have reigned without us....

[you've got it made; you're ready to be kings without us]

...And I would that you did reign, so that we also might reign with you. For I suppose that God has made us apostles last, as it were appointed to death; for we have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men. We *are* fools for the sake of Christ, but you *are* wise in Christ..." (vs 8-10).

There were sure going after him—weren't they?

"...we *are* weak, but you *are* strong; you *are* glorious, but we *are* without honor" (v 10).

I tell you—I joke about it every once in a while—I guess it's true. I have two of the most hated profession in the world: a loan broker and a minister. I can relate what the Apostle Paul is saying here.

Verse 11: "To the present hour we both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and wander without a home."

He had a tough life—didn't he? Think about it, he had a tough life.

Verse 12: "And we labor, working with our own hands....

[to please you self-righteous, stuck-up people over here in Corinth]

...When railed at, we bless; when persecuted, we bear *it*; when reviled, we entreat; for unto this day we are as *the* refuse and *the* off-scouring of the world. I do not write these things to make you ashamed, but as my beloved children **I warn you**" (vs 12-14).

That must have been a tough congregation that he had to write such a letter.

Verse 15: "For you might have ten thousand tutors in Christ..."

That tells you a little of something—doesn't it? Let's get one of the clues as to what was going on. They were having a ball back there. If you could advertise the Corinthian Church on television you would bring them in by the flocks. We have speaking in tongues; we have songs; we have super preachers; we have revelations.

Every Sunday night between 6-7 there's nothing on TV and the news is so rotten and stupid I don't want to watch it, so I flick back and forth between a couple of these religious channels, and there was one that clapped their hands and praised the Lord, and three songs later there were still going, sweating, screaming and yelling to come to this church, full of life and vigor!

That's what the Corinthian Church was like—'ten thousand' teachers in Christ; everyone was a teacher, an expert.

2-Corinthians 11:4: "For indeed, if someone comes preaching another Jesus, whom we did not preach, or you receive a different spirit, which you did not receive...

[from us]

...or a different gospel, which you did not accept...

[from us]

...you put up with it as *something* good."

In other words they were putting up, 'Oh, something new, we want to hear about it.'

Verse 5: "But I consider myself in no way inferior to those highly exalted *so-called* apostles....

[This not talking about the chief apostles in the Church. This means the hotshot super-duper apostles.]

...For although *I may be* unpolished in speech, yet, *I am* not in knowledge; for in all things I have demonstrated this to you" (vs 5-6).

Verse 13: "For such *are* false apostles—deceitful workers who are transforming themselves into apostles of Christ."

So, when you have this saying: 'I am of Paul, I am of Apollos, I am of Cephus, I am of Christ...' some of those who said they were of Christ were following those false apostles who said they were apostles of Christ. This was a confusing mad mess!

Verse 14: "And *it is* no marvel, for Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore, *it is* no great thing if his servants also transform themselves as ministers of righteousness—..." (vs 14-15).

If those things had not been going on in the Church at Corinth why write the letters? Why write them? They had some wild, wild things going on there so bad, that Paul said:

1-Corinthians 4:15: "For you might have ten thousand tutors in Christ, but *you do not have* many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I did beget you through the Gospel. Therefore, I am exhorting you to be imitators of me" (vs 15-16).

Then he modifies that 'Follow me as I follow Christ" (1-Cor. 11:1).

Verse 17: "For this cause I sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved son, and faithful in *the* Lord, who will remind you of my ways that *are* in Christ, exactly as **I teach everywhere in every church**. Now some of you are puffed up, as though I were not coming to you" (vs 17-18).

They're saying, 'Oh well, this Apostle Paul, he really doesn't have it all. This nice apostle over here, he's a wonderful apostle'—one of these false ones sneaking in—he's got a lot of wonderful ideas, good ideas. Listen to him.'

Verse 19: "But I shall come to you shortly, if the Lord wills; and I will know not *merely* the words of those who are puffed up, but the power....

[whether they have the power of God or just the power of vanity]

...For the Kingdom of God *is* not in words, but in power. **What do you desire? Shall I come to you with a rod, or in love and a Spirit of meekness?"** (vs 19-21).

That's tough! I have never had a letter written to me like that. That's pretty tough; you think about it! Go back and review the other chapters up to here, because when we come 1-Cor. 5 he's going to lay it on pretty heavy—it's all pretty heavy all the way through. They were really letting things get all strung out and all under the grace of God, all under everyone's a teacher and all this sort of thing.

What should happen with the Spirit of God and studying God's Word? *The more you study it, the more you realize how fantastic and great it is, and how little you really know*, even though you know certain things up to this point.

Apparently they didn't have anyone strong enough to control it the way that should have been controlled. However, even a strong man can only control it so long. Where does the control actually lie with the individual? *Within their own heart and mind!* It's like the old phrase: 'You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink.' You can even take him out in the middle of the stream and drown the critter, and it still doesn't want to drink.

It's the same way: God tries the hearts and reins and you can have a strong person there. I've seen where there have been strong ministers, but if it isn't from the heart and mind with each individual member there, they are going on the coattails of the strength of that man, and when he goes things will be different. When reading it, it really makes you wonder if they were ever really in the Church.

Paul says,

'There are those of you in the Church who have not the knowledge of God.' (1-Cor. 15:34).

So, it does make you wonder. It shows you what can happen to a church when it deteriorates. Yes, you can have leadership—that's fine, that's important—but you also to have faithfulness with each individual's own part. You have to have the knowledge of God. You do have to come to the point that the whole purpose of the ministry is to fulfill what Jesus said, 'It is sufficient that the disciple become as the master.' That's the whole purpose of the minister teaching; to bring people to that knowledge, to help them understand.

Not necessarily just control. You can do all kinds of things with controlling a group, but that doesn't mean that they are necessarily developing Godly faith—there's a vast difference.

1-Corinthians 15:34: "Awake to righteousness, and do not sin, for some *of you* do not have the knowledge of God. I say *this* to your shame."

That's something! There were those who weren't believing in the resurrection. There were some in the Church at Corinth saying that 'the resurrection is past. We're all going to heaven.' It's incredible!

I shake my head, but I have to say that I don't know all the circumstances there, and God sure preserved this for us for a good reason. I know I wouldn't want to pastor a church like this. I would be going stark raving mad; poor Paul, he really had it.

All Scriptures from *The Holy Bible in Its Original Order, A Faithful Version* by Fred R. Coulter

Scriptural References:

- 1 Corinthians 3:11-15
- 1 Peter 1:1-7
- 1 Peter 4:12-13
- Hebrews 12:1-11
- 1 Peter 4:13-17
- James 1:1-8
- Jeremiah 12:3
- Revelation 2:23
- Romans 5:1-5
- 1 Corinthians 3:16-17
- Ephesians 2:20-22
- 1 Corinthians 3:18-23
- 1 Corinthians 4:1-15
- 2 Corinthians 11:4-6, 13-15
- 1 Corinthians 4:15-21
- 1 Corinthians 15:34

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Revelation 3:14-21
- John 14:15
- Matthew 24:13
- 1 Corinthians 11:1

FRC:bo

Transcribed: 3-15-13