

XLIV. Traveling Route 66: The Bible in Biblical Perspective

*The Journey with Christ, the Promised One*

“I Corinthians—The Gospel Book of Order and Ardor”

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We are in the book of I Corinthians for this study. We are going to take a look at Corinth which was a church that had been compromised in many ways. As I was thinking about this I have to confess to you that it always strikes me how many times in God’s providence I will see where the Lord has taken us and I’m so shocked at how the life of the church somehow marries up with that order that God leads me to in my private study. Sometimes I’m also chagrined and somewhat disappointed as I have to fight my way through it and I sometimes have to handle a text in which in my heart I want the whole congregation to hear it, and the church at Corinth and a letter to the Corinthians is one of those for this study, when it’s Super Bowl Sunday night. I think the church at Corinth is very much where we are as an evangelical church in the United States. When you think of Corinth pastorally and theologically as you read it, it’s Paul’s burden to address the issue of how Corinth mingled rebellion, sexual anarchy and false religions into Christianity. This is what we call syncretism, trying to put all of that together. Sometimes I feel like the lack of clear thinking in the church of Jesus Christ today, leads to a lack of clear living and part of our lack of clear thinking is we keep trying to marry Christianity with our culture instead of penetrating our culture with Biblical Christianity.

The result is the degrading of the witness for Christ because we lose the distinctiveness of it or in trying to capture distinctiveness without Biblically thinking, there’s a reaction against it and so the people of God just kind of look mean and angry. That’s their difference, instead of different out of loving the truth and truthing the love. That’s what Paul’s burden is. Where I don’t identify with this at least at this point in time, thankfully, is that Paul is writing to the one church that rejected his ministry pretty much outright. In fact, when we get to II Corinthians the Apostle Paul is having to affirm his ministry because their point was they had Apollos, Peter, and all these other Apostles and they really questioned whether Paul was really an Apostle or not, even though he gave them eighteen months of his life there.

I want to read a couple of passages of Scripture. I want to go through the book of Corinthians by trying to give you a grasp of it. At the conclusion I will try to identify seven themes that will make the book of Corinthians very profitable for you after having walked through the book of Corinthians with you. Let’s start by looking at I Corinthians 1 which is the salutation. I Corinthians 1:1-3 says [1] *Paul, called by the will of God* (we don’t have any problem identifying an author of this book) *to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and our brother Sosthenes,* [2] *To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours:* [3] *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Look how rich this opening salutation is. How did I get to be Paul? I was saved, called to be an Apostle by the will of God. Paul had Sosthenes with him and he is always discipling, mentoring and always giving it away. The church of God at Corinth has those positionally sanctified in Jesus Christ, experientially called to be sanctified. Sanctified,

meaning set apart, so he is talking about a positional place that you are in Christ. You are legally saved, declared as righteous and innocent by the blood of Christ yet existentially, personally, experientially you're called to be saints. You are called to pursue holiness in your life for Christ. There he solves all of the Gospel discussions of our day, when he says here is who you are in Christ and here is what you're called to be for Christ. You're not called to be there so you can be sanctified but you're called to be saints because you have been set apart in Christ. But being set apart in Christ does not obliterate your responsibility to move forward and become more like Christ in your life.

Then he says yes, you're a local church but you never think of yourself alone. You are always connected to the body of Christ wherever people call upon the name of the Lord in every place, in other local churches. Then what do you need? You need grace and when God's grace comes you have peace from God through our Lord Jesus Christ. That's just a sample of the richness of the book of Corinthians. Now I'd look to look at I Corinthians 16 so you can get some particulars and then we'll look at some passages in between.

I Corinthians 16:5-24 says *[5] I will visit you after passing through Macedonia, for I intend to pass through Macedonia, [6] and perhaps I will stay with you or even spend the winter, so that you may help me on my journey, wherever I go. [7] For I do not want to see you now just in passing. I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits. [8] But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, [9] for a wide door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.*

*[10] When Timothy comes, see that you put him at ease among you, for he is doing the work of the Lord, as I am. [11] So let no one despise him. Help him on his way in peace, that he may return to me, for I am expecting him with the brothers. [12] Now concerning our brother Apollos, I strongly urged him to visit you with the other brothers, but it was not at all his will to come now. He will come when he has opportunity. [13] Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. [14] Let all that you do be done in love.*

*[15] Now I urge you, brothers—you know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints—[16] be subject to such as these, and to every fellow worker and laborer. [17] I rejoice at the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus, because they have made up for your absence, [18] for they refreshed my spirit as well as yours. Give recognition to such people. [19] The churches of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Prisca (or Priscilla), together with the church in their house, send you hearty greetings in the Lord. [20] All the brothers send you greetings. Greet one another with a holy kiss.*

*[21] I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. [22] If anyone has no love for the Lord, let him be accursed. Our Lord, come! [23] The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you. [24] My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.*

Now let me just start walking you through this Epistle. Acts 19:20-25 is the historical setting from which he writes this book to the church of Corinth which by the way, the church at Corinth produces a very famous, mature, growing and seems to be an effective defender of the faith, proclaimer of the Gospel whose name was Apollos. Apollos was from Corinth yet he had been disciple by Aquila and Priscilla at Ephesus to show him a more excellent way. Paul is trying to get the son of the church to go back to the church and he said 'no' at the moment but that he would come back at a later time.

I have had the privilege to stand at the ruins of Corinth three times and I want to tell you three things that struck me as I stood at the ruins of Corinth. I like history and I think when you're into history and you go to places of historical preeminence you can get insight while you're onsite. That really struck me the first, second and third time I was at Corinth. Here are the three things that struck me. One is that Corinth had been laid out by the Romans and it was typical Romans in the way it had been laid out with its market, its main street with stores on both sides and I'll never forget walking down the ruins of main street and realizing that I'm actually walking on a road that Paul walked on. Then over here was the public latrine which I will not describe from the pulpit for you. Suffice it to say, being a very private person, I would have had a difficult time living in those days. It was pretty much an outdoor deal there.

Right past there was some market places. Our guide at the time, stopped us there and we sat in this market area on the stones. The guide said "Very likely you're sitting where Paul sat" and then she pointed to what was in front of us. They were the holes that had been drilled into the hard pavement. She said "We have seen in archeology these places. This is the place the tent makers would have set up shop. Those holes are where they would have driven their poles in as they would work on the tents and raise them up and show them to people to sell them." It was all I could do not to lay down on all those holes down there. I was able to refrain from that at least for the moment. It was just so exciting to be there.

Then we went over, not far from there, to a place that was the court, the trial, the place of judgment. It was called in Paul's language, the Bema seat, where Paul says "We must all appear before the Bema." He would have been referring to that spot as a human place of judgment as an illustration of a place of righteous judgment, where we must all appear and we only have one Hope. I stood there and realized that Paul had stood at this place. He had used this as an illustration in his sermons.

The third thing that struck me as I sat there is I looked on the side of the hill and you can still see the preserved ruins of the temple. I don't think I'm over exaggerating in what I'm about to say. I'll put it in the language of a twentieth not a twenty first century church where this very likely was happening. It was where the Corinthians would leave a worship service or perhaps a midweek prayer meeting and when they would walk out from a number of temples, but from that major temple of Diana, they would hear the siren calls of the temple prostitutes, those with uncovered heads because their hair was short. They were those who would call and a large number of Corinthian men would go to the temple prostitutes and participate in the industry of prostitution.

Then their argument back would be an early form of a growing philosophy called Gnosticism. Gnosticism comes from the Greek word 'to know'. This is what their argument would be, "Paul, that's just our bodies. In our heart, in our spirit we are worshipping the Lord. We rejoice in our soul, heart and spirit. That's just our bodies. Everybody knows the body is evil anyway. So don't worry about the body. We're just cohabiting with a prostitute with our body but our heart and soul are cohabiting with the Lord." Paul will say in I Corinthians 6, "Flee immorality, do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit? You, body and soul, have been bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body." Later he'll say "Whether you eat or drink or whatsoever you do (in that body), do all to the glory of God." It is the church at Corinth that becomes the occasion for Paul to cut through the syncretism of the day which would

excuse sin and immorality and even claim that it's a part of actual spiritual growth at the same time. Standing in those places and realizing what had just taken place was incredible to think about.

Who wrote this Epistle? It was Paul. No one challenges this of any scholarly repute.

Where was he when he wrote it? As we just saw from I Corinthians 16 Paul was in Ephesus when he wrote this. He ministered in Corinth for eighteen months when he came and planted the church. When he planted this church he had some help and that was some other tent makers who had traveled around who were from Rome. These tent makers' names were Aquila and Priscilla. They had opened up shop there in the market place. They worked together with Paul and Paul had stayed there eighteen months to plant the church at Corinth. Then he had moved on from that church at that time. Now when he writes the letter back to them, he is in Ephesus where he will be for three years.

So when did he write this? He wrote this sometime during his three years of ministry at Ephesus. It was sometime between 53 to 55 A.D. My guess is that he wrote it sometime between 54 to 55 A.D. and if anything I'd put it in 55 A.D. When he wrote it he wrote it in the Spring because he is waiting on Pentecost. The Feast of Booths has passed and Pentecost is about to take place. In I Corinthians 16 he has given us the timing where he is anticipating Pentecost so it's in the Spring and he won't leave Ephesus until Pentecost is over. He also said he probably couldn't get there until the winter so he is anticipating to getting by to check on the church at Corinth to see how they are doing and how they respond to this letter he is writing.

Why is he writing this letter to them? The immediate purpose he is writing this letter to them is to answer seven specific questions that have arisen and have somehow been communicated to him, and to address three issues that were on his heart. While that occasions, the immediate purpose of writing it is he is primarily concerned with the worldliness instead of Godliness with their immaturity. He tells them they should be onto meat by now but they are still at milk. They should be mature but they are still fleshly. They are still carnal. They are not moving forward in their life. More than that he says, "You are arrogant. You even brag about the fact that you have members committing incest. You have men sleeping with their father's wife (meaning likely a step mother but that's still incest before God). You're bragging about your sins with the prostitutes, your immorality." There is an arrogant display of self centeredness in the Corinthian Christians. In other words, they aren't reflecting the Kingdom, they're reflecting the culture.

Wow! Now, do you know what this is on my heart? What's the divorce rate in the evangelical church in Alabama? According to the last survey I looked at it is one percentage point higher than the non professing population of Alabama. My dear friends, I'm not saying that Christians are perfect and you're perfectly aware of that just by watching me for fourteen years but there ought to be something different. There ought to be a desire for distinctiveness with conviction and humility married together, but mingling was the way of the Corinthians.

In fact, if you lived in the Mediterranean circle, to note someone of immorality, lack of character and lack of trustworthiness, you would have said to them, "Oh they're just Corinthians." It didn't matter whether they were from Corinth or not because it was a term of derision. "You're acting like a Corinthian. O, you Corinthian!" The culture of

Corinth had actually begun to be absorbed and theologically attempted to substantiate its absorption into the church. So instead of the church in the world, it was the world in the church. That is what was happening at Corinth. So what does the Apostle Paul do, but he writes this letter.

I want to give you an outline of this book and this is a very complex, simple outline. There are only two points to this outline which is very simple because of its prologue and epilogue, but you'll notice there are some sub points underneath the points, so it is also complex. There is the prologue which takes place in I Corinthians 1 through 4. In that prologue are the salutation and the greeting in I Corinthians 1:1-3. There is this marvelous prayer of thanksgiving. I would commend to you the book titled Gleanings From Paul; The Prayers of the Apostle by A.W. Pink. There are seventeen identifiable prayers of the Apostle Paul in his thirteen Epistles. Pink has taken the time to write a book pointing out the consistent burdens and patterns of the Apostle Paul. No prayer is more rich than this very brief prayer than you find in I Corinthians 1:4-9.

Then the Apostle brings out his concerns in I Corinthians 1:10 through I Corinthians 4:21. What will he do? It is in these chapters that he will bring out the concern he has about divisions. Someone says I'm of Paul, someone says I'm of Peter, someone says I'm of James, someone says I'm of Apollos and he was utterly devastated by this. He was devastated by what the ministers were doing so he addresses what ought to be done by pastors in ministry and leaders in the church in I Corinthians 3. In I Corinthians 2 he gives the burden of his ministry and that is to preach Christ and Him crucified. Then he moves onto I Corinthians 4 to speak of the ministries that the apostles have and what God calls the apostles to do. Here he describes the apostolic ministry and he lays out what a Gospel minister is. He also gives seven identifying marks of a Gospel minister.

After this he then begins to address his issues. You will find his three issues in I Corinthians 5 and 6. His first issue is the prevalence of sexual immorality in the church at Corinth. This is addressed in I Corinthians 5:1-13. Instead of settling issues appropriately among themselves, they were taking one another to court. He is not saying there wouldn't be a time to make use of God ordained civil magistrates but he tells them their first movements are not to them but to one another, to settle these things among yourselves, if at all possible. So he brings out lawsuits and believers in I Corinthians 6:1-11. Then he deals with this matter of Christian liberty. Do I eat foods that are sacrificed to idols or not? What is my liberty? I know there are no such things as false gods because false gods are false gods, therefore when you bring food to a false god that's still food. Since that god isn't real can I eat something that has been given to a false god? Absolutely I can eat it because it's all false, but if my eating that causes my brother to stumble I'm at liberty to say 'no' to it. So he brings out the principles of Christian liberty in I Corinthians 6:12-20.

Then he begins to work through the questions they had sent to him. They sent him seven questions. Now this isn't totally consistent but by in large when studying the book of Corinthians and you want to know these questions the Apostle Paul will give it away. Let's look at I Corinthians 7:1-5 which says [1] *Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: "It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman."* [2] *But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband.* [3] *The husband should give to his wife*

*her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. [4] For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. [5] Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.*

So here is your first question but notice what he says at the beginning of verse 1, [1] *Now concerning the matters about which you wrote:* The way you can spot this as you work your way through the rest of the book of Corinthians is that Paul will usually introduce the things they wrote to him about with the statement “Now concerning...” These seven questions start with I Corinthians 7:1 and goes all the way through to I Corinthians 16:4. The first thing is about marriage, divorce and singleness. It’s a rich text in I Corinthians 7. The next is about food sacrificed to idols and Christian liberty in ministry and he now expounds on this in I Corinthians 8 through 10.

The next thing he addresses is head coverings and the discussion over the cultural recognition of a prostitute and a woman who is under authority in the context of a marital relationship. He handles that in I Corinthians 11:1-16. Then there is that definitive text about the Lord’s Supper that was being abused and misused. In fact Paul informed them that God had introduced discipline, some had died and some were sick because of the way that they were dishonoring the Lord and one another in what ought to be a time of spiritual growth and encouragement to one another. This is found in I Corinthians 11:17-34.

Then he addresses in a rich text the matter of spiritual gifts, Christian love and how to order worship. Gospel worship has Biblically defined order and Spirit propelled ardor. Paul will bring out the same thing here. Paul brings out how the love of God compels us. Then he says “As you assemble chaos in the name of joy should not rule in worship. Let everything be done decently and in order.” So ardor does not destroy order and order does not dampen ardor. That is only possible when God’s Word is followed and the Holy Spirit is at work within our lives. He lays out the extraordinary gifts such as tongues and healing. He talks about the ordinary gifts of hospitality, teaching, and administration. He addresses himself through all of those.

It’s no accident that in a place like Corinth, that they want to be known as the gifted ones. So the people exercising the extraordinary gifts and the public gifts were the ones being extolled. The Apostle Paul tells them not to be jealous of anyone because every gift is important. Sometimes the seemingly insignificant the gift is the more important. Then he goes into the church being like a body. He says that they think the visible gifts are the ones everyone should have and be applauded and then he gives the illustration of the body.

My illustration is that I got up this morning, took my shower, got my sermon out, prayed through it, worked through it, spent some time in prayer, got dressed and combed my hairs and sure enough every time I look down in the shower there is more hair there. My hair is falling out so I go look in the mirror and wonder how those hairs are doing. If my hair falls out will I live? Yes. I don’t remember standing in front of the mirror asking “I wonder how your liver is doing, Harry? I wonder if my liver falls out.” The invisible we don’t even think about but what’s more important? It’s the invisible.

One of my favorite illustrations of this was when I was at East Carolina and God was calling me to the ministry. I was reading through a couple of books on Billy Graham and I remember reading one that had to do with an interview Billy did where a question was asked about the success of his crusades. This was about in 1958. When Billy was asked about the immediate successes of the crusades he said “That’s easy” and everyone thought he would give the credit to George Beverly Shea or Cliff Barrows or say “My preaching, our pre-evangelism work, our follow up work...” but he didn’t say any of that. He actually gave the name of a woman who had their crusade schedule and she would go the week before the crusade, gets a hotel room, and prays and fasts the entire week for the crusade. Then during the crusade she would pray every day for the crusade. Then after the crusade she stays another week to pray for the follow. Billy said “That is who you need to talk to.” No one knew about her but they knew about these others publically involved in his crusades.

It is those invisible gifts that are important. That is what Paul is setting straight in I Corinthians 12. He not only talks of the spiritual gifts but he talks about the way they’re packaged, in love, the most excellent gift of all in I Corinthians 13. Then how is that downloaded into worship? That is covered in I Corinthians 14. So he talks about the manifestation of those gifts in love and the gathered worship of God’s people.

Then he gets to this glorious truth of the resurrection. He identifies its importance in I Corinthians 15. Then they wanted to know about the offerings that were to be gathered on the first day of the week, just as you have purposed to do. Then he concludes it with the epilogue in I Corinthians 16:5-23. If you work through this outline and this epistle there are seven things that I think are of great importance that will be manifested to you from it.

The first thing is that the Apostle Paul cannot wait to pray for them, greet them and then he immediately goes into the importance of the Gospel. In I Corinthians 1 Paul says “I did not come to baptize but to preach the Gospel.” Does that mean Paul jettisoned the Great Commission that says to make disciples, baptizing them? No, he is just saying that baptism is secondary. If you get baptism wrong or miss it for some reason, like the thief on the cross, you can still be saved, but if you get the Gospel wrong you can’t be saved. Baptism, church government, the Lord’s Supper, discipling, stewardship, collections, order of worship, all of those things are important but they are absolutely contingent upon and dependent upon us getting the Gospel right. I Corinthians 2:2 says [2] *For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.*

Then he gives us the crux of the Gospel. The word crux comes from a Latin word meaning cross. The crux of Christianity is the cross. The cross is where the love of God met the holiness of God to save sinners because of the love of God to the glory of God, through the grace of God. Do you want to see how sinful we are? Go look at the cross. For one time in all of history, man had God where they could put their hands on Him. There is our hearts. For one time in history you could say, hell was on earth at the cross, to save us. It was poured out on Christ who drank the cup to the bottom. It is there the Son of God was suspended between heaven and earth to satisfy the holiness of God, to take away the wrath of God, by removing the guilt of our sin and then giving us His perfect righteousness so that we are clothed for heaven.

The hymn so appropriately says, *At the cross, at the cross, where I first saw the Light and the burdens of my heart rolled away.* (I Corinthians 2:2) *For I decided to know*

*nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.* If that is not Christ on the cross then we have no hope. If Christ had not gone to the cross we have no hope. When Paul says this in I Corinthians 2:2 he is saying it doesn't matter if I talk to you about stewardship, how women ought to conduct themselves, what Christian liberty it or idols are, but everything I have talked with about has its roots at the cross. The Gospel of Christ is foundational and the cross is short hand for the Gospel.

What about the resurrection? The resurrection is meaningless if it wasn't for the cross. Praise the Lord that the resurrection is announcing the victory of the cross. What about the incarnation? Praise the Lord for the incarnation because if we didn't have it, we wouldn't have had the Lamb of God to go to the cross for us but He was born to go to the cross. Even when Peter would say "God forbid that You should go to Jerusalem and die" Jesus would say "Get thee behind me Satan. This is what I came for. You're doing the work of Satan to try to stop Me from that cross." So here in these opening chapters Paul is giving us the foundation of the Christian life – the Gospel. He is giving us the short hand of the Gospel which is the very essential of the Gospel which is Christ and Him crucified.

A third thing he deals with, in the midst of this, is Christian unity and diversity. Does God use people in your life? Yes and praise the Lord for these people, but while you value them, you respect them and you honor them. I would only tell you what Paul would say "Did Peter die for you? Did I die for you? Did I save you from your sins at the cross? Praise the Lord for every instrument that He uses but you are Christ and Christ is yours." The diversity in the body is glorious and isn't it wonderful how God fashioned certain people with certain personalities and gifts to be able to reach people someone else couldn't reach, to be able to disciple someone that someone else couldn't disciple. But those people never become our focus, so we don't say "I'm of Apollos, of Paul, of Peter." I am Christ and Christ is mine. I praise God for every one that is used to bring me to Christ. I praise God for every one that He uses to point me to Christ, but the unity of believers is not their sameness.

I have no problem with Gentile evangelism or others teaching me how I can be more effective in evangelizing African Americans or Jewish evangelism or churches around the heart languages because you have to be able to understand, but from then on I rejoice every time I see a church gather and you can't explain the church sociologically or demographically or culturally. Here is a people who are not a people and they become the people of God. They are not alike in their background, color, economically or where they are from. So you can't just say "That's the church of..." You have to say "Those are a people who are not a people." What made them a people? They are the people of God. They have one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God who is over all and through all. So Paul drives home diversity and praise God for it! We are not all eyes, or all hears or all noses in the body of Christ.

What would it be if we were all an eye? Just think of a 4,300 pound eye. What if we were all a head? What if we were all an arm? No! Even your arms aren't alike or your feet, both are still different. God has made this glorious diversity to bring into marvelous unity and the point of unity is our Savior, our Lord and the Holy Spirit who dwells within each one of us. Yes it's a little tough. How does the saying go? "Living above with the saints, won't that be glory, but living below with the saints I know that's a different story." That's why God put I Corinthians 13 in the Bible. Love is patient, kind,



long suffering, it doesn't keep count, it just serves. The great virtues are faith, hope and love. There is coming a day when there won't be hope because it will be realized. There is coming a day that there won't be faith for you'll see by sight, but love abides forever. Love in Christ and for Christ and for one another for they will know you're My disciples by your love for one another.

Then he brings out ministry faithfulness. Let's look at I Corinthians 3:5-15 says *[5] What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. [6] I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. [7] So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. [8] He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor. [9] For we are God's fellow workers. You (ya'll) are God's field (church), God's building. [10] According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. [11] For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. [12] Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw—[13] each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. [14] If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. [15] If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.*

In other words, one day I'll give an account for my ministry when I go before the Lord. My ministry is not what saves me. Even if I falter it doesn't mean I've lost my salvation. It does mean though that I built wood, hay and stubble and everything I did just burns up. If we do what is faithful to the Lord then we are putting gold, silver and precious jewels and when you throw the fire to the precious jewels it just makes them brighter. When you throw the fire to wood, hay and stubble it's gone, it burns. I may be saved but my ministry disappears because it was all about that which was transient and temporary instead of that which is substantial and glorious. So Paul gives the dynamic of what the church is to look like. It's a field that we're working on.

Then he goes on to say in I Corinthians 5:16-17 says *[16] Do you not know that you (ya'll) are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? [17] If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.* In I Corinthians 6 he'll talk about your personal body being the temple of the Holy Spirit but here he is saying the local church is a temple of the Holy Spirit. Look at that warning. God if I have to stand firm for the truth in a apostate church help me to be faithful but God do not allow me by personality, preference or my own sinfulness to destroy any local church. This is Your church. Do not let me destroy it. O God my God let me put gold, silver, and precious jewels. So Paul lays out for us ministry faithfulness, Christian maturity, and shows us how to be a pastor.

Just read this book. It is so interesting how Paul goes back and forth. It reminds me of that shaving cream commercial the way Paul does here – slap, slap, I needed that. Then he turns right around and encourages them after he sternly warns them. Watch the way Paul models ministry, mentors or addresses problems. He tells them you can't have a life style without a life love. You can't have a life styles that's Christian of a life love that's Christian unless you have a life view that's Christian. So I want you to think Christianly. Paul models and mentors them.

Then he makes this astounding, stunning statement. Here is what he says. The cross is where we're saved and those of you who deny the resurrection, if there is no resurrection for you then you're saying there is no resurrection for Christ, and if there is no resurrection for Christ then everything that we're doing is vain, false. In fact, I'm guilty of blasphemy if the resurrection is not true. If Christ is raised, He's the first fruits and you too will be raised. To deny the bodily resurrection of the believer is to deny the bodily resurrection of Christ. Witnesses after witnesses after witnesses declare it. God has revealed it. It was according to the Scripture and because He is risen He declares this victory. Because He is risen so will you. You'll have a new body for a new heavens and a new earth. He brings it to a conclusion by saying "Therefore my brethren be steadfast, be immovable, always abound in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil in the Lord is not in vain. Amen." Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You the time we could be in this marvelous Epistle. I just confess the breadth in the Old Testament to do in one sermon was overwhelming, the depth of this in the New Testament is overwhelming. Please help Your people here to take what has been given, first test it against the Word of God, and then secondly, Father, give them the ability to go deeper and wider in the unfathomable Word of God book by book by book for the Scriptures do not save us. They bring us to our Savior, Jesus, and in whose Name I pray, Amen.