

1 Corinthians Class 2 Transcript

Greetings, and welcome back to class number 2 in this series on FI Online on the book of **1 Corinthians**.

We hope you enjoyed the first class. We gave a background to the book of **1 Corinthians**, along with the first couple of verses. We'll make a good bit more headway in this class today.

Probably, for those of you who are familiar with these classes, you know that our typical format has been to answer questions at the beginning. Due to some technical issues we're not going to be able to do that for these first few classes, but, you are welcome to go ahead and send your questions in, and we will attempt to answer them a little bit later on. So thank you for your understanding with that.

As always, when we begin one of these classes, we do want God's guidance and direction. So, once again, if you will please, bow your heads and join me. We will pray and ask God's guidance.

[Prayer]

[2:11]

We're able to continue in this class where we left off last time. We made it through the first couple of verses, and again, remember, we ask you to be thinking about: what are the issues that Paul has to address here in Corinth?

We all know that the book tells us early on there was division within that congregation. But as we said, there are some issues that are causing that division, and until we address those issues, the division is simply going to continue on—because it isn't really a division that's the problem; the division is the result of the problem. So, let's go further here, and see what we need to consider.

Last time we read those first two verses where Paul describes his calling. He puts himself on, in many ways, the same level as the brethren in saying that, while he has an apostle's responsibility, that Jesus Christ sent him to Corinth because He wanted the people of Corinth to have the truth given to them through the apostle Paul. He also acknowledges that they too are called and are special, are set apart by God for His purpose. So, let's continue on.

A very typical statement that Paul makes—but again, we need to note it in [**1 Corinthians 1**] **verse 3**:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

This word *grace* is a magnificent word. *Barclay* says this:

Paul here uses a favorite word of his. It is *charisma*—or as we have it here: *charis*—which means “a gift freely given to a man, a gift which he did not deserve and which he could never by himself have earned.”

It's a very powerful word. Sometimes we limit the concept of *grace*. We've sometimes said—I've heard people say—“Well, *grace* means ‘unmerited pardon.’” Well, yes, that's included, but *grace* is a much bigger word than that. We won't take the time to go through in detail. We've done that in other classes before. But we should understand that *grace* is a very big word, and it

describes the way God deals with His people.

[4:22]

The definition that I've given to the students here at FI, I hope you will find helpful. It is: "A gift given from the goodness of the giver without regard to the worthiness of the recipient." I think that's an important concept: "A gift given from the goodness of the giver without regard to the worthiness of the recipient."

The emphasis that we would see in the word is really upon the character and the motive of the Giver, rather than on the recipient or even on the gift itself. God gives many different gifts, as we'll see in this book. And they are all given by *grace*, because God is a generous giver, not because any of us deserve any of the gifts that we have received.

Now again, keep that in mind as we look at the book of **1 Corinthians**. Paul is reminding them that everything they have that has any real value to it—eternal value—is a gift that God's given. They didn't produce it themselves. They didn't bring their gift to God. He gave them these things because He is a giver.

That also tells us something about the attitude that God would want to see in us as His people. If we're to have the mind of Jesus Christ, and the Godhead—the Father and the Son—are givers, then that really should be our approach too. And again, we see that God gives without first stopping to consider: "Is this person really worthy of the gift?" They give because this is the heart of God. He's a giver, and if we're going to have that same mind, that should be a part of our thinking too.

[6:03]

Now admittedly, Paul uses the same intro in all of his epistles, or virtually all of his epistles. So, yes, it is in a sense a repetition, but it always has meaning. It isn't something just to take as if: "Oh, it doesn't have any significance to it."

He says *grace* and *peace*. The word for *peace* is *eirēnē*. It means: "to bring together, to unite." And again, obviously in the context of **1 Corinthians**, that's an important concept. It was interestingly used as a word—doctors would use the word to describe the joining together of two parts of a bone that had been broken. And it forms a new joint, and—not a joint, but a new connection—and when you study it, you find that with all that goes on, actually that spot becomes stronger than it was before.

So, the kind of thing we're talking about here, when we use the term *peace*, is a "bringing together of things that were separate." Now God called all kinds of different individuals. When we see this Church in Corinth, or even if we look at the Church today, we see that God has brought people from all kinds of different backgrounds. He's brought people who are successful in business. He's brought people who have lived their entire lives in poverty. He's brought all kinds of different people—highly educated, poorly educated—people who have all kinds of different backgrounds come together to make one body. Again, that's going to be emphasized here.

But it makes the point that God is bringing together people who probably in normal life would never have even come in contact with each other. And yet God is making one body, one family, out of those diverse people. So the concept of *peace* here is not just kind of a nice word. It's not just a word that means, "Well, I hope you don't fight each other when you come together." There's more to it than that.

In fact, it's very similar to the Hebrew word *shalom*, which, while we often translate it *peace*, really means: "All that goes into making 'peace' in a person's life"—their needs being met, their fears being put away—a lack of conflict, yes, but much more than that. So that's all embodied in this.

[1 **Corinthians 1:3**] *Grace to you and peace (and then it's) from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (Both members of the Godhead.)*

Again, as a side point, we note that the Holy Spirit is not mentioned as a person because the Holy Spirit isn't a person. It is the power by which God gives *grace* and *peace*, but that *grace* and *peace* comes from the Father and Jesus Christ.

[8:42]

So, Paul then says in **verse 4**:

I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus,

Okay. Paul says, "When I think of you, I always thank God."

Now remember, Paul is going to be correcting some serious problems in Corinth. So he begins—and this isn't just buttering people up—he begins by saying, "I want you to know that when I go to God and I pray about you, which I do, I thank God for you. I thank Him for every last one of you—that He's brought you, He's made you a part of His body. I am thankful to God. Now, that doesn't mean you're perfect. It doesn't mean I can go to God and say, 'Well, these people have got it made.' No. But I see in each of those, Jesus Christ dwelling. I see the spirit of God, transforming and making these people the people of God." So, he says, "I thank God always in that way."

I wonder sometimes—and I've asked our students before—when people think of me, how many people thank God? How many people think to thank God for me? How many people thank God for you? We should be the kind of people who are living in such a way that, when others think of us, what comes to mind is thankfulness and appreciation. "My life is enriched by that person, and I really appreciate that God called them in this age to be a part of that Body." That's a wonderful thing to think about. It's very important for us to come in that way.

[10:15]

But he says, *I thank...God always concerning you for the grace (okay, the many manifold ways in which God gives these gifts to you, it says,) which was given to you by Christ Jesus.*

That's perfectly okay. It's not wrong. But the preposition that's there in the Greek, is *en*, *e-n*, which normally is translated *in*. So, it's the grace given to you *in Christ Jesus*—that as long as we live—we talked last time briefly about the sphere of influence of Jesus Christ in our lives—that we can live within that sphere of influence, or we can go outside of it and live in the sphere of influence of the god of this world. But we are offered the opportunity to dwell within that influence of Jesus Christ, and within that, there are all kinds of gifts that God gives. We don't deserve them. But God gives them.

He gives insight. He gives wisdom. He gives hope. He gives strength that we wouldn't have on our own. He gives us the ability to do so many things. I hope we recognize that. I hope as Christians we recognize what an amazing gift it is to dwell within the sphere of influence of Jesus

Christ. That changes life a great deal.

I'm a fan, in some ways, of TED Talks. Some of you are aware of those. But one of the things that you will always see in a TED Talk is that the emphasis is on what we as humans can do. God isn't a part of it. It's what we as humans can do. And as humans, there are many things we can and should do. But, they're leaving something out that's very, very important. You and I should not leave that out.

We dwell within the sphere of influence of Jesus Christ; then, we have amazing gifts that God gives to us. And when we walk away from that sphere of influence, when we remove ourselves by our wrong thoughts and actions, then we're also cutting ourselves off from those gifts. And that's important to keep in mind.

[12:14]

As we're going to see—and I'll bring up one of the issues now that we talked about—we're going to see the Corinthians had a problem with pride. Pride is a very, very serious problem. They had pride about their wealth, their knowledge, their gifts, their sophistication. But Paul says, "Those aren't the things I'm thankful for. That's not what makes me thankful when I think of you."

He's thankful that God has so freely extended to them gifts that they didn't deserve. And that's true today too. That's not a put-down of them. But Paul sees this in a different way. These people, apparently, were seeing the gifts they got from God as something that made them special. I don't mean "special" in the sense of being God's people. I mean "special" in the midst of God's people, like: "I'm a little bit better than some of these people are." And that creates all kinds of problems.

I would say—and this is one of two issues that I hope you will consider as we go through the book of

1 Corinthians. I think you will find the issue of pride coming up over and over again. Oh, it's perhaps in the background. It's often not labeled as pride. But a perceptive person is going to recognize, "Oh, yes, that does have to do with pride." I hope that even all of us, from time to time, stop and look at ourselves and note that sometimes the things that we do even today are done out of personal pride. And, that's not the way we're supposed to be.

Several years ago, there was a—we were having a particular program of training for some who would come in, and Mr. Dave Register was giving a presentation on pride. And, I had thought about giving a sermon that particular Sabbath on the same subject. But after I heard his presentation, I said, "Well, no, I don't need to cover it again." But in the process, I came across a fascinating quote about pride. It actually is traced back to the Roman Catholic writer Augustine. We don't normally quote Roman Catholic writers, but I think in this case, Augustine got it right. He said, "Pride is the sin that is so powerful, it changed angels into demons."

That's sobering to realize that, when you look at what took place, it was pride that turned the fallen angels from obedience to God to being demons. If it can affect the angelic world that way, how powerful is it for you and me? How dangerous is it? And how likely is it that Satan is going to play on that human weakness? So it's a very important concept to keep in mind.

[15:03]

Okay. So Paul goes on: "I thank God for what He's given you in Christ Jesus. I thank Him,"

5 *that you were enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge,*

He's basically going to tell the Corinthian Church that they've been given a tremendous amount by God. And, he looks at them—and now, again, there's something important there. The fact that God has blessed them in these ways can easily be seen as at least a certain degree of approval. God is not rejecting them, even though problems exist in that congregation. He's giving them many gifts. He is blessing them in many ways, but He's requiring them to use those gifts in the right way.

So, he says, *you're enriched in everything by Him*. Don't forget the Source of the gifts. And then he goes on and talks about *in all utterance and all knowledge*.

The knowledge that Christianity brings is a unique knowledge. It's not something that's extant in the world around us. Probably like me, many of you, when you came to the Church of God, recognized pretty quickly that much of what we focus upon is education. Our messages on the Sabbath, generally speaking, are educational. There are things that teach us. We come to church and we learn. We pick up new information. Those of you that are listening to these classes, you're doing it so that you can learn. Education is a value that you have embraced, and that's a key value within the Church of God. Christianity is, in many ways, a reeducation. It's knowledge that's not generally available in the world. It's not the knowledge the world accepts. The world, as we'll see further, even in this chapter and the next, looks upon the knowledge that you and I consider precious as foolishness, as of no value. They fail to understand the importance of it. We don't dare fail to understand that.

But he said, in the Corinthian Church, the subject of knowledge is going to come up. In fact, when we get to **chapter 11**, for example—or no, it is **chapter 8**, I believe it is—where he says: *We know that we all have knowledge*. And then he makes an interesting statement: *Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies*—or builds up.

Knowledge is good to have, but knowledge can be misused. Knowledge coupled with pride doesn't produce unity. It produces something else. So, don't forget that the knowledge that you have comes to you from God. It's by Him that He's enriched you with that knowledge. It's not knowledge you brought to God; it's knowledge that He gives to you, collectively—to all of us, not just to individuals.

[17:52]

When he talks about *utterance*, it has to do with the speech, the ability to express things. So he basically is saying: "You are able to express things effectively, probably more than you could before." You are often in speaking—or you hear messages that are "inspired." Yes, God does that. Don't forget that it is God Who is doing the inspiring. The knowledge, the effectiveness in communicating it didn't come from you.

Verse 6 *even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you,*

What is this *testimony of Christ*? Well, *testimony* is that which a witness gives. There is a witness of Jesus Christ living in you. As we see you changing, we see you growing, we know that that shows Jesus Christ is alive in you. He's living there. You are different people because Jesus Christ is living in you.

And he goes on to say:

[Verse 7] *so that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ,*

He says, “You’re not short-changed in any way when it comes to the gifts that God gives—that Jesus Christ provides to His Church.” We’ll see more about those gifts when we come to **chapter 12**, especially. But, he says, “In all of these gifts, you don’t come short. It’s not like we can look at some other congregation out here: ‘Oh, they have all these gifts, but you know, the Corinthian Church, God isn’t giving them very much.’”

No, they have all these wonderful gifts, and they are using some of them well and some of them not so well. So, we’re going to talk about those gifts. But, he said, “You haven’t come short. There’s nothing missing there. It’s not like you need something more that Jesus Christ isn’t providing.”

[19:35]

But he also talks about an attitude that they have: *eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ*.

Now, that has to refer to Jesus Christ’s return, because He’d already been here once. He didn’t need to be revealed in a physical sense here. So they are looking forward, eagerly, to the return of Jesus Christ. That attitude of “eager expectation” about Christ’s return tells us something about the way we, as Christians, ought to live our lives.

Did you ever come across somebody who, every time you see them, it’s, they’re down and they’ve got this distressed look on their face? Oh, sometimes we all go through difficult times. There are people, it seems like no matter what happens, they’ve always got some kind of a complaint about it. It’s just not quite right. “Oh, I didn’t like this facility.” Or, “My room at the Feast wasn’t what I wanted it to be.” And on and on it goes. And they miss the wonderful things that are there.

We should be a people whose basic outlook is *eager expectation*. We’re looking forward to something so much better. We’re not just focused today. Again, if we lose that *eager expectation* about the revelation of Jesus Christ, we tend to look at the world around us, and we focus on those things—what I can acquire, or what problems exist, or how I have to change the world today. I need to be a do-gooder who goes out there and, you know, makes the world safe for turtles.

Nah, that’s really not our calling. Not that we don’t—that we are abusive, or we don’t care about those things. But there’s a balance, a perspective that we have on those things. This world, as it exists today—whatever way we can make things better, that’s just fine. But it isn’t *this world* that we’re looking forward to. It’s the return of Jesus Christ.

[21:22]

And he goes on to say, **verse 8**:

who will also confirm (or establish) you to the end, —

So, the One who has begun this process in you is going to continue to work with you to the end. You may want to tie in [in] your notes **Philippians 1 verse 6**. It’s a memory verse we sometimes use that says:

... He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ: (King James Version)

It’s a very encouraging verse. It tells us God will not give up on us. We can give up. We can walk

away. Sometimes there are situations that people walk away for a period of time, and God mercifully wakes them up, and they come back again. God doesn't give up on them. We've had people who have returned to God's truth who walked away from it over 20 years ago, and yet, after a period of time, they want to come back. And I've talked to some of those people who say, "What was wrong with me? I don't know why I did that. That was terrible. I feel like I'm back home." And that's wonderful! We look forward to that. People can come back because God "establishes and confirms to the end."

What is He going to do with us?

[1 Corinthians 1:8] —*that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

God is working with us to refine [us], so that when Jesus Christ returns, we can be presented as "clean." We can be presented as—there's not something people can accuse us of doing wrong. We're blameless before man. And God Himself can say that we've been forgiven for the things that we came short of.

Now, this is true for those people 2000 years ago. They went to their graves, and the next day for them is *the day of our Lord Jesus Christ*. For us, we're still awaiting that day. But at that time—God is working in our lives today, to bring us to that point so that when that comes, we're blameless before God.

He goes on to say:

[1 Corinthians 1:9] *God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Okay, *our Lord* means "the Master," the One who's in charge, the One who guides and directs our lives. But it's interesting, the Greek is actually [in] a little bit different order there. It literally says: *faithful is God*. There is an emphasis that is placed there. He tells us all of these things. This is what God intends to do with us, and *faithful is the God* who intends to do that. He doesn't lack power. He doesn't lack ability. He *is faithful*.

[23:54]

... *by whom you were called*—

Now again, that tells us all of us are called by the same God, not necessarily by the same methodology. But we are all called. Our calling is equal. There's no one who is called because God says, "This is a special person. I've got to have them." God calls. Each of us is called in that way. We are summoned in that way.

And then he says that we are *called into the fellowship of His Son*. Let's look at that word for a moment. The word *fellowship* is the Greek word *koinōnia*. We can translate it "partnership" or "participation." You see, sometimes when we read "fellowship," we just think of, "Well, after services we fellowship with one another." Well, yes, we do. But, there's more to this word than just simply: "We get together and enjoy talking for an hour or so."

This word is tied to the word for "a house," for "a household," and it means we are a part of the household. We're partnering; we're a person who participates, who's carrying on. You know that in your own household each person has certain functions that they carry out. It may be different in different households. I know one household that—very fine people, where the husband really enjoys cooking, and the lady really enjoys working in the yard. Now that may not be the way you

do it in your household. It's not the way we do in ours. But at the same time, it's perfectly legitimate, no problem—but each person contributes. It's not like one person does all the work, and everybody else sits around. Well, that's kind of the concept of the fellowship that we're called into. We are “participants” in the work that God is doing. We are “taking part” in this.

Another definition calls it “a friendly participation with others who are called.” It implies working together. You and I are not just called to warm a seat. We're not just called to come in and be sponges who absorb whatever the Church has to offer, and then go our way. We are called to be participants, at whatever level that's possible. Some people perhaps are called with physical infirmities, or they're so aged they really are not able to do that much as far as physical service. That's all right. Paul's going to show that they have a function in the Church too, and it's just as valuable as anyone else's function. God has called us to be participants in the Church of God, in the Work of God.

[26:28]

You know, years ago we were told in Ambassador College that your personal growth is directly dependent on how much your heart is in this Work. It seems like we haven't talked a lot about “the Work” in the same way as we used to. But that Work is still there, and it's still important, and our hearts need to be in it. We were told that at a time when all the responsible positions in the Work were taken by mature men, and in some cases, ladies who were fulfilling responsibilities. And, as students we sat there thinking: “Well, okay, that's nice to know our heart needs to be in the Work.” And through the years, we'd pray about it, and it's amazing the doors that God has opened in those years since then.

What doors does God have in mind for you? You don't know and neither do I. But your personal growth is directly connected to how much your heart is in the Work. We are called to be participants, and that's a very important concept for us.

Move on to **verse 10**. He says:

Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (There's that concept again.), that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

Now, Paul's words here indicate a certain level of concern. He's pleading. It isn't just a matter—I mean he doesn't come along and say, “I'm an apostle. I'm telling you this is the way it is. Shape up or hit the highway.” No, Paul doesn't do that. He pleads with God's people. He treats them as if, of all things, they were his brothers and sisters. They were part of his family. You know that you don't have much authority to order your brothers and sisters around. If you've ever tried it, you know it doesn't work well.

Well, Paul sees God's people in that way. They're his brothers and sisters. He has a responsibility before Jesus Christ. But they're his brothers and sisters so he says, “I'm pleading with you. Please, consider this.” And he says, “I do it in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” When you stop and think about that as a Christian, what more powerful exhortation could there be in your life than for somebody to say, “I'm coming to you in the name of Jesus Christ. Please, consider this.” Wouldn't you as a Christian say, “Hmmm, that's really important. That's not something I can take lightly. That's something I have to consider very, very seriously.”

[29:01]

So Paul talks about divisions. And we see he says, “There're *divisions* among you.” I highlighted

the word *divisions* there. The word is *schismata*. It means “to split, to tear.” It is the condition resulting from splitting or tearing. It is “rents” or “tears.” As one puts it, it’s not simply a “smooth dividing.” It implies a ripping apart and the consequent damage done in the process. Something is ripped. It’s like trying to rip a piece of cloth. It’s torn in such a way it’s almost impossible to put it back. You can’t just weave it back or stitch it back together. That’s the kind of word this is.

And Paul says, “I’ve heard that there are divisions among you.” It’s terrible. He sees this as a real serious problem. This is what’s taking place. But I want you also to note something else. I want you to note that the division is *among you*. In other words, the division is taking place in Corinth. It’s not a division where people are going out and forming new Church organizations. We’re talking about division within the congregation. We’re talking about a situation where some people in a congregation just really don’t associate with other people in that congregation, where they kind of have their own little cliques, their own little separate groups. It can be caused by all kinds of different things, and we’ll see some things here. But that’s what Paul is talking about, people within the congregation who kind of view others in the congregation as different than they are.

Now, again, for many of you who are watching this, you can look back over some periods in modern Church history when sadly that occurred in the congregations of the Church of God today, when people were choosing up sides and ultimately, in a couple of those cases, ended up going off in different directions. But, you can still have division in a congregation that doesn’t lead to an organizational split. It just leads to people being separate from one another. How do you have one family, one body, when people are separate?

I was taught when we went to Ambassador College that division is the most serious problem a congregation can have. And it certainly is a serious problem. But again, I think we have to look beyond the end result, division, and look at the causes. And interestingly, the causes are given right here in this verse.

Notice what we highlight here.

10 ...you (need to) *be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.*

Paul is saying the divisions are taking place because we have different values. We’re judging by a different set of values. People are saying: “This is important,” and someone else is saying: “No, that’s important.” And as we begin to judge things based upon those values, we are coming to different decisions. We’re coming to different judgments.

[32:09]

We may think of “judgment”— sometimes we think of “judgment” as a condemnation, and that’s not really the biblical sense of the word. Yes, it can include condemnation, but think about another type of judgment. Suppose, for example, you went to an art show, and there are judges who are judging the art. They’re not judging to point out which are the worst pieces. They’re judging the good things. What is it that’s enjoyable? What’s first place? What’s second place? They look at those and evaluate on good terms. That’s judgment too. And God judges in that way as well. We’ll see that as we go a little further again in **1 Corinthians**.

But what happens if two people are judging by a different standard? Suppose you have an art show, and some of the art is done in charcoal—black and white. Another is done in color. And one of the judges is judging based upon, let’s say, the accuracy of the pictures that are there, whether in black and white or color. And the other judge is judging: only those things that are

color are the good things; everything else is not. Well, you are going to come to different judgments. You can't see things in the same way.

If you're judging, for example—as many of us have to do from time to time—to purchase an automobile, if you judge by different standards, you're going to come to different conclusions. Someone may judge by, “I want a car that looks really impressive.” Okay, there are a lot of cars that look impressive that really aren't built very well. There may be someone else who judges by, “I want a car that's designed and engineered very, very well to last for a long time.” Okay, engineers can design really ugly vehicles. So, what's your standard for judging?

Now those are very physical things, but there are spiritual values we're to judge by too. And what we're finding in Corinth is that the brethren there are judging by different sets of values. They're allowing wrong values to come in, and they're making their judgments as a result of that. Well, if I judge one way and you judge another way—about a spiritual matter—the inevitable result of that is division. So, if we don't get back to judging by the right standard and judging the same way—thinking the same way about those values—then we're going to continue to have division. The only way to solve the problem of division is to solve the wrong thinking that's leading to it. So Paul is going to address that as we go further.

He says he wants us to *be perfectly joined in mind and judgment*.

What was taking place in Corinth? Well, we'll see in a moment, as we go forward, that people were taking sides, and they were choosing heroes. They were saying who they were going to follow, and who they think is really the servant of God that you ought to follow, and who, perhaps, was maybe not quite so good.

[35:14]

It's interesting that when this kind of thing takes place, there's a whole process. I gave a presentation a number of years ago about conflict resolution. And one of the things that you learn as you study it is: there's a whole series of steps that take place when a conflict between people begins. In the very first step there's kind of an irritation, but nobody says anything about it. It's just kind of held down, and you're maybe irritated about something that the other person says or does, but you don't really say anything about it. You just kind of try to pass it off.

But as time goes by and they continue to do something that irritates you, it begins to get worse, and ultimately you reach that stage where there's an explosion. Perhaps you've had one of those experiences where somebody just seems to erupt all over you about something, and you think: “What did I say? All I did was some simple thing here.” And that's because there was a tension building up all along.

But one of the steps that's really interesting to me—one of the steps that you find—is called the “Search for Allies” step. And that step is where one person tells their story to a friend, to someone else. And basically says, “If I tell you the story, don't you agree I'm right?” And when the other person only hears part of the story, then oftentimes they will [say], “Yeah, you're right, and the other person is wrong.” They haven't heard the whole story.

This is why we're told in the book of **Proverbs** that: “He that's first in his own cause seems just, but a good man, a righteous man comes back and examines a little bit more deeply.” You need to be careful. Otherwise, you begin to take sides. This is the part of conflict.

Now it goes on beyond that, and I don't have time to go through that. But, the cycle or the process of conflict can be stopped anywhere along the process, but very often people don't stop

it. And ultimately it leads to division. It can be in a family. It can be at work. It can be in any number of environments, and it can be in a congregation. Sometimes there are people who talk with one another, not because they're trying to figure out what's right, but because they want allies. They want affirmation. They want approval. And that's not the right way to go about this. So, Paul says: "We need to be careful about this."

[37:31]

So, let's go further here. He says, [**1 Corinthians 1**] **verse 11**:

For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you.

Now this does several things. Paul is telling them that he's not just saying something that's hearsay. He's been told. He's been informed, and he tells them who informed him.

I've had the situation sometimes, and maybe you have too, where you confront somebody about an issue that's a problem. And the first thing they say is, "Who told you?"—as if somehow that makes a difference. Paul just—he takes that weapon away from them. He says, "Here's where I heard it. I heard it from Chloe, Chloe's household."

Now we don't know much about Chloe. It's a female name, and speculation has been that she may well have been a deaconess in one of the congregations there, or in Corinth itself. She may have been one of those. But she would have been an individual who is respected, an individual that everybody could say: "You know, she's not a gossip. She's not somebody who just runs to tell every bad thing that happens." Chloe is the kind of person that, if there's any way for her to help you resolve it, she will. But, if it gets out of hand, if it reaches the point where she can't help in that way, and she recognizes people need help, she's going to go try to get them help. Chloe doesn't come and say, "Paul, get over here and straighten these other people out." She says, "There's a problem. There is a difficulty here. There are contentions."

The word that's used for *contention* is an interesting one too. It means "a conflict resulting from rivalry and discord; always saying bad things about one another; never having a good word to say to one another; to express differences of opinion with at least some measure of antagonism or hostility; to argue; to quarrel." It's that kind of a sense to it.

[39:31]

Now again, I think all of us have a duty—and this is one of the wonderful things about Scripture. Scripture should be for all of us "a mirror." It's the kind of thing where we look into it, and we see "us." We look at ourselves and say, "Okay, is that talking about me? Am I one of those people who, no matter what happens, I just can't seem to say anything good? I've always got a complaint about something, no matter what it is."

Well, if so, maybe you need to look at your heart—your attitude. There is something not right there that you need to examine. If we have that attitude toward other people—if we just can't seem to say something good about some people—we always think negatively whenever their name comes up—(See, Paul said, "Whenever I think of you, I thank God.") if you think of people and something negative comes up, maybe something is wrong that needs to be resolved.

But he says, again, "This is taking place," and you may note again the last two words, "*among you*." It's taking place within the congregation, not different groups antagonistic with each other, but within the congregation these contentions are there. But also note one other phrase that

Paul uses early in that verse. He says, *my brethren*. Paul again, though he acknowledges the problem, recognizes: “You’re my brethren; you’re my family; you’re my brothers and sisters, and I’m very concerned about this.” It’s a wonderful approach that he says.

Now he begins to give examples. He says here in **verse 12**:

Now I say this, that each of you says, “I am of Paul,” or “I am of Apollos,” or “I am of Cephas,” or “I am of Christ.”

What are we seeing here? Well, we see individuals choosing heroes. That’s kind of the term that’s used. They’re in the Church. They’re all in the Church, and all of these people are ministers in the Church—at least Paul, Apollos, and Cephas—or, that’s another name, an Aramaic name, for Peter. All of those people are ministers in the Church, and yet they’re choosing up sides. Why would you do that? There are certain ones who had an appeal to certain ones in the congregation.

[41:43]

Now, again, what you really have to understand here is: there’s a certain level of pride involved. In choosing a hero, you’re choosing that the one that you follow is actually a little bit superior to these others that other people listen to, which makes you a little bit superior because after all, you’ve judged that: “This one is the one we ought to be following.”

Who followed Paul? Well, Paul came from a Hebrew background—Jewish background. He was a scholar. He probably appealed to those who had more of a scholarly bent to things. When you read through Paul’s epistles, there’s a great deal of theology that’s there. He was a deep thinker, and there are people for whom that is really appealing. So, they’re saying, “Well, I’m going to follow Paul where he leads.”

Then there are those who said, *I am of Apollos*. Now, we haven’t covered Apollos, but if you remember the story in the book of **Acts**, Apollos was a Jew from Alexandria—extremely well-educated, very eloquent, a man of very eloquent speech. And, he had come to Ephesus. He had been a disciple of John the Baptist. He came to Ephesus. Aquilla and Priscilla had educated him further in the truth. And, we don’t know all that took place there, but he became a believer in Jesus Christ. He became a Christian, and then he went to Corinth to be of help to the people there. Apollos was one of those golden-tongued orators that you just love listening to. I mean he is so fascinating.

[43:24]

I remember one speaker we used to have in the Church—he’s dead now—but [he] was just a tremendously eloquent speaker. I remember listening to him give a description of the bombing run of the Enola Gay, the B-29 that dropped the first atomic bomb in Japan. He took probably a half hour describing what was taking place. And in that description, you could just sit there, and you almost felt like you were sitting in a jump seat in the bomber. And you could feel the vibrations and see what was going on—a wonderfully eloquent speaker.

Well, okay, that’s a wonderful gift, and I think we today we have a number of very, very interesting speakers in the Church. Not everyone is. Not every minister is an eloquent speaker. I followed a minister in one particular case where he wasn’t particularly a great speaker, but he was probably the greatest example of serving God’s people I’ve ever seen. And the people didn’t—I mean, they came to Sabbath services, and the sermon wasn’t all that inspiring and exciting. It really was okay—because they knew this man loved them, and cared for them, and

would do anything on earth to help them.

So, yes, we have different gifts, and some people are more eloquent than others. So, these people were looking at Apollos and saying, “Now Apollos, that’s the guy that I really see God inspiring.”

And then there are those that said, “Well, no, I’m following Peter. You know, Peter is one of the original Twelve. He was there with Christ. Paul says Christ taught him—yeah, we know that—but you know, Peter was right there. I mean, he is ‘the company man.’ He is the man who knows the way Jesus did it. I can listen to Peter.”

And then there’s a group that says: *I’m of Christ*. We can really take that a couple of different ways. I often—for years I took it as, “Well, here are the people saying: *I’m of Paul, I am of Apollos, I’m of Peter*. And there were those who kind of turned their nose up and said, ‘Well, I follow Jesus Christ.’” Possibly. That could be. I have no doubt. I have found people occasionally who approached things in that way.

But, I have a feeling that there may be something else here. Because when this kind of division begins to separate a congregation, very often there’s a group of people in that congregation who are looking around saying, “What’s going on here? Why is all this happening?” And I can imagine that group saying, “Aren’t we all supposed to be following Jesus Christ? I mean isn’t that who Paul, Apollos, and Peter are following? Isn’t that the model? We’re not choosing heroes here. Our Hero is already established—it’s Jesus Christ.” I think it could be that. We could take it either way. We can’t prove it. I suppose someday we can ask Paul and find out. Maybe it’s a little of both.

[46:16]

But, the point is that, yes, we are supposed to be following Jesus Christ. And as he will say in the next verse:

[Verse 13] *Is Christ divided?*—

Have you somehow chopped Jesus Christ up and divided Him into these different categories? Jesus Christ is the living Head of the Church. Does He inspire one but not another? Does He inspire Paul but not Peter, but not Apollos? Doesn’t Jesus Christ work in all three?

Now it’s interesting to note that of all three of those men that are mentioned there, other than Jesus Christ, none of them were trying to get a following. None of them were saying, “Follow me. I’ve got it right, and don’t worry about those other guys.” They were co-workers. We’ll see that as we get into **chapter 3**. Paul talks about the relationship between his work and Apollos’ work. And how that each of them had a function, but God’s the One who provides the growth. So, these men were not seeking a following.

If you ever come across someone who’s seeking a following, be very careful. That’s not the way God works. That’s not the way Jesus Christ leads His Church.

So, **verse 13**:

Is Christ divided?—

Or “has Christ been divided?” Or, as another translation puts it, *Does Christ stand divided up?*

—*Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?*

Now those are ridiculous questions. They're questions that immediately cause someone to say, "Well, of course, not. No. What good would it do to be baptized in the name of Paul? Paul can't give me forgiveness. I have to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ." So he said, "Why would you choose me?" Paul is deliberately saying, "Don't choose me as your hero. I'm not the one you follow. You follow Jesus Christ."

[47:56]

He says, **verse 14**:

I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, 15 lest anyone should say that I had baptized in my own name. 16 (Oh) Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas. Besides, I do not know whether I baptized any other.

Now we don't know all the details of what's taking place here. But Paul is going to make the point in the next verse that he wasn't sent to be a baptizer. He was sent as an apostle with a message. And there are others who would carry out the function of baptizing, and so on. That seems to be the way Jesus Christ did it as well. And we're told that He did not baptize, but His disciples did the baptizing. So, that may be the way Paul chose to do things as well, although he says he did baptize a few, probably those very early ones.

I can imagine this. As you know, having served in the field ministry for a number of years, I sometimes come across people who say, "Oh, do you remember me?" And I think, "Well, you look familiar." And then they'll say, "You baptized me." And I think, "Oh, good. I'm glad. But I still don't remember. It's been too many years." We don't—you know, when you've baptized a lot of people, you don't always remember every last one. Though each one is special, though each one you've spent some time talking with and counseling, as time goes by, you may not remember every one.

So I see that with Paul saying here, "You know, it wasn't my practice to baptize. I baptized these, not anybody else." And he said, "Oh, wait a minute—yes (**verse 16**), I did baptize the household of Stephanas." Okay. So, again, isn't that the way you and I would do things as we're trying to recall something? We'd say, "Well, I didn't do—oh, wait a minute—yes I did; I did this." And that's what I see Paul writing here.

[49:34]

Now that also tells me—again, it's an inference—but it kind of tells me that I think Paul was writing this letter very rapidly. There was a need to be addressed, and it isn't some long-thought-out thing. He's going through it very rapidly, and whoever his amanuensis was—the one who wrote all these things down—is writing as rapidly as he can, kind of taking dictation. And that's kind of the way it came out, and Paul left it that way.

Verse 17, he says:

For Christ did not send me to baptize (He didn't send me to be a baptizer.), but to preach the gospel,—

Now we move on to something here that, again, is subtle, but Paul is making a very important point.

—not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect.

Oh. So he said, "I was sent to—my job wasn't to baptize." Now why does he make a point?

Well, I haven't heard it in many, many years, and that's probably because of the passage of time. But every once in a while—years ago, I used to be in southern Oregon and some of those areas where Mr. Armstrong had been many years before, and occasionally you'd come across someone who said, "Well, I was baptized by Mr. Armstrong." And okay—well, that's nice. You know, that's fine. And I certainly would not denigrate that in any way. But, the person that baptized you really—is not really all that important.

The man that baptized me left the Church years ago over some heresy and is no longer alive. So, I can't claim some great fame to it.

What do we have? Are we going to gain some kind of credibility because: "After all, I was baptized by Paul"? No, Paul says, "I didn't baptize people. I didn't do that. But what I was sent to do was to preach the gospel." So, Paul is changing the focus. There must've been some people who thought this, "Who you're baptized by is important." And Paul is saying, "No, it's not really important. But, you know what I was sent to do? I was sent to give a gospel." Now, again, the gospel is the "good news" message. It's the message of salvation. It's the message of what God is doing, His whole plan for all people. And this is something that Paul was sent to do to the gentile world.

[51:46]

We won't read it here, but Paul in other places talks about how he considered the opportunity to take the gospel to the gentile world as being one of the greatest blessings God ever gave him. Most Jews wanted nothing to do with gentiles. That was a part of their upbringing. But Paul says, "I consider it one of the greatest blessings in my life to be able to take the gospel message to the gentile world."

Probably some of you have had experiences—not quite in that sense, because we're not commissioned to take the gospel to the gentile world in that way—but as you get to know people in the Church that God has called who are from a totally different background than you, people you would have never met in this life if it hadn't been for God's calling, so many times you look at that and think about how much those people have enriched your life.

I grew up in the Midwest, and I thought basically everybody was pretty much like Midwesterners. I very quickly learned, no, that's not true. People are very, very different, and they approach things differently.

One of our early assignments in the ministry was to serve in the San Francisco area, and we met people from all over the world, all kinds of different backgrounds. And it was such a joy to be with those people and learn what their lives had been. Some of you have had the opportunity to travel internationally, and you've met brethren in those other areas, and you just absolutely fall in love with them. They are just such special people, and you never—your paths would never have crossed if it hadn't been for God's truth.

So, Paul is saying, "I wasn't sent to baptize people, but I was sent by Jesus Christ to bring the good news to the gentile world, and specifically, Corinth." But he said, "I wasn't sent to impress you. I wasn't sent so that you could choose me as a hero. I wasn't sent with the wisdom of words. I wasn't sent to come to you with these magnificent philosophical truths. I was sent with a basic simple message, which some people are going to look at and ridicule." But he says, "If I came with this magnificent presentation, all the bells and whistles, all my PowerPoint in line, you might be missing something that's more important." He says, *lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect.*

[54:15]

Now, I briefly mentioned *cross* here. The word is *stauros*, and it basically means an “upright post” or a “pole.” It was a word that was used to describe a “fence post.” It could mean other things. We just simply don't make a big issue out of what the shape of the instrument was that Christ was crucified upon. Was it an upright pole? Was it like a lower case “t”? Was it like an uppercase “T,” like an “X”? All of those were used for crucifixion in the first century. We don't really know. But it doesn't really matter because he's not talking about the shape of it. He's talking about what the cross of Jesus Christ means, what His sacrifice means.

He said, “What we are really focusing on here is the sacrifice that God through Jesus Christ gave for us. I don't want anything to detract from that. Because, if we don't have the sacrifice of Christ, if Jesus Christ did not come and live a perfect life and die for you and me, all the rest of this is meaningless. We don't have any hope.” So, that's what has to be crucial at the core of what we believe. So he says, “I don't want that sacrifice of Christ *made of no effect*, made void, made meaningless.”

Verse 18 *For the message of the cross (or of the sacrifice) is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.*

Again, we notice a few things there. It talks about those *who are perishing*. They are on a pathway toward *perishing*. They are moving in that direction. That's where their lives are leading. And those people look at the cross, the sacrifice of Christ, as foolishness. Now when you stop and think about it—again, you and I are brought up in a world where basic Christianity is kind of the norm, and we just accept that everybody has certain ideas about that. But most of the world doesn't grow up that way.

Most of the world doesn't see it that way, and throughout history, most didn't. And in the Roman world of that first century, the idea that you should worship a dead Jewish carpenter who was executed as a criminal, because you believe He's alive again, sounds pretty foolish. If somebody came to you and told you that a person you knew who [had died]—they came to you, and they said, “President John F. Kennedy is alive again”—you would probably want to get that person some special help. You would not believe that. It would be foolishness to you. And, to the world of that day, it was absurd. *To those who are perishing*, it's foolishness.

To the Jews—I mean, to the gentiles, the idea was total foolishness. To the Jews, here was the person who claimed to be the Messiah, who was executed like a common criminal. “No, we can't believe in that kind of a Messiah.” And then you come along and say He's alive again. “No, we don't believe it.” But you and I believe it. You and I base our lives upon that belief—to those of *us who are being saved*.

[57:28]

Again, we sometimes think of salvation as entirely future, but that's not true. Here's a quote from one of the sources that we use here.

Salvation is described by Paul as a thing done in the past. We were saved. As a present state, we have been saved. As a process, we are being saved, and as a future result, you shall be saved.

All of those are found in Paul's epistles, and we discussed that in the book of Ephesians when we went through **chapter 2**, that salvation is past, present and future. There are elements of it in that way. Paul is addressing those of us living today who are in the process of being saved.

Those of us who are being saved look at the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and understand what it means. And we are amazed. We are awed. We are left speechless. How do you explain that God became flesh, lived without sin, and died for you and me to take away the penalty of my stupidity and selfishness?

Wow! What an amazing thing that is! Why would God do that? Because our God is a giving God, and because He is a God of love. So, God the Father and God the Son made this amazing sacrifice. And to us, to look at this, to understand it, we come to recognize that only by something like that—by a sacrifice of that magnitude—would there be any hope for any of us. And then we also recognize it's not just a hope for any of us, it's a hope for all of us. What an amazing thing that is!

Well, I see we've used up almost all of our time for this class today. We went a little long last time, so I want to make sure we end on time today. So, we hope you'll join us next time as we move into class 3, and we'll pick up in **verse 19 of 1 Corinthians chapter 1**.

[59:34]