

1Corinthians 17-11-05b

Let's pick up our study now and with the sort of the history of the city and of the founding of the church as a background. If you'll turn over to Acts chapter 18, let's see what Luke records about Paul's initial time in Corinth. Acts chapter 18, you may recall Paul's time in Philippi in chapter 16 of Acts, his time at Thessalonica in chapter 17 of Acts, and we've seen that both times he ended up kind of getting run out of town by the angry Jews.

And he goes to Berea in the last part of chapter 17, and then he goes to Athens, and you remember he's at the Areopagus in Athens and gives that speech where he says, I was passing through and I saw an altar with the inscription to the unknown God, and he delivers that message there. And after these things in chapter 18, Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth. He found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla because Claudius had promulgated an edict that ran all the Jews out of Rome.

And so Aquila and Priscilla were Romans who had to leave because of Claudius' edict, and they were in Corinth. So because he was of the same trade, they were tent makers like he, and so when he comes to Corinth, you can only guess at what divine coordination brought about their meeting. Did they meet at the synagogue? Did he see them mending tents and say, hey, that's what I do? But in any way, he was of the same trade.

He stayed with them and worked, and he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath and persuaded both Jews and Greeks, and you can see that there were some Greek proselytes to Judaism. It kind of puts you in mind of back when John was baptizing at the Jordan, and Peter and Andrew and James and John had come down from Galilee and were listening to John the Baptist. The person of Christ and the message of Christ had not yet come, but there was John preparing the way, and these guys were already down there with an interest.

And so when the Lord Jesus appeared and John says, Behold the Lamb of God, they are primed and ready. The same thing with these Greeks who are coming to the synagogue. They're already aware of the Old Testament God of Israel, and they believe in Him and they want to learn about Him and know more about Him.

Well, here comes Paul into the synagogue and says, Here's the fulfillment of those Old Testament prophecies and all the things that Jesus explained to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, Paul is explaining in the synagogue. There are a few of the Jews who believe and respond. There are more of the Greeks who believe and respond, and this makes better sense to them.

And it's a caution that we don't let our tradition and our heritage be so definitional that we can't learn something new. It's an odd thing that with all of the preparation and the plowing into the ground of the seed of the Old Testament truth that the Jews weren't the most fruitful field when

it came time to talk about the gospel of Christ, but their own Judaism held them back. They couldn't see the culmination.

They couldn't see the fruition. They couldn't see the forward progress of God's plan, and it's easy for us sometimes to get comfortable at a certain point of growth or understanding or function and say sort of this far and no farther, and well, that's just too much. And we have to be humble enough to continue to be teachable, and that's I think the best definition of humility is teachability.

You're willing to consider. You're willing to ponder. You're willing to reflect and review, and there are some essentials that never change and shouldn't change.

The foundation of the Lord Jesus Christ, the essentials of biblical faith and truth, but there are other things where maybe we've inherited a lot of baggage from, in our case, church tradition, going all the way back to the Catholic Church, surviving down through the Protestant centuries and into the modern day where why is it that so many churches believe that you should tithe your income to them? It's one thing to say that God should have a tenth. It's something else to say, I am God's representative on earth, and you should give God's tenth to me. And many of the other practices, well, a church should have a building.

A church should have this. A church should have that. Well, where is that in the Bible? We inherit these things and sort of take them for granted and absorb them from our upbringing, our history, our observation, and when it comes time to take a close look at our beliefs and our practices in the light of the Word of God, we want to be sure that we are teachable.

The Jews really had a problem with this, and they became enemies of the cross, enemies of Christ, the one who came to save them. And it's Jesus on the cross saying, Father, forgive them. They don't know what they're doing.

We don't want to be that blind. Here is the Messiah standing before them, and they cannot recognize Him. And we want to be prayerful.

We want to be teachable. We also want to be firm about those things that do not change and that we know are essentials of the faith. So, Paul is persuading both Jews and Greeks in verse 4, Acts 18.5, when Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia.

Notice Paul sort of precedes them into Corinth, and they remain behind in Macedonia, finishing up, and then they join him. Paul is compelled by the Spirit and testified to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ. And it's interesting that when Timothy, who remember he's got a Jewish mother and a Greek father, and Silas, who is of course Jewish, when they come from Macedonia, Paul is compelled by the Spirit, or in the Spirit, I'm not real sure if that's a capital S, but he's compelled and testified to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ.

And I'm always a little bit cautious here. This could have been Spirit, capital S, and he's supposed to do this, and the opposition is supposed to come up. But it could also be small s

Spirit, and Paul constantly wants to cross the line and talk to the Jews.

And, you know, I would sacrifice all of my rewards, he says in Romans, for the sake of my brethren to whom belong. And you've got Romans 9, 10, and 11, and it's Paul's heart for his own people. He's a Pharisee, and he just is leaning back across the line.

God says, I'm sending you to the Gentiles. He's been to the Jerusalem council, and they said, we go to the Gentiles. You know, you've got 11 other disciples, 10 after the death of James, that are going to go to the Jews.

You're the apostle to the Gentiles. But he just can't give it up. And so, I don't know.

I just mentioned for the sake of argument that the Greek here can just as easily be read as Paul being compelled in his own spirit that he had to talk to the Jews. And Timothy and Silas come, and whatever they said about what's going on in Macedonia, and he says, boy, you know, the Greeks are really catching fire if we could just get our own people on board. And so he goes and testifies to them that Jesus is the Christ.

He's been persuading Jews up above, but he seems to really push the issue here in verse 5. So now, at this point, they oppose and blaspheme. So he shook his garments and said, your blood be upon your own heads. I am clean.

From now on, I will go to the Gentiles. So he departs from there and enters the house of a certain man named Justice. And this is actually tidious or titious justice.

And there's a place where this man is mentioned, and Gaius precedes it. And they're not real sure if Gaius is a separate guy or Gaius is this guy's first name. This may be Gaius titious justice.

At any rate, he's got the house right next door to the synagogue. And so Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, we know Crispus is a Jew. He wouldn't be the ruler of the synagogue otherwise, even though he's got a Latin name.

He believed on the Lord with all his household. Many of the Corinthians hearing believed and are baptized. So the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, do not be afraid, but speak and do not keep silent for I am with you.

No one will attack you to hurt you. Why would he need this reassurance? Go back and read the preceding couple of chapters. He has been run out of town, tarred and feathered, you know, and so on.

No one will attack you to hurt you. I have many people in this city. He is in the right place doing the right thing at the right time.

So he continues there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them. Then you have the story of Galio that I already mentioned. He's the proconsul, the Jews next door at the synagogue rise up with one accord.

You know, nothing to unify the Jews like opposing Paul and the Christian gospel. This fellow persuades men to worship God contrary to the law. Paul was about to open his mouth, but remember God said nobody's going to interfere with you here.

So just before Paul is about to open his mouth in his own defense, Galio says, if it was a matter of wrongdoing or wicked crimes, you Jews, there would be a reason why I should bear with you. But it's a question of words and names and your own law. Look to it yourselves.

I don't want to be a judge of such matters. Get out of here. And he dismisses the case.

And as I say, this is a wonderful precedent because for the next decade, Christianity has the imprimatur of Rome as being allowed in the same way that Judaism has been tolerated. It's not a threat to the divinity of the Caesar or any of the rest of it. So he drove them from the judgment seat.

So the Greeks, notice, took Sosthenes, who is our first Corinthian letter from, Paul, an apostle according to the will of the Lord, and Sosthenes, a brother. Well, here's Sosthenes. All of the, it says all the Greeks, but it really, I think, just says they all, and these are the Jews who took this matter to court, took him the ruler of the synagogue and beat him before the judgment seat.

Galio took no notice. And they feel like he's a traitor to the cause. He's the ruler of the synagogue, and he's friendly to Paul, and he believes the message of Jesus.

So while Paul does not get beat up, Sosthenes does. And you get the idea that Sosthenes is eventually out as the leader of the synagogue, and that's why he is with Paul in Ephesus when our letter is written. This is probably the end of his tenure as ruler of the synagogue in Corinth right here.

So then Paul remained a good while, beyond the year and six months, and then he takes his leave, and he sails for Syria. Priscilla and Aquila are with him, had his hair cut off at Cancria because he made a vow. You know where Cancria is now.

That's the port that faces Asia to the east. He came to Ephesus, left them there, he entered the synagogue, reasoned with the Jews, but pay attention now, they ask him to stay a longer time, he did not consent, took leave, saying, I must by all means keep the coming feast in Jerusalem, I'll return again. So he sailed from Ephesus, landed at Caesarea, greeted the church, went to Antioch, went through the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening the disciples.

Now while Paul is gone on this trip, wanting to keep the feast in Jerusalem, a certain Jew named Apollos, born in Alexandria, an eloquent man and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, fervent, spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, but he only knew the baptism of John. He didn't have the message of Christ.

He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. Aquila and Priscilla, who Paul met in Corinth, spent that nearly two years with Paul in Corinth, they have gotten the Christian gospel from Paul, now

they're going to pass it on to Apollos. They took him aside, explained to him the way of God more accurately.

When he desired to cross to Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting him to receive him, he arrived, greatly helped those who believed, vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the scriptures that Jesus is the Christ. Look at the next verse, remember there's no chapter breaks in the original text. And it happened while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions came to Ephesus, finding disciples and so on.

So Apollos has been to Corinth. This little side note is critically important to understand our letter. Because while Paul is gone, he's been there nearly two years, Priscilla and Aquila, and all of those who came to believe, he's laid this strong foundation, then he leaves.

Who comes in and begins to teach? Having been instructed in Ephesus by Aquila and Priscilla, it is Apollos, known for his eloquence. He's a man from Alexandria, Alexandria was a center of learning and intellectual attainment. And so he is impressive, he is well spoken, from later attestations we believe that he was everything in terms of physical presence and presentation that Paul was not.

You know, Paul mentions a place or two that you all think in person, I'm very unimpressive. He was bald, he had a beaked nose, he had a high-pitched voice, and you think this is the guy that God chose to be the apostle to the entire Gentile world, which is impressed with wisdom and knowledge and well-spoken attainment. So the time that Apollos spends in Corinth precedes the writing of our letter.

Very important to understand. So turn back now to 1 Corinthians and let's begin our letter. This letter is written about three years after Paul leaves.

And what has happened in the meantime is, after Apollos has been there and spoken, Paul gets word that things are not going so well, the situation is starting to deteriorate in Corinth. And so he is going to write them a letter, not this letter. There is a previous letter to Corinth that has not been preserved, is not included in the canon of Scripture.

We have reference to this letter in 1 Corinthians 7, verse 1, and a couple of other allusions. But he says, concerning the things of which you wrote to me, that letter is the Corinthians writing to Paul in response to the letter that Paul wrote. Turn back a page to chapter 5, verse 1, it is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, immorality such as is not even named among the Gentiles, that a man has his father's wife.

And in verse 9 he says, I wrote to you in my letter not to keep company with sexually immoral people. He says, I hear that despite me writing this letter mentioned in verse 9, that this stuff is continuing. And he goes on in verse 10 to say, I certainly did not mean this, that, and the other that you seem to have taken.

In other words, the letter that Paul wrote, that he explicitly mentions in 5.9, was misunderstood

or didn't work, it didn't have the desired effect. Probably the reason it's not in the canon, maybe it wasn't as inspired in terms of its content, because it seemed to have had a different effect. And Paul says, you seem to have taken what I said wrong.

So that letter we don't have. So Paul wrote that letter, he's heard that it's reported, he says in verse 1. So he's gotten reports back that after the reception of this letter, here's everything that's going on. Now, they wrote back, as I said, in 7.1. But here's what happened.

When he says it is reported, these are the people we're going to see in chapter 1. These are those of Chloe's house. It has been declared to me in 1.11, my brethren, by those of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. And it is reported in 5.1, probably also from these same people.

So here's what happened. You remember Corinth, where it is, what it is, how the church got founded. That was a few years ago.

There's been, Paul's gone, and there's been time for other influences to start to work. The mash has started to ferment. Apollos has been there and spoken.

And Apollos is a good guy, but he's a different guy, with a different style. He's very impressive. He's very logical.

He's very oratory, sonorous, statuesque, messenger. And people say, all right, now we're, now, you know, I understand, I'm glad that Paul came and shared Christ with us and all that, but now we're getting the good stuff. Here's the guy that's really going to take us to the next level.

And this hooks into their belief in two things. And these words recur time and again. And we're going to see these as almost thematic in Corinthians.

Wisdom and knowledge, Sophia and Gnosis. This is the Greek ethos, we're wise. This is the Roman science.

The theory is the Greeks. The philosophers are the Greeks, Plato, Socrates, you know, all of the playwrights, all of this Greek heritage of culture and wisdom in the abstract. And then you have the Romans appropriating the best parts of that, taking it over, and they put it into practice.

They are the guys that build the aqueducts and the bridges and conquer and have armies and roads and technology. It is historical science from the Greeks, and it is practical science from the Romans. And I urge you, I was talking about this with Matthew and with Elizabeth not long ago, a very helpful distinction in our milieu, which in many ways mirrors the Corinthian experience.

We have the heritage of science that has done so many wonderful things for us. But arguments from science conflate, confound, and wrap one kind of science in another. There are two kinds of science.

There is operational science. This gives you computers and cell phones, air conditioning and cars, space flight, stereos, right? It works. It is testable.

It is repeatable. It is falsifiable. It is of genuine, observable, concrete benefit.

It works, right? A second kind of science is historical science. We find fossils in the rocks. We find background radiation in the skies.

We have evidence of an expansion in the universe. We have evidence of the movement of tectonic plates. We have evidence.

We have bits and pieces. We have clues. Historical science takes those clues and weaves a narrative to account for those clues.

We have primitive life in the deepest layers of rock. We have more advanced life in the later layers of rock, therefore it evolved. Evolution is a story that accounts for the evidence.

It is not testable. It is not repeatable. It is not falsifiable.

It is a just-so story. Sometimes it's true. Was there a Big Bang? Maybe there was.

It does not conflict with the biblical account when God said, let there be and there was. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The Big Bang model theory is not inconsistent with anything the Bible has to say.

In fact, the Bible seems to confirm when it says God stretches out the heavens. Well, they are literally stretching out even as we speak. But it is a just-so story.

Nobody was there to observe these things. Nobody can prove them. Nobody can falsify them and prove that they are not so.

It is a narrative which you can choose to believe if it seems to make sense of the available clues. But it is a different kind of science. It is historical science.

It is an extrapolation. It is an interpolation. It is a narrative into which you can fit the clues and make them work.

We have a narrative given to us by the Word of God. Secular materialism, humanism, has a narrative provided by historical science. Both of them are matters of faith.

You cannot test, repeat, falsify the creation narrative. You cannot test, repeat, or falsify the historical science narrative. Where they coincide, where they agree, now you have the testimony of two witnesses, maybe three witnesses.

And so I have no argument where historical science is in harmony with my biblical narrative. But I reject, as a mere matter of story and faith and myth, anything that historical science tells me that directly contradicts the Word of God. That life formed itself, that nature created itself,

directly violates the narrative I have.

Now what is the difference in these two narratives? You say, well, come see, come saw, Buddhist, Hindu, Christian, what's the difference? Secular humanist, it's all a matter of faith. There is a difference. And that's what 1 Corinthians is going to point out.

Let's read the first chapter now. Just keep in mind that we have here a situation where you're going to pit Sophia and Gnosis, wisdom and knowledge, against something else. Let's read the first chapter together.

Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God and Sosthenes, a brother. What a brother. He got beat up for the faith.

To the church of God, which is at Corinth. Interestingly, we know that 1 and 2 Thessalonians preceded this. Paul wrote Thessalonians before he wrote Corinthians.

And in those letters, he says to the, this is the church of God, which is at Corinth. He says to the church in Thessalonica, it's a different formation. Here, Paul is reminding them at the outset that they belong to God.

When you read the greeting to the Thessalonians, it starts out differently. I'll read it to you here. He says to the church of the Thessalonians in God.

The church of the Thessalonians in God. This is the opposite. This is the church of God in Corinth.

And he says, you are first and foremost in God. When he's writing to the Thessalonians, he says, you're in God. This church of God is in Corinth.

So they're identified first and foremost in Thessalonica by where they are, and he reminds them they are in God. It's the opposite in Corinth. A little nice detail there.

To those who are sanctified, this is hagiadzo, this is set apart, this is made unique, this is distinguished by. The emphasis here is not so much on outright holiness as it is, you know, we think about sanctification, but it's not that you are righteous or that you are sanctified. It is that this is what distinguishes you.

Think about where the letter is going to go. You're not distinguished by your Jewishness or your Greekness. You're not distinguished by your slave or freeness.

You're not distinguished by your richness or poorness. You're not distinguished by your Apolloness or your Cephasness or your Paulness. You are the church of God.

You're at Corinth, but you are of God and you are set apart in Christ Jesus. All of you, of God, in Christ. He's already speaking of that which unites.

He says what distinguishes you is being in Christ, and he's front-loading the message in the greeting, which he always does. Called, notice, you get sanctified, you get hagiadzo and then hacias, two forms. You are set apart in Christ Jesus, called, and this isn't you're named this.

This means you were, God called you. This is calling in the sense of an appeal. You were appealed to by God to be this.

You're not just named saints. You are marked out by God drawing you and your response to that call. Calling is always universal, but the called are those who respond.

You can be called and not be called. That, by the way, is another really ubiquitous feature in Corinthians, is the tension between things that are seemingly in contradiction. Paul says you are all one in Christ, and yet he says there are wars and divisions among you.

Paul says I am a servant and I determined to know nothing among you, and yet he says I have a message from God and I have apostolic authority. There is a tension there that logic can't resolve, that the Apollos Oratory cannot reconcile by reason. Your Sophia and your Gnosis are going to come at odds when you find these seeming contradictions.

There is an already, not yet, aspect to our salvation. We are already the heirs of eternal life, but we're going to die. We're already citizens of heaven, but we're not there.

Over and over again in Corinthians you're going to find this, you are united in Christ and yet look at your practice, you are splitting up. You have all things in Christ, but you're missing a whole bunch of things. And so you see that here, you are separate and set apart in Christ Jesus, called saints with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Don't think that you're special because you are one part of one church in Corinth. You are part of something much bigger than what you see in Corinth. And yet right now your subjectivity is causing you to only see those who agree with you, or those who are similar to you in standing or in status.

And he says, you are called with all who in every place call. Notice you had set apart twice, you had the verb and the noun, sanctified and saints. And you are called by God to be set apart with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus.

God called you and you call on the name of Jesus back. Our Lord, both theirs and ours. If you're having a hard time realizing that you're one with your brothers in the church, don't forget you're one with the brothers in every other church.

Their Lord and ours. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. This is one of the standard greetings, and not to give it short shrift, but the peace is dependent on the grace.

He doesn't say peace to you and grace, ever. It's always grace to you and peace, and there's an

order there. In order for us to enjoy the peace of God, we have to be sure that we remain qualified to receive the grace of God.

We don't pursue peace with God. We pursue peace with all men, right? Because we already have the peace of God that doesn't come by pursuing peace with God. It comes from God's grace.

So the avenue to peace in our soul, peace in our heart, is not to try to get peace. It is to get grace. Grace to you, Paul says.

And when that grace is established, the source and the destination, Bob Thame called it the grace pipe, which I think is a little bit mechanical, but there is a source and a destination for God's grace. And although God is always gracious, He is a God of grace, His grace doesn't reach every single one of us. His grace reaches those who qualify themselves to receive it by calling on the name of the Lord.

God calls, we call back. He says, where are you? I am the God of salvation. We say, Lord, I'm right here.

There is a call and there is a response. There is calling that is initiated by God, and there is a response in us. There is grace that comes from God, and our response is to enjoy His peace.

Grace to you and peace comes from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. And in this age, the grace that we enjoy from God is through the Lord Jesus and through the Holy Spirit that the Lord Jesus Himself sent to us. I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given you by Christ Jesus.

Notice he doesn't say, I thank God that you've got peace. He says, I thank God for the grace, because the grace creates the potential for peace, but they actually don't have peace at this point. The grace is always there.

If you lose your peace, you've lost your qualification for grace. It's that simple. Go back and figure out where you've stepped out from under that wonderful dispensation of grace.

Get back under there. Peace will follow. I thank my God concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus.

This is the instrumental. It's in, by, and with, and they're all true. It's in Christ Jesus, it's by Christ Jesus, and it is through Christ Jesus.

That you were enriched in everything by Him, in all utterance and all knowledge. Now Paul, again, is front-loading his argument, because they're going to be claiming that we've got utterance, speaking in tongues, and we've got knowledge. We've got Sophia, we've got Gnosis, we have wisdom and knowledge, and that's why we are now able to sit in judgment, and the division here that he's going to talk about in the rest of the chapter is not primarily, it includes,

but it is not primarily divisions attacking each other.

This is incipient. It's beginning to happen, but that's not the real problem, because he doesn't give them a letter about dispute resolution. He doesn't say, now look, these guys are right, and you guys are in the wrong, so you need to abandon your position and get with these guys.

It's not internecine fraternal warfare that he is going to try to fix here. Their division is primarily between themselves and the founder of the church. The gospel foundation that Paul laid, and by extension, there's an ad hominem against Paul himself.

They're beginning to argue with the gospel that he presented, and those of you that spend any time in debate know that debate, especially when your case is weak, will very quickly turn ad hominem, and when you don't like the message, you'll start to attack the messenger. This is why they hauled Paul up in front of Galileo several years earlier, the Jews did. So he says, I thank God that you have been enriched with these things.

Notice, the grace of God is good. These gifts of God in utterance and knowledge are good. What he's going to turn the corner into down the road in the letter is, it's what you're doing with them that is the problem.

But, you know how good sales technique, they say, get the client to say yes. Get them saying yes. Get them to say yes, yes, yes, and they say, well, yes, we are in Christ Jesus, and yes, we have received God's grace, and yes, we do have utterance, and we do have knowledge, and they're nodding their heads in assent, kind of like Romans chapter 1. All those nefarious ne'er-do-wells suppressing the truth and unrighteousness, and turning themselves over to all those heinous crimes, and everybody's nodding their head yes, and then Paul in chapter 2 says, and you, and there's three fingers pointing, you old man are doing the very same thing.

Well, this is not foreign to Paul's thinking. He does it a lot, and he's doing it here. He is being positive and encouraging at the beginning, but he is going to assert his apostolic authority and say, you've been given these things, but you're not using them right.

And here's what we want to watch for as we get into the study of this letter. We have been given many great and precious things in, by, and with the Lord Jesus Christ. We have wisdom.

We have knowledge. We have been taught in the Word. Most of us have spent a lot of time, much of it together, in studying and learning from the Word of God.

The question becomes, are we going to unconsciously, and without full awareness, make a mistake in beginning to depend on that, or beginning to use that as a platform on which we are going to stand, and we end up with division from the larger body, the body that Paul appeals to when he says, those in every place who call on the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. He's their Lord, and He's our Lord. And it's easy for us to look around at Christianity and say, well, they don't do what we do.

They don't believe what we believe. They don't say what we say. They don't emphasize what we emphasize.

And we have a tendency to, it's one thing to mark a distinction. It's one thing to know better, but it is something else to think that we are better. You can know better without it turning into a subjective, I am better.

And because of that, I don't need to police myself. I don't need to pay attention to what I am doing. And we know that in the Corinthian church, there are going to be problems of insensitivity.

Remember at the Lord's table later on? There is immorality, because they are going to decide that because I've got this wisdom, my petty insignificant actions don't really count for anything. It doesn't matter if I'm immoral. It doesn't matter if I'm... I mean, there have been people who have been partakers of very good, solid biblical teaching of the ice variety, isagogics, categories, and exegesis in at least three churches that I had personal experience of, who began to pay very little attention to their personal life and personal practices, because they had so much doctrine.

Well, if I do slip or err, I will rebound, I will confess my sins, I'll claim 1 John 1.9, and it's all okay. I don't really have to worry about that very much. This doctrine is so definitional for me, and I am on such a plane in my thinking, in my relaxed mental attitude, their mental attitude became so relaxed that sanctification went by the wayside.

Not partaking of drunkenness went by the wayside. There are churches all over the country today where sexual immorality is not just tolerated or countenanced, but smiled at. Well, our teenagers will be teenagers, and we're not going to frown on fraternization of the physical sort and people living without benefit of marriage.

It's all union in Christ, and we don't judge, and, well, yes, this person is homosexual, but we want to embrace and welcome, and we don't want to divide and make an issue out of morality, and we're on this plane of wisdom and knowledge that doesn't affect practice. My practical life, my life Monday through Saturday, is one thing, especially Friday night and Saturday night, and then I'm all holy and sanctified and sanctimonious on Sundays, and maybe Wednesday nights if I'm really with it. And this is a danger, and it's easier to see in others than it is to see in ourselves, but the warning we're going to get from Corinthians is, don't rest on your laurels and on your history of apostolic ministry and good teaching, understanding, and pursuit of certain aspects of that that appeal to us.

Well, I have a gift, and here's the exercise of my gift. I speak in tongues. I have utterance.

I have wisdom. Paul says those things are good. It's what you're doing with them that needs to be examined, and we want to examine ourselves and make sure that we are still in the faith and that we're not separating ourselves or drawing distinctions because we're not observing these

things properly.

That's what this letter is really going to help us with. And what Paul is going to talk about, let me just read you one more chapter, part of the chapter here in verse 10. I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, notice he doesn't say by my rational arguments or by my Old Testament application of Scripture, Israel, by extension is you.

He says, in the name of Jesus Christ, that you speak the same thing, that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. It has been declared to me by those of the house of Chloe, you're contentious. I'm of Paul.

I'm of Paulus. I'm of Cephas. I'm of Christ.

Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized in the name of Paul? Talks about baptizing and so on. Christ did not send me, verse 17, to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words. Whoa.

I am a big proponent of defending our faith as being reasonable and rational. I gave you some foundation for that earlier in talking about when we confront the alternative view that bases itself in science and in philosophy versus biblical revelation, that's a good thing. But we have to be careful that we don't try to rationalize Christianity and try to argue people into faith.

Paul says, you didn't come to faith because I was so eloquent and appealed to you with, well, it makes more sense than anything else. That would make the cross of Christ of no effect. The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing.

It's not going to overwhelm them with its logic. You're not going to explain how killing a man on a cross is going to satisfy the justice of God. It's never going to make sense to the secular mind.

They're going to think it's gross. They're going to think it's bloody. They're going to think that God is a genocidal, homicidal maniac, right? He's only satisfied when you slaughter animals and kill his son on a cross.

That makes him happy. That's not going to make sense. The message of the cross is foolishness.

You're wasting your time trying to explain the forensics of God's justice. To us who are being saved, it is the power of God. I will destroy the wisdom of the wise.

I will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. You're not going to reason and rationalize an unbeliever into faith in Christ. It isn't going to make logical sense, and you can't come to the unbelieving world with the message of Christ on a rational platform.

Remember I said there is a tension all the way through the book? There are sort of opposites

that are...