

LESSONS THIS QUARTER

1) 04 March 2018	1Cor 1-3	United in Christ
2) 11 March	1Cor 4-6	Glorifying God
3) 18 March	1Cor 7	Keeping Commitments
4) 25 March	1Cor 8-10	Influencing for Christ
5) 01 April	1Cor 15-16	Assurance of the Resurrection
6) 08 April	1Cor 11	Remembering the Sacrifice
7) 15 April	1Cor 12 & 14	Serving God's People
8) 22 April	1Cor 13	Understanding Love
9) 29 April	2Cor 1-2	Enjoying God's Comfort
10) 06 May	2Cor 3-4	Displaying the Gospel
11) 13 May	2Cor 5-7	Becoming New
12) 20 May	2Cor 7-9	Giving Faithfully
13) 27 May	2Cor 10-13	Finding Strength

INTRODUCTION

- **Authorship:** 1st & 2nd Corinthians were written by Paul, as attested to by himself (1Cor 1:1; 16:21), by Clement of Rome (~96 A.D.), and by other early church fathers. Paul wrote at least 4 letters to the Corinthians, and these two letters are the only ones we have. 1st Corinthians is actually Paul's 2nd letter to them (1Cor 5:9), and 2nd Corinthians is his 4th letter to them as seen in 2Cor 2:3-4; 7:8-9.
- **Date:** ~55 A.D., about 3 years after Paul left Corinth for Ephesus
- **The Town of Corinth:** One of the top 10 largest cities within the Roman Empire, known for unbridled immorality. Prostitution was a common practice within Corinthian pagan temples.
- **The Church of Corinth:** This letter was not written to a single church complex but probably intended for multiple home-churches within the town of Corinth, which were probably contentious with each other, and the sins of the secular world had crept into them. Formal church buildings did not become common till 150 years later (early 200's).
- **Purpose:** Where Romans and Galatians portray foundational Church doctrines, 1st & 2nd Corinthians deal with Christian ethics. Several controversial topics in these 2 letters include the following:
 1. Church factions and lawsuits
 2. Immorality, divorce, and remarriage
 3. Spiritual gifts within individuals and within the Church
 4. Tolerating sin within the church and Church discipline
 5. The liberty we have in Christ
 6. Ministry of Reconciliation
 7. Defining roles of men & women within the church
 8. Frequent, consistent, proportionate, generous, cheerful, willful, and sacrificial giving

The Church at Corinth..... What Happened?

- The Corinthian church had all the spiritual gifts and had 18 months of first hand teaching from a prominent Apostle (Paul) and from other faithful disciples seen in Acts 18 (Aquila & Priscilla, Silas, Luke, and Timothy) – yet the Corinthians were the most carnal and immature group of believers imaginable, rift with disunity, selfishness, prejudice, and tolerance for the most despicable sins.
- **SO, being able to work miracles or exhibiting spiritual gifts does not equate to spiritual maturity or doctrinal purity**

Biases and Perspectives

- **Inventory:** We need to acknowledge our biases and perspectives when we try to tackle some of these tough issues. For example:
 - Are there Apostles today, such as Peter & Paul? Yes | No
 - Do the "signs of an Apostle" still exist today? Yes | No
 - Do spiritual gifts exist today? Some | All | None
 - Is God still working supernaturally today? Yes | No
- This type of self-inventory allows us to see why we interpret Scripture the way we do and why others interpret it the way they do.
- **Remember.** Sometimes one's biases are the fortresses or strong holds which must be demolished before one accepts Christ or changes their doctrinal positions to be more biblical.....2Cor 10:4

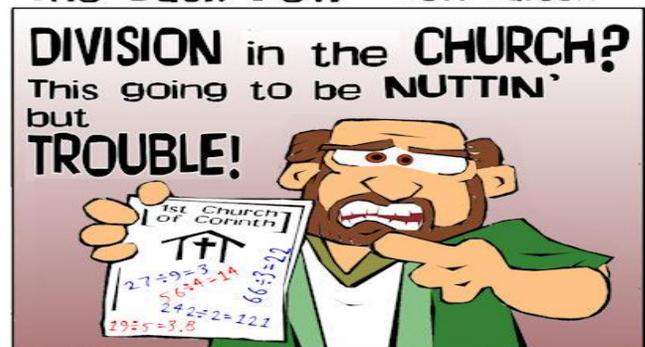
Consider the Following when it Comes to Supernatural Miracles:

- **Definition of a Supernatural event.** A supernatural miracle, healing, or wonder breaks a known law of nature instantaneously.
- Today's so-called "faith healers" and "miracle workers" cannot claim 100% success as Christ did or as the Apostles did early in their ministry. All the so-called successes of modern day "healers" can be attributed to "psycho-somatic" healings or providential occurrences, and are no different from the so-called miracles worked by witch doctors, hypnotists, shamans, Satanists, and occultists.
 - We don't see war vets having their missing limbs restored
 - We don't see hospital wards being instantaneously emptied even of one burn victim or a child with terminal cancer
 - We don't see any Downs Syndrome kids receiving normal DNA

- The supernatural wonders and healings of yesteryear by Apostles & apostolic appointees are over. Scripture gives us evidence of this:
 - Jesus and His Apostles/Disciples were able to heal ALL (100%) (Mat 4:23-24; 8:16-17; 9:26, 35; 10:1-9; 12:15-16; 14:14-21; 14:35-36; 15:30-38; 19:2; 21:14; Luke 10-17; Acts 5:15-16; 6:8; 8:6-13; 14:3; 19:11-12; 28:9)
 - **HOWEVER**, even the Apostles lost this ability to heal all and to work the "signs of an Apostle" even before they had died off
 1. Paul couldn't heal his own thorn in the flesh 2Cor 12:7-10
 2. Paul could not heal Epaphroditus Php 2:25-30
 3. Paul had to leave Trophimus sick in Miletum..... 2Tim 4:20
 4. Paul told Timothy to take some wine (or medicine) for his ailments (why not send him to a miracle worker) 1Tim 5:23
 5. James told his readers to pray, call for the elders, and confess their sins to receive a healing. There was no need for them to seek out someone with the gift of healings..... James 5:13-16
 6. After Acts, supernatural miracles are depicted in past tense or as worked by the Apostles and early Disciples (except for 1Cor & Gal, which were some of Paul's earliest letters)..... Heb 2:3,4
 - **Also**, if Apostles had to be present each time the Holy Spirit was given out, as evident by the speaking in tongues, then they still need to be here (using the Charismatic argument that "God is the same yesterday, today, and forever") Acts 2:3-6; 10:46; 19:6
 - **Also**, if Apostles (1Cor 12:28; Eph 4:11) and the signs of an Apostle (2Cor 12:12) are still in existence today then the New Testament should still be growing beyond our current 27 books
 - **THEREFORE**, we have to acknowledge God is working differently today, and this is in line with the Holy Spirit distributing as He wills, and that God works in different ways at different times..... 1Cor 12:11; Heb 1:1
 - The world will see supernatural miracles and wonders once again when the 2 witnesses identified in Revelation 11 appear on the scene, but they will only be around for 1,260 days (3 ½ years).
 - If others could work the signs of an Apostle since the times of the Apostles, then the miracles of these 2 witnesses during their brief 42 months of ministry would not be anything for the world to marvel at.

Passage	Comments
1Cor 1	<p>STOP THE TRAIN & FIX THE PROBLEM!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • vv1-2. Why did Paul restate his authority to these wayward saints? Notice he does call them "saints by calling" and not "saints based on good behavior." Salvation is not at stake • vv5-7. Though, the Corinthians "came behind no gift" and they had it all – all the right knowledge from the right people (Paul, Luke, Silas, Aquila, Priscilla, and Timothy) with signs confirming their salvation experience, yet that does not guarantee doctrinal purity or spiritual maturity. So, what does guarantee doctrinal purity & spiritual maturity? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Anything? <input type="checkbox"/> Nothing? <input type="checkbox"/> Brotherly love? <input type="checkbox"/> Humility? <input type="checkbox"/> Blessed Life? <input type="checkbox"/> No divisions? <input type="checkbox"/> Other? • vv8-9. God will ensure we finish blameless, even if we fail from time to time. How does He do this? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Discipline? <input type="checkbox"/> Blessings? <input type="checkbox"/> Warnings? <input type="checkbox"/> Other • vv10-16. Cease the quarreling and heal the divisions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • But will they? How would they? Did they? • Can we disagree on issues and still have unity? • v17. Christ did not send Paul to baptize. Baptism is therefore relegated to a secondary issue. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider this. Baptism, whether by immersion or sprinkling, 1x backward or 3x forward, is an outward sign of an inward truth

The Back Pew - Jeff Larson



Paul was aghast to find scribbled on the back of a church bulletin.. **DIVISION! 1 Cor 1:1-17**

Passage	Comments
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> vv18-26. Why is the Cross foolishness to those who are Hell-bound? Remember this – They are willfully ignorant (2Pet 3:5). Yet God is willing to gently work with the ignorant (Heb 5:2) if they just willfully submit themselves to Him (Rom 10:3). But this cannot be done before their biases (fortresses or strong holds) are demolished – and we have the weapons to do it.....2Cor 10:4 - And what are those weapons? Logical reasoning and answers, which we are prepared to give (1Pet 3:15). PLUS, God uses us, like Paul, to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, from Satan to GodActs 26:18 vv29-31. No flesh will glory in His presence. IOW, when all is said and done, it's not our smarts, good looks, or logical reasoning that get people saved. God gets all the credit for working thru us & softening the hearts of the unbelievers.

Was Paul a Bad Teacher or Were His Disciples Bad Students?

- The Corinthians had Paul in their midst for 18 months (Acts 18:1-17). He was known for bestowing the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:6), working countless miracles (Acts 19:11), and teaching the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27)
- Yet, the Corinthians, who came behind in no gifts (1Cor 1:7), were known for divisions (1Cor 1:11), for immaturity (1Cor 3:1), for judgmental behavior (1Cor 4:5), for immorality (1Cor 5:1), for idolatry (1Cor 10:14), and even abusing The Lord's Supper (1Cor 11:30)
- Paul also spent more than 3 years all total at Ephesus. Recall that Ephesus was the church noted in Rev 2:1-7 for leaving their 1st love.
- Paul also spent considerable time with the Galatians and they swayed toward **extreme** legalism
- What happened? Did Paul fail in some regard? Did he not train his disciples properly? Should he have spent more time with them? Did he pick poor elders or Sunday School teachers?
- We can only surmise the problems were with the Corinthians, Ephesians, & Galatians. **Every Church is only one generation away from apostasy!** We must always take responsibility to be on the alert, be steadfast, and to grow up – IOW, “act like men” and take our faith seriously!1Cor 16:24

Passage	Comments
1Cor 2	<p>Preach it, Paul...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> v1-4. Paul's fancy preaching and godly wisdom were not key to Paul's success. It was the demonstration of the Spirit and of God's power. Can we do the same today? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Maybe <input type="checkbox"/> Don't Know <input type="checkbox"/> Don't Care Consider this. The Lord worked with His Apostles by “confirming the word with signs following” Heb 2:4 v5. Our faith rests on the Power of God. What is the Power of God? Is it supernatural healings or miracles? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider this. The real power of God, as depicted in this book, is not in temporal wonders but in the permanent and eternal conversion of a Hell-bound soul to a Heaven-bound saint, and transforming an immature believer into one that mirrors the perfect image of Christ vv6-16. God's Wisdom & Spirit. "...if the rulers of this age (including Satan) had understood the Cross, they would not have crucified Christ" – This is one of the reasons why God has not revealed everything about the End Times. Even Satan could potentially thwart God's will. Recall how Satan thwarted Paul, with God's permission, of course, from traveling to Thessalonica1Thes 2:18
The All Sufficiency of Christ	<p>v2. For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.</p> <p>Consider This. The author of the book of Hebrews stated that it was time to stop drinking milk, leave the elementary teachings of Christ (Heb 5:12-6:3), and move on to deeper things of God. BUT, as the next few chapters in Hebrews points out, the deeper things of God revolve around the Priesthood of Christ (Heb 7) & “a new covenant” (Heb 8). Hebrews ends with grateful and practical living (Heb 13).</p>
1Cor 3:1-9	<p>Time to Put Your Big Boy Pants On</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> vv1-9. Paul calls these spiritually-gifted Corinthians carnal babes for their envying, strife and divisions, & they are unable to be given “meat” or higher teachings of God <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How would you handle it if you were called a baby? Would you be offended or would you grow up? How do you mature immature believers? All we can do is encourage and lead by example We can only mature those who want to mature. They have to willfully and intentionally make the effort to study, pray, and obey with a grateful heart.

Passage	Comments
1Cor 3:10-23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> vv10-15. Paul laid a foundation (which was Christ) and every believer is responsible for how they build on it <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do we prove if our efforts are worthy of rewards? vv16-17. The Corinthians were also treading on dangerous ground because Paul told them God would destroy those who “defile” their bodies – “the temple of God” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How would God do this?.....see 11:28-30 vv18-23. Let no man deceive you! Be aware that Satan can also deceive us (Rev 12:9) and we can be deceived by other men (2Thes 2:3). So, what are our safeguards against deception? <input type="checkbox"/> Prayer? <input type="checkbox"/> Bible study? <input type="checkbox"/> Other?

More Food for Thought. God's Character is the Same Yesterday, Today, and Forever, BUT He Does Change His Ways from Time to Time.

In the Old Testament...

- Gen 4:17; Lev 18:9. Cain, Able, and/or Seth had to marry one of their sisters, but now it is illegal to marry siblings [probably due to weaker genetics over time]
- Gen:29; Lev 18:18. Jacob married 2 sisters, but now it is illegal, at least for Jews to marry more than one sister concurrently.
- Lev 20:10; 2Sam 12:24. Death was once the penalty for adultery, but after King David & Bathsheba, that command was almost nullified as Scripture states that God loved their 2nd son, Solomon.
- Josh 5:12. Supernatural miracles were once common on a daily basis for the Jews (clothes not wearing out, feet & knees not swelling, free food every day, Fire by night & cloud column by day to lead them daily – BUT, those wonders suddenly ceased when the Jews marched into the Promised Land.

In the New Testament...

- Lev 11:7,12; Mark 7:19. It was once unlawful (for Jews) to eat pork and lobster, but Jesus now declares all such foods clean to eat.
- Apostles and supernatural signs of an Apostle were prevalent during most of the 1st Century, but it looks like supernatural healings, miracles, and signs ceased even before the Apostles had died off.....Heb 2:3-4
- The Word of God grew during the 1st Century, but now the Word of God is static, probably because Apostles have ceased, even though Scripture never explicitly says Apostles would cease. The whole counsel of God must be factored in on this. For example:
 - After the Apostle Paul was specifically chosen and taught by Jesus and acknowledged by the Jerusalem church (Acts 9, 15) and Peter's testimony (2Pet 3:15-16), no other man has since been so selected and confirmed by the Scriptures – though, Barnabas was tagged as an apostle (sent one) in Acts 14:14. Also, the New Jerusalem only reflects 12 foundation stones representing only 12 Apostles (Rev 21:13-14). Presumably, Paul replaced Judas, similar to how Dan and Ephraim were eventually de-listed from the 12 tribes of Israel for unspecified reasons and replaced with Joseph and Levi (Rev 7:5-8)
- The early Church once had instantaneous spiritual gifts given to those who accepted Christ, but now someone has to buy a book or CD to learn how to speak in tongues, and no one knows what the gift of administration is or how it is used.

CONCLUSION / APPLICATIONS

- Who takes responsibility for resolving church divisions? Pastor? Elders? Congregants? Deacons? Everyone? Others?
- ...and what do the others do? Complain? Pray? Nothing?

NEXT WEEK: 1Cor 4-6. Paul tells the Corinthians to kick someone out of church for their immorality. What are the limits (i.e., principles) for when our love covers a multitude of sins and when we need to stop tolerating sin?

The Back Pew – Jeff Larson



Thinking “Babes in Christ” was a Christian dating service instead of a workshop for new believers, Sal would find himself disappointed again. 1 Cor 3:12