

# 1 Corinthians 8-9

Sunday 7/3/2011

## I. Introduction: Christ Our Lord and the Corinthian Problem

We are back today to the book of 1 Corinthians. Last week we talked about some special things on Anniversary Sunday, and we had a great day. We finished the marriage section, chapter 7, which took us quite a while, but there is so much in there. We are basically getting an overview of how each book of the Bible portrays the Lord Jesus Christ. It has kind of turned into a mini-series, but that is okay; God has the freedom to do whatever He wants to do with it.

We have been talking about how Christ is portrayed in each book of the Bible. We know now that in the book of 1 Corinthians, Christ is portrayed as Christ our Lord. This is the central issue, the central problem with the church at Corinth. They are operating in a concept that Jesus is not Lord. Everything they are doing, they are really messed up on.

Last Saturday, we had our Bible Basics class. Let me just say this: I had so much going on that I really neglected to say anything about this; I forgot to do it. But we had over a hundred people for our Bible Basics class last week, and it was a great time. I think the thing that really made it more special than just all the people coming out was watching all of the older Christians help the younger ones. I watched how you were showing them how you put things into your Bible. Many of them had questions, and you were helping them. That is really what it is all about, and that is a great thing to see: not only are the new people grasping the material and having such a desire to learn it, but the older Christians, those that have been around for a while, are actually taking part and helping them put it all together and grasp that material and showing them how you do it in your own Bible.

You remember I told you many, many times, this is why we sell the wide-margin Bibles. The best study Bible that you will ever have will be your own, and you put your notes in it, and we try to help you to do that.

## II. The Principle of Contrast in God's Teaching

You will remember that I told you that the Bible and the key to the Bible is simply learning how to rightly divide the word of truth, and the Bible has divisions in it. One of those divisions that we talked about in Bible Basics was the aspect that when God divides something, it brings about a contrast. When He divided light from darkness, light and darkness are a contrast. Heaven and hell are a contrast. The old nature and the new nature are a contrast. That is absolutely one of the greatest keys that you are going to find anywhere within the Bible, probably one of the single greatest things you will ever find. I pointed that out to you back then because you are going to use that concept in everything you do through the rest of your Bible. We are going to obviously build on that in July, then again in August, and if you are real good, I will give you a special bonus in September. But when God divides, He teaches us by the contrast of what He just divided.

When I went into the ministry, back in 1976, we came to Kansas City. I was hired in December 1975, flew out to Kansas City, and then we moved back out in January 1976, right after the first of the year. When I came here and went into the ministry, the education that God gave me as far as how to build a church and how to pastor a church was very unique. It is something that you never get in Bible college; it is something that you will never get any other way than getting on-the-job training, so to speak, which I think is the best training you can ever get.

God put two men in my life, and those two men were two men who I can honestly say today taught me everything about the ministry and everything about pastoring and building a church. There was a third man that I would throw in that equation that taught me about the Bible. About building a church, pastoring a church, and the day-to-day operations of a church and everything you deal with, there were two men that God put in my life. One of them did it phenomenally well. One of them would be, in my mind, the best example you could ever have of how to run a church, pastor a church, and do the things in a church the right way. The other one was a great example of how not to do it, probably the worst example of a pastor, the worst example of building a church that you could ever find in your life.

That was very unique in my world, and I know God does everything differently with different people. But it probably was the single greatest thing that God had ever done in my life as far as me understanding and basically seeing the ministry. Because what God did for me was give me a contrast. He showed me one who did it really well, biblically, by the book, so to speak, and then He showed me one who did it by the political, by man's wisdom. It had very little to do with the Bible. It had everything to do with politics, everything to do with the monstrosity that we call a church today. For me, it was the single greatest thing that God ever did as far as teaching me the ministry.

I think a lot of times the new Bibles do exactly the same thing. They form a contrast of what is real and truth versus what is man-made and not truth. I think that everything in life will fit into that aspect if you just start to observe it. For me, my whole life and everything I have learned about God, the Bible, and certainly the ministry has formed around that great contrast that God gave me. When you have a contrast, it makes things like day and night. It shows you the thing that is right and how good it is and how absolutely God honors it in the Word of God. Then it shows you the other side, which is usually man-made, man-contrived, things that man puts together that have nothing to do with the Bible.

I say all of that because this is exactly the same thing we find in the book of 1 Corinthians. God sets up a contrast in this church. If you are paying attention, this is a very rich book with a lot of great biblical principles in it. I know most of you do not understand what I am about to say yet, but hopefully you will in time. You are going to realize that most of the things that you learn in life about God and the Bible and the ministry and certainly the things of God, you are going to find that God shows you by contrast. If you are paying attention, He will show you what the real deal is and He will show you what the wrong deal is. You can take that almost to every aspect of your life. The Bible will show you what kind of friends you ought to hang around versus what kind of friends you should not hang around. The Bible will show you places you should go and places you definitely should not go. Everything is built on the form of a contrast.

It is something that is around us all the time. We never see it. We never totally understand it. But as you mature and you grow to the place in the Word of God that you get to, you begin to see and understand exactly how it works. That is really the key to the book of 1 Corinthians. The principles that come out of that, the principles that you learn from that, are things you never want to forget. They form a mindset. Principles form a direction of life. Principles and the examples of contrast give you a pathway that you stay with where God wants you to stay, and you never get off the track. That is really what the book of 1 Corinthians is all about. It is a tremendous chapter. I want to continue today, as we come through it, to point out great principles that if you are paying attention and you are smart, you are going to write these down and you are going to begin to use these.

### III. Review of Corinthian Church Problems (Chapters 1-7)

We saw in chapter 1 how they are really all messed up on who baptized whom. They are actually accrediting some kind of spirituality based on how spiritual the person who baptized you was. If you were baptized by Paul, then that seemingly means that you are a great spiritual person. If you are just baptized by Joe Schmoe, somebody nobody knows, then you are a lesser Christian. Of course, that is ridiculous, but that is a contrast.

In chapter 2, we see the basic fundamental problem in this church. It did not take long to get there, did it? The basic fundamental problem in chapter 2 is they are not following the Bible. They are using man's wisdom. They are following man-made ideas, trying to work them into the church, and it is causing all kinds of problems. This is much why I said when we started our book that most of the churches you find today, Baptist churches anyhow, are just mirrored images of the church at Corinth. They are not following the Bible; they are following man, man's wisdom.

In chapter 3, they are actually arguing and attaining some kind of spiritual notoriety of who won whom to Christ, just like they did in chapter 1, except that one was about baptism.

In chapter 4, they failed to be stewards of the mysteries of God. We know that there are seven mysteries in the Bible. Again, how many churches across this country even know that, let alone take the time to teach those seven mysteries? Yet, the whole Bible basically is built on those seven mysteries.

Chapter 5, we see that they are having a tolerance for sin in the church. They are not dealing with it biblically, and they are all divided over how to deal with it.

Chapter 6, they are taking each other to court over civil matters. Somebody is wronging somebody, so instead of bringing it to the body of the church to deal with it, they are taking it to an unsaved civil court.

Then we got into chapter 7, and we saw the aspect of marriage, divorce, and remarriage, and how the church should deal with it. This book is one of the most important books in all of the Bible as far as ministry, because the whole book forms a contrast. Contrast is so important in your life and in my life.

## IV. The Problem of Legalism and Conscience (1 Corinthians 8)

Now today, we are going to look at two more great chapters. I have kind of got this thing laid out to break it down in chapters where 8 and 9 go together. In chapter 8, we see the number one trademark of what we call spiritual babies. You will remember that in chapter 3, verse 1, he called this whole church a bunch of babies. So I want you to look at chapter 8. We are not going to read it verse by verse because it is a lengthy chapter, but we are going to come down through it section by section, and you will be able to get it that way. We see some great things.

We also see a system here in this church that develops into our Christianity today that probably does more damage than all the booze and the drugs and all of the world put together. This system, as we know it today, is called legalism. It is a system of putting you under a set of rules to try to make you spiritual. Many, many churches think if they set up the right kind of rules that you will be the right kind of spiritual person. So they tell you how to dress. You will find in many, many Baptist churches, the fact that a woman wears slacks to church is absolutely horrendous. Many of you wear shorts to church, and that is fine with me; I do not care. But in most churches, you would be asked to leave. Your knobby knees would cause you to leave or something like that. But anyway, most churches are like that, and they think that if you wear the right kind of clothes, that is going to make you spiritual.

Now, do not misunderstand me. I think that a Christian ought to dress modestly. But I do not think you can legislate morals to anybody. In fact, I know you cannot. When I preach to you, I do not preach to you about the length of your skirt or the length of your shorts or the shirt that you wear or how you wear your hair. I do not deal with that. I learned a long time ago, again, by contrast, that if you want to change the way somebody is, go after their heart. Preach to their heart. When you preach to their heart, God will deal with them.

I will tell you something else I found out that is a good process: the less I have to tell you what to do, the better off it is for everybody. I would much rather have God tell you what to do. I think that is a mistake that young Christians make when winning people to Christ. I like to be in a position where I have somebody that I probably know is unsaved, and yet I do not ever tell them they are unsaved because they think they are saved. So what do I do? I just let time go by. They keep coming to church. They keep getting the Word of God. You know what? The Holy Spirit of God does the work. I do not have to preach on salvation every week. I could preach on the man on the moon or UFOs or the heaven declared the glory of God or the state of Israel. You know what? The Holy Spirit of God will exact out of that exactly what that person needs, and in time, that person will say, "I think I need to be saved." You are always better off to let God tell you what is wrong with you. But some people will not listen to that. So God has guys like me and a thousand other preachers out there that basically preach the Word of God, and most Christians do not like it. But hey, it is a tough world out there; that is just the way it is.

That is the whole concept. You cannot legislate morals. You can put all kinds of rules around human nature, and human nature will find a way around it. You put a rule up here: "Dresses have to be to the knees." So all the women show up with dresses to the knees. Then you will find one

that has one so thin a mosquito can fly through it without breaking his wings. So now you have to put up here: "Dresses need to be knee-length. Dresses need to be thick." Then you will have some gal wear one so tight that it looks like a skin diver suit. So now you have to have... You see, in other words, human nature will always find a way around what it wants to do. So when you preach, you preach to the heart because the heart is what God does.

Let me tell you something, ladies. When you dress this morning, any morning, to please the Lord, whatever you have on will be right. If you are trying to impress somebody else or whatever the case, that is going to be obvious too. Same way with the guys. It is a thing where you cannot legislate morals. The story goes, a little kid one time said, his daddy said, "Well, what are you going to give up for Lent?" And the kid said, "Well, I am going to give up chocolate." He said, "That is a good idea." So about two weeks into Lent, Dad comes into his room, and he is eating chocolate. Dad says, "I thought you gave up chocolate for Lent." And he said, "Well, you did not give it up for Lent." And he said, "Yes, I did. I quit drinking alcohol." And the kid said, "I saw you drinking a beer yesterday." And the dad said, "Well, I gave up hard alcohol." The kid said, "Okay, I gave up hard chocolate. I am just eating soft chocolate." You see, there is always a way around it. In other words, when you get into that pulpit, you forget people and you just preach at hearts. Take the Word of God, let the Holy Spirit of God preach at hearts. That is the issue you get into.

You are going to see this church at Corinth; it is much like the churches today. They built a non-biblical system that we call today legalism, a church that is full of immature spiritual babies that have puffed themselves up with the little knowledge that they do have. Now they have devised a system of rules and regulations that are designed to keep people spiritual, and that just will not work. It is a church of spiritual Pharisees and Sadducees. I have told you this before: that has always been interesting to me. There is nowhere in the Bible do you find the authorization of Sadducees or Pharisees. They come out of that time period between the captivity of 606 B.C. and when Christ shows up. What they are, they are a group of religious leaders that are man-made, that God never gave any authority to anywhere, any place to run anything. They have suddenly appeared, and when Christ shows up, they are running the whole nation of Israel, yet they are not even found anywhere in the Bible. You know what that is? That is a picture of churches today. Churches build their churches on systems that are not even found in the Bible. That is the church of Corinth, and that is the problem they get into. That is modern-day legalism. That is modern-day Baptist churches.

### ➤ The Issue of Meat Offered to Idols

Now in this chapter, here is the issue. We need to understand what the issue is. Here is the deal: Christians are going down on Monday morning to the marketplace, and they want to get their groceries. When they go down to the marketplace, they go into the place that sells the meat. Hanging on the meat market wall is meat for 99 cents a pound. Right next to it is meat that is \$1.99 a pound. A dollar difference. The difference between the two is the fact that the 99-cent-a-pound meat was used in yesterday's pagan sacrifices and the pagan altars to temples to Zeus and Lord knows who all. Because it is a day old, and they kind of did not eat it, did not cook it, did

not eat it, but they gave it back to the market, he is selling it a dollar cheaper. The \$1.99 meat has just been freshly cut that morning.

Some of God's people are recognizing the deal. They are buying the 99-cent meat because it is cheaper. They are taking it home, and they are happy with the fact that they made a great deal. They are ahead. They got a great deal now going because they saved a dollar off a pound of meat, bought the 99-cent meat, and they are happy about it. Word spreads. Oh, the church of the Corinthians, some of God's people are not happy about that. Because the issue now has become that some of God's people are really upset because of the fact that this meat was offered to idols just the day before. They think there is some kind of blasphemy, some kind of sacrilege here. That God's people should not be buying meat and consuming it that was just offered yesterday for idols. That you are going to get a demon. That you are going to get some kind of curse on you. That something terrible is going to happen. That this is against God because that meat just yesterday was being used in sacrifices to all these pagan gods. And now you are a child of God who is going to buy that same meat and feed it to your family? See, that is the issue.

When I grew up, there was a law on the books. Many of you older folks remember this: how many remember the blue law? Oh, dating yourself. I really do not remember, but my mom and dad told me about it a lot. The blue law was a law that nothing could be open on Sunday. Restaurants could be allowed to be open. Today we want to go shopping after church. You have to pick up some this or that. You can go just about anywhere you want to go. I do not know of anything that is closed today on Sunday. You can go wherever you want to go. You can go out to the mall out here, out here at the Independence Center; they will all be open, people all over the place. When I grew up, that was a terrible thing. It was looked down on. Pastors preached on it. Oh, I remember hearing them just as a little kid. I remember them hearing and preaching on how evil it was to go out and do anything on Sunday because Sunday was the day of rest. They gave the idea that you should not do anything on Sunday. It always bothered me that right after church, the preacher always went out to a restaurant to eat, therefore causing somebody else to have to work to feed them. But that did not seem to bother them.

I started to figure this thing out when I was three. Somebody said, "How did you get what you know in such a short lifetime?" I put in a lot of overtime. I started when I was three. I looked at these things. As I got older, I thought to myself, "Now wait a minute." Once I got into the Bible, I saw this thing that, first of all, there is nowhere in the Bible that the day of rest was the Sabbath day. The blue law was based on the Sabbath. So what Baptist preachers did, they took the Sabbath concept and brought it into Christianity. Now I do not know how to break this news to you, but the Sabbath was Saturday. The New Testament church starts on the first day of the week. But you know what Baptist churches did? Baptist churches, because they were not operating by the Bible, they lifted up the Sabbath, which was the day of rest where you did not do any work, and tried to put it into the first day of the week, which is Sunday, to kind of keep everybody under control, so to speak. Now if you want to play that thing out to the line, if you read the Old Testament, we are going to make the first day of the week the Sabbath. I have some bad news for you, pastor. In most cases, the people in your church could not drive to your church without breaking that concept of the day of rest. But it did not seem to bother anybody. It is

because it was a man-made system. Nobody even knows where the blue law started. I know where it started, and I know how it got brought in and who brought it in and why it was unbiblical, because the people that brought it in were unbiblical. It goes all the way back to the Puritan background, and they are about as screwed up as you can get.

It went on and on. I remember when we have a tremendous athletic thing here, and our league probably has brought in more people. Let me ask you a question: how many people today first started coming to this church through our athletic ministry at some point? Look around you. There is a whole bunch of people who started coming through it, and a lot of people are not here today. It is one of the most powerful things that we have ever done. I learned that from back home in Canton by the model that they had an athletic league. But I realized that, again, back then, we were under some weird concepts. We were a lot like the Church of Corinth in many, many ways. We were not legalistic like the rest of them, but we had our own legalistic ways. One of the things that we did is we had a basketball league and a softball league. I basically mirrored my stuff off of what we did back then. We had one rule back then that I got rid of when I first came to Kansas City, and that was they had a length of hair rule. I am not kidding you. I look back on it and I think, "What in the world was wrong with us back then?" There were kids that came to play ball. If their hair touched the top of their ear, they were not allowed to play basketball. If the hair got on their collar. Now you have to remember that was back in the semi-hippie days. How many know who a hippie is? Some of you cannot go through life without knowing what a hippie is. Everybody thought short hair was godly. Hair was a big deal back then. They would misuse the verse out of Corinthians that says that long hair is given to a woman, not a man. I have heard preachers, my own father in the Lord, Mal Sabaka. He was a tough, rough guy, and he would say, I have heard him say it a thousand times, he would get up and he would preach and he would say, "Long hair was given to a woman to please her husband." And then he would look at all the men with long hair and he would say, "Whose husband are you trying to please?" That was him.

One day I figured it out. I watched this preacher preach. When he was working up a sweat and he was done, his hair was all over the place, and he kept wiping his hair out of his eyes. But he had short hair. Then I come to the great conclusion: it was not long hair that was offensive to God; it was the placement of that long hair. You take the hair this way and comb it over here or over here, God goes, "Hmm." You take that same hair and sweep it back, God goes, "Hmm." It was stupid. Absolutely stupid.

I grew up in an era where you did not go to movies if you were a Christian. In fact, if you were a worker in most Baptist churches, and a lot of you know this, you signed a thing that if you were going to be a deacon, you were going to be a worker, that you would not go to movies. And yet, we would show movies in church on Sunday night. But I figured this out. When you use the word, get up in the pulpit, and I made the mistake one time, boy, I got cleaned out about it. I got up and made the announcement, and we were having a movie from Bob Jones University, which was a great movie. \*Sheffy\*, I think it was. I bought a boy and his dog. No, that was \*Lassie\*. But anyway, I got up and I said, "We are having a movie tonight." Oh, I could feel the cringe behind my back when I sat down, and a pastor leaned over and he says, "We are having a film

tonight, not a movie." Then I got it. If you get up and you say you are having a movie, God goes, "Hmm." If you get up and you say we are having a film, God goes, "Hmm." It is stupid, absolutely stupid. No, it is ridiculously stupid. But these are the games that churches have played and continued to play.

Back in the 1970s and the 80s and the 90s, there was a man who was one of the biggest Pharisees that the world has ever seen. Christian Pharisees, same man, but he was a Pharisee. His name was Bill Gothard. Bill Gothard would have seminars around. Bill Gothard was an unmarried man. He promoted the concept of being celibate like Paul does, an unmarried man, never been married all his life. Yet he thought because he was an unmarried man, he had great insight into marriages. You do not have great insight into marriages until your wife hits you in the head with a frying pan or a rolling pin. You do not have great insight into marriage until she slams the door in your face, throws food in your face, and throws you down the cellar steps and sics the dog on you. Now you have insight. Excuse me for my moment of personal testimony there.

There is a book that just came out that somebody wrote about Bill Gothard called \*Battered Sheep\*. It is a great book. It lists the Pharisees of Bill. I do not need a book to know the Pharisees; I grew up in it. Bill Gothard took the position that there was absolutely no remarriage. It did not matter what happened. I mean, if your husband died, that was the only case, but absolutely no remarriage. No matter what happened, your husband could have beat you, shot you, murdered you, or tried to murder you, and you still had to stay married until he died. If you married somebody else, you were living in a life of adultery the rest of your life, and God was not pleased. That is Bill Gothard. He was really big on a lot of things. The thing that bothered me about it back then, and he was tremendously popular. He would come to Kansas City. There would be five, six thousand people. They would have to rent an auditorium or a big church. Five, six thousand people would go hear him. He was something else. They all come out with the little syllabuses, and they all came out preaching a little hypocrisy. It was incredible, absolutely incredible. He talked about the spirit of fornication, the spirit of adultery. Everything had a spirit to it, and it is incredible stuff.

Later on, when it was revealed that immorality was going on with his own people, his own staff, and he had a large staff of people, then it came out that he himself had been involved in his immorality. He got up before all of his people, all of the churches, and all the people that he taught, and he confessed moral failure. For everybody else for the last 50 years, it was sin, but for a pious Pharisee, it is moral failure. That sounds good. Fifty years ago, when you go down to the mission, they were bums. Now they are transients. I almost want to be one; that sounds so good. Back when you are a janitor, what is wrong with that? Now you are a sanitary engineer. His hypocrisy was sin for everybody else, but when he fell into what he preached on, for him it was a moral failure. See, it kind of sounds better, does it? Moral failure, oh, that is not bad sin. Like movies and film. They learned how to play the game. Everybody else had sin; he had a moral failure.

It was him that came up with a great theory on the Cabbage Patch dolls. I remember Cabbage Patch dolls. Oh yeah, you probably still have some. Bill taught that with a Cabbage Patch doll, you got a birth certificate, and each Cabbage Patch had a name. Bill taught, Bill, that is too

sophisticated, Billy taught that Cabbage Patch dolls came with a demon. If you gave your kid a Cabbage Patch doll, you were ensuring they were going to hell because they were going to get a demon. He even went so far as to say that all the names were demon names. You are laughing; it is absolutely true. I mean, you are going to laugh at it; it is funny. I will laugh in a minute. I am a future right now. But that is what he did. He would get up and he would berate Christians and put them under this great bondage that if you bought your kid a Cabbage Patch doll, your kid is going to hell because your Cabbage Patch doll has got a name with a demon. I remember looking at that and I thought to myself, "What day is he going to be in town?" "Well, he is going to be here Friday, Saturday, and Sunday." Wow, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. You know those are names of demon gods? You know Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday are the names of Roman gods. You notice in the Bible they never called it Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday. It is always the first day, the second day, the third day, based off the first day. You know why they never call Sunday, Sunday in the Bible? Because Sunday is a pagan day with a sun god. That was the big day of the week at 12 noon when they give all the sacrifice. So the Bible never makes that mistake. It calls it the first day of the week. We call it Sunday. You know April, January, February, March, April, May, pagan gods. You know that old thing goes. How does it go? "30 days hath September, April, June, and November..." They are pagan gods. It did not seem to bother him that he put his whole preaching schedule around demon gods. We would all be here October 31st, that is a Friday, but Cabbage Patch dolls had demons. Ridiculous.

He also preached that if you are a Christian and you eat red meat, you become a sexual deviant. That might make some of you happy. I do not know, but the bottom line is that is what he said. When he would come to Kansas City, there would be 6,000 people go hear him. Half of them go out for a rare steak when he was done. My point is, Christians are famous for building up systems that have nothing to do with the Bible. That is the church of Corinth. That is their problem. We have the same issue here, or should I say the insane same issue here in chapter 8. "You eat this meat, you are going to get a demon, and you will give in over to Satan."

Now Paul lays this chapter out very neatly, and I think it is probably one of the best outlines in all of the Bible. So you will want to get it down while we are here, especially people at the back tables. That is what you are there for. This is a great outline for you, and it is easy to get in your Bible, so you want to get it. I will tell you something else. There are a lot of good, solid, everyday principles in this great contrast.

### ➤ Knowledge Versus Charity (1 Corinthians 8:1-3)

The first three verses here really form an intro into the chapter. Let us look at verses 1 and 2.

Father, we do thank You and praise You for the Lord Jesus. We love You. Thank You, Father, for the time we have set aside now. Pray that You will use it. Give You the honor and glory out of it, and we will thank You for all You do. In Jesus' name, for Your sake we ask it. Amen.

Now look at verses 1 and 2. It says,

*1 Corinthians 8:1-2*

*Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth.*

*And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.*

Now that is a great concept and a great principle there. What he is saying here is the fact that there is a great contrast between knowledge and charity. You are going to find in this chapter, you do not find anything about wisdom, nothing about understanding. You are going to find a great contrast here between knowledge and charity. You see, knowledge is the basic facts of things, and that is what the church had, but they had no wisdom. You see, knowledge is facts, but wisdom is the ability to use the knowledge that you have, and understanding is the final process, which you look back and put it all in contact with the Bible. This church has knowledge, but they do not have wisdom, and they do not have any understanding, like most of God's people today.

Charity in the Bible will be defined for you, and we will see it when we get on down here, but charity in the Bible is defined as the biblical concept of love. It is changed in all the new Bibles. They take the word charity out and put the word love in. That is the wrong thing to do. There are different forms of love, and charity is the biblical form of love, because charity is something that you love something or someone without any ulterior motive. You do not want anything back. When you give something to charity, there are no strings attached, or there should not be. That is the biblical love in the Bible called charity. So we begin to see that contrast.

What he is saying here is this: if you are really spiritual, you do not need to brag about it. You know all that you do, and what you know, and how spiritual you are. Ever see Christians like that? Honest to goodness, there are some of God's people that they cannot listen to what God is doing in anybody's life without stepping in and telling you how they were part of it. It is just like, "Timeout, spotlights, come on me. Yes, look what I did. Look what God did with me. Oh yes, they got saved, they got this, but they could not have done it without me. Oh, keep that spotlight on me for another 15 minutes." That is where the term "15 minutes" phrase comes from, your friends. Of course, that is not what he is saying. He said, "If you are really spiritual, you do not brag about it." The true mark of a mature Christian, we do not have it in the church of the Corinthians, have very few of them today. But the bottom line, the true mark of a mature Christian, male or female, is that the more you know, if you are really spiritual, the more you know how stupid you are and you realize how little you really know. That is what he is saying in verse 2.

*1 Corinthians 8:2*

*And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.*

In other words, the true mark of spirituality is the more you know, the more it forces you to realize how much you do not know. You give God the glory for it because you have no problem telling people how stupid you are. You do not bask in the light of what you do know. That is why he said, "Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth." Charity is understanding and loving the Word of God from the aspect that the more you read it, the more you study it, and the more that you give it, God gives it to you, the more you realize how you do not know. Hey, I have been in

the Bible over 40 years, and I will tell you what right now, the thing that I am impressed about the Bible is not all the things that I know. The things that impress me about the Bible are the things that I do not know. I am on a crash course with the judgment seat of Christ and in a real hurry to find out what I need to know because that judgment seat of Christ is not going to hold me accountable to what I knew or what I did not know, but what I could have found out but was too lazy to do.

Then verse 3, this is all the intro to this chapter. Oh, this is a great concept. This is one of the greatest single verses in the Bible as far as I am concerned. I have used this more in dealing with people. I have used this more. Nothing has saved my hide more than anything else on this planet when it comes to dealing with people than this verse right here because it simply says,

*1 Corinthians 8:3*

*But if any man love God, the same is known of him.*

You know, I do not know why Christians cannot get that. I do not know why God's people continue to hang out with people who do not love God. In your mind, you think they have to love God, they must love God, they should love God. When the Bible clearly tells you, "If any man love God, the same is known of him." Let me tell you something. There are certain characteristics that go along with loving anything, including God. If you do not have those characteristics, you do not love Him. I mean, hey, again, I have a message. I preached this message one time years ago in a guy's Sunday school class. He invited me to preach while he was gone somewhere, and I preached that. People got mad at me, like I wrote that. I did not write that. That is what it says. You say, "Well, that is just your interpretation." You interpret it for me. That is one of the verses in the Bible that it just says what it says and it means what it says. Anyway you want to slice it, it says, "But if any man love God, the same is known of him." If you love Him, it shows.

You know what your wife's favorite expression is? It is another reason why I consider what Paul said about staying single, guys. Your wife's favorite expression is and will be, "Talk is cheap." You will say, "I love you." She will say, "Actions speak louder than words." "Shut up, woman! Bible says women will be silent in the church." That does not work either. I am telling you. What she is saying is true. Actions do speak louder than words. This whole thing, "I love you," when you do not show you love someone. You think if your wife can figure that out, hello, anybody in there? You do not think God can figure it out? God figures us out so fast it will not know what it is. Talk is cheap.

*John 14:23*

*Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.*

So we do not read our Bible at all. We do not get into the Bible at all. We do not do anything with the Bible at all. Then we say to God, "I love you." See? We really think God believes it. You tell your wife, you do not treat your wife right. You do not do what is right. You do not do anything

biblical with her. Then you walk around saying, "I love you." She looks at it just like God looks at it. She sees it as being phony.

He says, "If a man love me, he will keep my words." He says in Proverbs 18:24,

*Proverbs 18:24*

*A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.*

You all have friends. You all have close friends. You all have people that are really close to you. I watch you people. I watch the test of you teenagers. You text a thousand times a day. I do not know how you do it. I see some of them are just going so fast, man. I mean, I text. If you get a "V," it usually means a "U." I mean, that is just the way I am. My fingers are so big or the buttons are so small. I just, and I will hit two of them at the same time. I do not go back and correct it. I do not have time. If you, let me give you a little piece of advice here. If you have a long thing you want to tell me, call me. If you want an answer back, call me. I am not texting no epistles. I am sitting there, and I just, I will be sitting there all of a sudden, you know how your phone goes off and you get a text? Then you get these multiple epistles going on. I have one guy; he is just driving me nuts. He sends me 50 texts at a time. I am sitting there, and he says, I am saying, "What in the world is going on my phone?" My battery goes dead just telling me he got texts. Then he opened it up, and there are 28 texts. I got this guy's life story. Thank God for delete buttons, boy. I will tell you. That old commercial is true about that girl that broke up with her boyfriend, and she said, "You know what the best part of breaking up is? That little delete button on your phone," and she puts his number out of her phone. I love that. That is true. I look at that. If you want, you want it, you can send me something this long, and I will read it unless you are this guy. I will read it. No, he is a, I will tell you what, man. I mean, he is in the ozone layer or someplace. I will read it, but you will probably get back, "Okay." If you have something you want me to answer, I get people sending me Bible questions on the text. You are out of your mind. "Bob, can you explain to me this?" No, I do not have that much memory in my phone. You kidding me? You want me to do a three-hour dissertation on a text? Man, you are way ahead of me in technology. I will tell you that much. That is not going to happen. So in that case, you will get, "I do not know." You want me to send me a text? You have, I will answer you back.

Now I have no idea how this fit into what I was saying before because I completely lost my mind, but it is a good thing. If you want, call me. Call me. Just a minute here. I am going to find out where I am at. Oh, your friend is a sticker closer than a brother. I watch you kids text your friends all the time. You are like lightning. I have seen people driving their cars. I think there ought to be a special police unit that drives unmarked cars, sits high, truck, that can look down in. All you do is tool up, and you see somebody over there texting and pull them over. They will unseat their phone, body search them, throw them in jail. I watch them. They are doing it out of time. I watch people in Bible study. I am up here teaching my heart out, and somebody is back there, "I love you too." That is all about. My point is this: you cannot get along with your friends, your boyfriend, your girlfriend without talking to them one way or another, a thousand times a day, but you can get along without saying one word to God all day long, and then you still think

God thinks you love Him. We live in two different worlds, people. This is part of my problem. She is a friend that is closer than a brother. You ever have a friend you just did not talk to? I mean if you picked up a gal you are dating and you go out and have a nice night, going to go to dinner and go somewhere, and it is a beautiful night, and you are driving there, and the time you pick her up, the time you bring her back, you never say a word to her. She asks you what is wrong. No dinner conversation. You go to the menu place. "What would you like, sir?" She tried to make conversation. "Well, honey, how is your food?" "Good, I guess, huh?" We do the same thing with God. That is a great powerful verse.

Here it comes. If you love somebody, you like to give them things. Do you ever miss your wife's birthday? You know, she gets up in the morning, and she is expecting roses and cards and everything, and there is nothing there. She is an optimist. I did not know you very well. She thinks, "Oh, he is going to surprise me with flowers sometime during the day after he is gone to work. How romantic." So every time she hears a car stop out front, she is looking, waiting for the florist. Nothing. She is still an optimist. So she thinks you are going to swoon her off her feet and take her out to dinner at six o'clock when you come home. You come in dead bone dragging in, you know, flop down, turn on the sports thing. Nothing. She is still an optimist, though I must confess, but this time she is waning a little bit, and you finally go to bed that night, and she is thinking, "Well, this is it. She is going to surprise me. He has got something out there." You know, my friend probably grew up a new car, and he is going to turn the porch light on and say, "Honey, whose car is that out there?" And you are going to say, "I do not know." "Well, whose car do you think that is?" "It is yours." And you know how it works, do not you? You know, turn the light off, you know, the roller, go to sleep, say, "Night, honey." Next thing you know, whack. You startle up there and say, "What is going on with you? What is the matter?" And she is crying by now, you know, and she is hysterical by now, and she is boo-hooing all over the place, and she just, you know, and you do not know. You still do not have a clue. I mean, you are like Dagon, the false god. You are dead, dumb, and you cannot get anything. She finally tells you it is your birthday, and you feel terrible. So you know what you do? We all do it. You just say, "Oh honey, you know I love you." Does that work for her? No, seriously, does that work for her? I am trying to see how many people have been guilty of that. Does that work for her? No, it does not work for God either. You love people. You are like, you know what you do? You find out what people like, you find out what they want to do, then you give them what they want. It is just that simple.

"If any man love God, the same is known of him." I will tell you something else, if any man does not love God, the same is known of him. That negative attitude comes out. How can you love God and not go to church when the Bible says Christ loved the church and died for it? You think you would love the things He would love? I think, maybe that is just me now. You find all kinds of reasons? What did anybody ever could ever do? Anybody ever say, "So you had a bad experience at one church?" So what? What does that mean? Throw the Bible out because you found a bad experience? Go find you a good one. You know why I find people, most churches when they say, "Well, I do not like that church." Let me translate that for you. I am a Greek and Hebrew expert. It is not that I do not like that church; it is that I do not like any church. Because I am out of fellowship with God, and I am going to make a pretense that I do not like this church, but six months, a year, two years from now, I will not be going to any church. You know why?

Because that is my real issue. "If any man love God, the same is known to him." And if you do not love God, the same is known to him. This is all intro. You know why you spend time with people who do not love God? You know why you give up the things of God for the worldly things, and you are comfortable with it? You figure it out yet? I will tell you why: because you do not love Him really either. That thing I gave you, what, two Thursday nights ago in Psalm 78, that thing will decimate you if you ever bother reading it. Verse 36, "They did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied to him with their tongue." That is us. That is us. So these first three verses are great intros.

➤ Idols Are Nothing (1 Corinthians 8:4-6)

Then he gets into the heart of the matter here in verses 4, 5, and 6. He says,

*1 Corinthians 8:4-6*

*As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one.*

*For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,)*

*But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.*

You see what he is saying here is, and here is another contrast: God (capital G-O-D) versus gods (small G-O-D). That is contrast. Now God (capital G-O-D) will be the Lord Jesus Christ or God the Father. The small G-O-D will be false gods. Those are the things that man makes up. He says this meat offering is to gods, and it means absolutely nothing to a Christian. A Christian ought to be smarter than that. A Christian has no illusion that there are any other gods. He has no illusion that this meat issue is absolutely stupid as far as contact with the devil and getting demons. See, a Christian should see what is real and what is not real. He should have a good handle on the contrast, and he should view the real versus the unreal and view the unreal with total lack of respect and total no credibility whatsoever to it.

We live in a world that wants to be tolerant of religions, and I understand that to a certain degree, but you realize that that is something everybody has to obviously, we are under grace, so you have to use that on an individual different basis. But at the bottom line, in the Old Testament where there was no grace, God did not cut the old false nations any slack at all. You get back there in 1 Kings chapter 18 with Elijah and the four prophets of Baal; they have a contest that is going to find out whose God is God. See a contrast. They build a sacrifice, and they simply say, "Okay, you say your God is God. I say my God is God. Let us have a test. Let us put the God to the test. Let us build an altar, put the wood on it, get this thing ready. Whichever God can call down fire, that is the one that we will just know that He is God," and everybody agreed. So they say, "You guys go first." You know these four other prophets of Baal, they build the altar, and they get all the wood on it, they get the sacrifice on it, and they are dancing around, you know, and they are cutting themselves and they are crying up till 12 noon when the sun is the highest. That is when the sun god is supposed to shoot down fire. Nothing ever happens.

Now Elijah, he is a great model for you and for me. He has great tolerance for religion. He is standing over here mocking them. Somebody is saying after the first half hour, "Where is your God?" After an hour, "Do you think there will be any fire today at all?" Two hours, "Do you think your God maybe is on vacation?" That just infuriates them, and now they are cutting themselves, dripping blood on it. He is over there saying, "Hey, you want to get some real blood on that? I want you to try that one right there." He is making fun of them. He says, "Maybe your God is on a hunting trip." Then he takes his. He builds his altar, puts his wood on it, and then he brings in about 150,000 gallons of water and puts it on it. Then he stands back, and God comes down. He burnt, the Bible says He burns up the sacrifice. He burns up the wood. He burns up the water, and He burns up everything. Then he did the Christian godly thing. He killed the 400 prophets. Now that is the Old Testament. My point is, you ought to see as Elijah saw that the things of this old world and the things that the world tries to throw at you, you do not have to be afraid of those things. You do not have to be afraid of them at all.

God's people are kind of like superstitious people. I had a guy one time, and he had a heart attack. He called me on the phone, and he said, "You are not going to believe this." He said, "I do not know what to do." I thought his wife died. I thought his kid got hit with a car. He was upset because he went to get new license plates, and he came back 666. He thinks now because he has got a license plate 666, he is demon possessed. He thinks they are going to befall on him. He said, "I do not know what to do." I said, "No, do not take them back. Put them on your car, man. What a great witness opportunity. Hey, you know you got 666. Yeah, I am looking for the devil. I am going to run over him." Superstitious Christian. "I got 666."

One time I had a person, you know, with all the good intents in the world, a number of years ago. I knew I was going out of the country and going to some places that were trying to hang in, and this person was a dear old lady. She was probably in her 60s and her 70s, and I would talk to her about where I am going and things that I am doing, and she and I, and she was not saved, I do not think, but she felt the compassion, and you know what she did? She got me a little gift. She was the St. Christopher's medal. You know what I did? I thanked her for it, hugged her and kissed her, and I said, "That really means a lot to me." Now do you think I am wearing the St. Christopher medal today or ever did? Do you think that if I did wear it, you think I would get a demon from St. Christopher? You see, you are not superstitious about those things. You are just not. You are not. You are just not.

You know, God's people come to the place where they are afraid of things that they are not. Kathy gave me a... Kathy Langford gave me a couple of charts at a National Geographic, and I love stuff like that because they do a great job, and on one of them was the land of Israel, and on the other side, it was a portrayal of the history of Jerusalem, and it showed a timeline coming down through it, which I thought was great. It showed the Dome of the Rock where the Muslims have today, and that was the site of the temple, and it showed the outcropping there, and it gave basic, you know, National Geographic. They are not going to... They are just going to give you the facts, and as I read that, you know, they were talking about how the Christians claim this and the Muslims claim this, and this is the place where Mohammed supposedly went to heaven on a winged horse after his trip from Mecca, you know, and this is... and then talked about the Bible.

"This is where the temple was built with Solomon and David here, and this is where in Christian tradition the Lord is coming back." You read all that stuff, and you know what? I look at that, and I read that just like Mohammed did not win place or show. I do not give the story and the credibility about Mohammed and the Dome of the Rock because I know when the Lord comes back, He is going to knock that golden dome off that thing, and He is going to set that thing up the way He wants. I do not give him any credibility, you know why? Because there is no credibility to it. Those are false gods, just like connected with 1 Corinthians chapter 6, and a real Christian who knows his Bible does not waste time of day with it. Does not waste the time of day with it.

➤ Weak Conscience and Fear (1 Corinthians 8:7-8)

Now look at verses 7 and 8.

*1 Corinthians 8:7-8*

*Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled.*

*But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse.*

"Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge." What knowledge? The knowledge of verse 6 that there is one God and one Lord, and the rest of it does not matter. "Howbeit?" That is an old English phrase for "how come?" "Why do not you grow? Why do not you know these things? Why are you staying a big weak baby Christian all of your life?" Because the bottom line is, folks, when you know and operate by the Bible and Bible principles, you do not get caught up in these things. Weak Christians who have a weak conscience, that is what he says. Verse 7. They have a weak conscience. You know what that means? They do not have a good conscience toward God. You know what that means? They do not understand what to believe and what not to believe and where to lay their emotions based on an absolute Bible that tells you what to feel and what to think.

Now I find a lot of God's people that are scared of a lot of... I do not know if you know this or not, but the devil and the demonic forces, they can only operate in your life as a Christian. Bible says, "Give no place to the devil" in Ephesians chapter 4. You know what that place is? The devil has any place in your life to do anything or any unclean spirit has anything to do in your life to give you any problems. You know where the door that he enters in? It is the door of fear. It is the door of ignorance. It just starts with you believing that there is something to it when there is not, and then you are afraid of it when the Bible clearly tells you that perfect love casts out fear. The Bible says, "He that is in you is greater than he that is in the world." The Bible says that you ought to perfect your love for God, and by the perfecting that love, it casts out fear. You see, and listen to what I am saying. You should fear the devil, but you should not be afraid of the devil. When I say you should fear the devil, I mean you do not mess with him. You do not challenge him out like Billy Sunday did to come out and fight. You do not shake your fist and call the devil a coward. You do not do stupid things like that. Michael the Archangel, who was more powerful

than all of us, in the book of Jude, when he was faced with the devil, the Bible said would not even bring a railing accusation against him. He just rebuked him with the Lord and said, "Let him alone." That is good advice.

*1 Samuel 24:6*

*And he said unto his men, The LORD forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the LORD'S anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the LORD'S anointed.*

The devil, if you know your Bible, is the Lord's anointed. He is the anointed cherub. He is one of the Lord's anointed. He has a job to do just like anybody else in the Bible if you know your Bible. You see, you fear the devil of who he is, but you are not afraid of the devil or his crowd because as a child of God, they do not have any power over you. They do not have any control over you. My God, folks, you have the Holy Spirit of God living inside you. You have God Almighty living inside you. What in the world are you afraid of? I will tell you what you are afraid of. You are afraid of the unknown, and the unknown in your life is because you are ignorant of the Bible. You have never got into it. You have never grown through it. So there are spooky things out there.

I have not been winning for years. I am too old, and there is too much money. But haunted houses are always great. We used to take, when I was years ago when I was a youth pastor, we took kids to the edge of hell downtown, and some would go, they were great. I enjoy it. I enjoy it. I do not know why. I pay \$9 to be scared, but I enjoy it. After about four or five years, I got a little smarter, and it became fun. But it also became, "What is the point?" Maybe that is why I do not go anymore. Because you go in there, and you just place it where it is pitch dark, and they hang things from the ceiling, and there are people that reach out and touch you, and you hear groans, growls, all these things out there, and it is dark. It is scary. I will never forget for the first four or five years I went, it was fun. It was scary. The girls, they are really scared, and they will not go. So you are going to be the man; you are going to lead them, but you do not want to go either, you know. You walk up there, and somebody comes around a corner with a big mask on like that, you know, look down at you, and you just, you know, you try to be brave. But you know what? That is what you paid the money for.

After about four or five years, I happened upon a night vision scope. We got in there in a dark room. You could turn it on. Everything was... They have big signs, "No flashlights." You know why? Because when you turn the lights on in those places, they are not scary anymore. You see the walls, you see the painted stuff on there, you see the guy with makeup on, and he is fake because the light is on; it always shows you what the fake is. I said when the light is on, it always shows you what the fake is. Thank you very much. You know why? Because when the lights come on, all the darkness is gone, and there is nothing to be afraid of anymore. My point being, there are a lot of things out there in the dark that the devil wants to try to scare you with: Cabbage Patch dolls, meat given to idols. When you turn the light on, the Word of God at the entrance of that word, give it light, see there is nothing to be afraid of anymore. Now it does not mean you do not fear the devil of who he is, and you do not be stupid and take him on. You

reverence him of the power that he is, but you also know that greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world, and he has no power over you.

I have had people call me, "Bob, I think I have got a demon in my home. What should I do?" "Run him over with a car when you are back in the garage." You see, the very fact that you get afraid, that gives them all the license they want. They play on your fear. Maybe you do, maybe you do not. You walk into the house, and you are saying, "There was power, power, power in the blood of the Lamb." He is gone. Somebody said one time, "I was sitting at the table, and I was eating, and the salt shaker moved. What should I do?" "Tell him to get his own food." "This food was given to me by God Almighty, the Lord Jesus Christ, the one that is going to put you in the bottomless pit, Revelation chapter 20. So what in the world are you doing here? Excuse me, I am out of here, sorry." You know, that is what Jesus did when the devil came to Him in Matthew early on there, Matthew 4, attacked Him three times. He just said three times, "It is written." The devil said, "I am done here."

Verse 8 says, "It does not matter to God one way or the other, whether you eat it or you do not eat it, as long as a Christian, you know the truth about it." I am not afraid to eat it. You should know the truth about everything and then make your decision based on that. We make too many decisions based on fear of what we do not know. I told you a lot of good principles here.

#### ➤ Liberty and Stumbling Blocks (1 Corinthians 8:9-13)

*1 Corinthians 8:9-13*

*But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak.*

*For if any man see thee, which hast knowledge, sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols;*

*And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?*

*But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ.*

*Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.*

Now, this is where we switch over, the great balance. In everything in life, there is a balance. We just talked about all the things that you are to be bold in. Now he switches, and he talks about the fact that these are the things that you have to balance it out with. To everything, there is a balance. I told you before that you keep finding the word knowledge here; you do not find the word wisdom or the word understanding. We find here that somebody is weak in their conscience. That means that they have not gotten the light.

Now, I have to say this, and this is where you have to balance it out. Obviously, the Bible says we need to be careful of weak Christians, young Christians, and not do things in front of them that are going to hurt them or make them stumble. But at the same time, you cannot live your life being in fear of weak Christians, or you will not get anything done. There has to be a line drawn.

What he is saying is, and you find this true in the ministry when you have been in it for a while, you find out there is nothing wrong with being a weak Christian, weak in your conscience. The problem is when you continue to stay there, that you do not grow out of it. You can be respectful and help somebody and be careful with somebody, but let me tell you something. If they continue to stay that way and not get the Word of God and the principles in their life, then that is on them. That is the balance you have to have.

He says in verse 11, "Do not let the fact that it is okay be flaunted in the weaker brother's face." This is a problem many, many times because we know it is okay. We just beat up the other person with it, and that is not good. I think that when there are questionable areas, you need to sit down with them, open up the Bible, and show them. If they do not get it, that is okay. If they stay in the book, they will continue to grow, and in time they will get it. If they do not stay in the book and grow, what is the matter? It is just that simple.

Verse 12 says, because the... and this is a great principle. Using our liberty to make a young Christian fall, we even know the thing is right. He says,

*1 Corinthians 8:12*

*But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ.*

Now, that is a tremendous principle. That is one of the greatest verses in the Bible that says when God's people go out of their way to slander somebody, to hurt somebody, say something about somebody, they think they are doing it to them, and they are a great Christian. The bottom line is the Bible says they are sinning against Christ. You know why? Because that person is part of Christ's body. That is why. That is a great concept. Unknown, but a great concept.

Verse 13 says, "So we use discretion in not just what you do, but how you do it." I think that is wisdom. Knowledge is the facts, but wisdom and understanding is the ability to use the knowledge that you have in a biblical format. There are a lot of things that you can do and say that you do not. This is the end result, knowledge. But as I said, there is no wisdom. There is no understanding. So when it is just knowledge by itself, and you never attain the wisdom and understanding, you know what knowledge does? We already looked at it. Knowledge puffs you up. It puffs you up because you never learn how to use the knowledge that you have. You never attain the wisdom to see how to use the knowledge or the understanding to see the biblical principles that tells you what to do with it. That is the bottom line in the problem. It is always a balance. It is always a balance.

## V. Paul's Example of Liberty and Accountability (1 Corinthians 9)

Now let us come into chapter 9 here. In this chapter, he continues the aspect of our liberty that he is already talking about in 1 Corinthians 8:9-13.

➤ Paul's Apostolic Rights (1 Corinthians 9:1-5)

He is saying here basically,

*1 Corinthians 9:1-5*

*Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord?*

*If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord.*

*Mine answer to them that do examine me is this,*

*Have we not power to eat and to drink?*

*Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?*

Now what he is saying here basically is this, and I read these and then I will give you an understandable breakdown of it so you can better understand it and basically get it into your Bible. All these things that I am telling you are right in my Bible, right by these verses. Paul says he has a right to do and go wherever he wants, but he will not do it because his goal is to reach people. Some of those things he could do will hurt and not help people come to Christ. Here again, this is the ability to discern and understand. What he is saying here in verses 1 through 5 is based on the two or three other great principles in the Bible that we have all looked at by now. Remember we come through Romans, we talked about Romans chapter 14 and 15 that were to help the weaker Christians. Romans 15:1, "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak." Remember I gave you 1 Corinthians 6:12,

*1 Corinthians 6:12*

*All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.*

Nothing should control you. Nothing in your life in excess is bad, even the Bible. Now I know a lot of young Christians have a tough time with that. That is because you are still young. You do not understand. Bible says, "The full soul loatheth an honeycomb." Here comes a point where you know, I grew up, Mel Sabaka, my father in the Lord. He was my inspiration for everything in the Bible. I tried to mirror many things. By trial and error, I learned a lot of things that worked for him, did not work for me. Mel used to read his Bible through every 33 days. Now that is 55 chapters a day, by the way. So there was a time in my life when I felt that was the key to learn the Bible. So I started reading the Bible through 55 chapters a day, and I started to bring it once every 33 days. I did that for two, maybe three years. At the end of three years, I was the worst spiritual mess you could ever be in your life. The reason for that, and I learned a great truth out of it. The reason for that is, see, I thought that it was how many times I went through the Bible that really made you spiritual. By the end of my three years or two and a half years, whenever it was, I was judging my spirituality, not on what God was doing with me, but that I got my 55 chapters in today. If I got my 55 chapters, I felt like I was in fellowship with God. When I fell short of it, I felt like I was not right with God. In reality, it had nothing to do with that. I learned

a great lesson out of that. The great lesson I learned was, it is not how many times you go through the Bible, but it is how many times the Bible goes through you. That is the key. Because too much Bible, like anything else, gets you off track. You have to have a balance. Everything in life is a balance. People say, "Oh, a Bible, you got, oh, I cannot believe Bob said you could get too much balance." That is because you are a Pharisee. That is because you are puffed up. You do not see the balance in anything. That is the whole concept. You have got to have a balance in everything you do.

Now he says in verses 2, 3, 4, and 5, "I have the power to do all things." See, I am under grace, but power always has to have an accountability factor. Always does. You have the power to do whatever you want to do, but there has to be an accountability factor. This is the problem with churches today. Pastors want the people to submit to them, but they do not want to submit themselves back to the people. They want the people to be accountable to them. They do not want to be accountable to the people. That will not work. That will not work. People, you know, they have to understand that accountability is absolutely crucial.

You know, we talk about leadership in a church, and we talk about pastors or deacons or elders, and everybody thinks that is some special deal. But the bottom line is this: you are not a pastor or deacon, an elder in a church for any other reason other than to serve the people you are in, and you are accountable to them. This thing that is some kind of power that you being named makes you something special. All it does is make you lower than everybody else because you are to be a servant. When you do not fulfill that, then you have got your own puffed up mindset of it.

I will tell you this. You notice there is a great principle that it keeps popping up in everything that Paul talks about. I think it is a great principle. Notice he says, "You are my work in the Lord" in verse 1. He says, "The seal of my apostleship are ye in the Lord" in verse 2. Over in 2 Corinthians, they were people that were upset with Paul. When you study the New Testament, we look back on it and we think that Paul, you know, everybody loved Paul. How could they not? We read the books, Paul's writings, and they are a source of everything that we believe in our church. But I have to tell you, and you should know this, if you know anything about your Bible, in Paul's day, he was not accepted by everybody. A lot of people did not like him. A lot of people had a lot of problem with the way he did things. Paul always keeps bringing up. I think this is one of the greatest tremendous principles you are ever going to find anywhere again in the Bible about how to find out contrast to what is real and what is wrong, what is phony and what is real. Because there were Pharisaical Christians, like in 2 Corinthians chapter 3. They are actually, Paul is trying to help this church. There are people in the church now that were once Paul's friends that are now out of fellowship with God. They are making Paul the bad guy. They are saying, "Well, who do you think you are coming in and telling us what we should do?" Then they have the audacity to ask him, "Could you provide for us a letter that proves you are who you say you are?" What? You know what he says to them? He says, "You want a letter? Go look in the mirror." He says, "You be my letter of epistle." In other words, you guys would not even be here if it was not for me. But there were people all through his life that gave him problems.

I am telling you, that brings up a great concept for you and for me. Because you can always tell what people really are. You want to write this down. You can always tell what people really are. I

said, you can always tell by what people really are by what they build. I will say it again. You can always tell who people really are by what they build. You see, Paul was constantly attacked by people who never built anything for God. So what he is doing here, by contrast, is giving us the great principle of how he handled it by saying to the people who attacked him all the time, but in their lives they never did anything, he contrasts what he has built: thousands of people, probably hundreds of thousands of people, thousands of churches, versus what they built: absolutely nothing. You see, the Bible makes things real clear, real easily. Things like this are invaluable in our own day and age that we live in. If you really want to know where somebody is at with God who wants to pretend they are spiritual, wants to live like the world and live like hell, and yet talk about God and how much they love God, just watch what they build. Because whatever they build is a direct relationship to where God is at. Paul uses that as a contrast because here is Paul building thousands of people, building thousands of churches. Here is somebody who is building nothing criticizing the man who is building everything. So Paul has no problem. We look at that and we say that is arrogance. We say, "Well, Paul, that is pretty prideful." He did not see it that way. He uses it to show them. He uses it to show them when he comes down through there. He says, "You want to talk about my work in the Lord? Hey, you are my work in the Lord. You want to see the seal of my apostleship? Just go look in the mirror." You will always find what people are by what they build. It is true in any church. In any church, you will have people who labor and work and build people. You will have people who complain about what is going on. You will have people that will focus on and do and get involved and try to change people's lives. People who stand on the sidelines and just complain about everything that somebody else does. What do they build? Absolutely nothing. What do they do? Try to tear down what you are building, and that today it does not make any difference. It does not make any difference. They will all get a bottle of beer, a can of snuff, and be off. It is just the way it works.

➤ **Becoming All Things to All Men (1 Corinthians 9:19-23)**

Then verses 19 through 22. Now here is another great principle.

*1 Corinthians 9:19-23*

*For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more.*

*And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law;*

*To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law.*

*To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.*

*And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you.*

Now, real spiritual people take not the attitude of a Pharisee or a Sadducee, but rather the attitude of a servant. Verses 20 through 23 simply put, Paul says he became all things. He became sensitive to where they are at. He identified with their suffering. He was sensitive to their culture. He identified with whatever they were at in life without becoming a partaker of their sins. I think one of the greatest examples of this is in Acts chapter 16, and then again in Acts chapter 20. In Acts chapter 16, keep in mind now, this is on one of Paul's missionary journeys. Long after the law was gone, Paul is going down to the Jews, and he is going to try to meet them for Christ. He is taking Timothy with them, who is a Gentile. So what does Paul do? He has Timothy circumcised. There is no law at this point. Timothy does not have to be circumcised in any way, shape, or form. You know why Paul did it? Paul knew that if he was not, it was going to cause a problem, and Paul knew that it did not mean anything to him. So he had Timothy circumcised so he could be accepted of the people that he wanted and did not meet.

Over in Acts chapter 20, you know what he does? After he goes down to Jerusalem, he goes down there, and he heads out with the Jews, and he goes right in with them. He shaves his head, he puts the clothes on, he goes through the purification. Hey, all this is done away now with Christ. None of this has anything to do with New Testament Christianity, but Paul knew that is where the Jew were, and he was. So he goes down there, he does everything they do right up to the point where it is time to give the evening sacrifice, and Paul does not do the evening sacrifice. You know why? Because he knew that was the line. He knew the purification did not mean anything, the clothes did not mean anything. The having Timothy circumcised did not mean anything, but sacrifice and a lamb. Once the Lamb was already sacrificed on the cross, that would have crossed the line. You see, he had the ability to use what he knew, and by doing that, he did not come as a Pharisee. He did not come as this religious leader. He did not come lording over people. He came as a servant, and our job is to understand and how to accept people where they are at because through your attitude of a servant, you become the tool that God uses to bring them to Christ. So he says, "I become all things to all men." He said, "I have made all things to all men that I might by all means save some." Then he says, verse 23, "And this I do for the gospel's sake." That is the only reason we exist. We get in chapter 15, we are going to define the gospel, but it is the only reason we exist for the gospel's sake. That is our only motive. Our only motive is to do what we do the way we do it and have the balance in our life and follow the things that we are supposed to because of what Christ did for us on the cross, the balance.

### ➤ The Christian Race and Its Rules (1 Corinthians 9:24-27)

Then the last thing I want you to see here in verses 24 through 27. He says,

*1 Corinthians 9:24-27*

*Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.*

*And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.*

*I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air:*

*But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.*

Now you want to look at this. Here is another great principle. Remember a couple of weeks ago on Thursday night Bible study, we talked about Ephesians 6, and somebody asked a question about the armor of God. I told you how that Paul put that context for you and me in the Christianity and the concept of a first-century Roman soldier. He identified with a soldier and what he saw his day and then wrote about it in Christian terms. He is doing the same thing here. He is putting this context here of the Christian life and the Christian walk and the Christian race in a concept of a first-century Roman Olympics. Exactly what was going on. I do not know if you know much about the Olympics. The Olympics started with the Greeks long before the Roman Empire ever came on. When the Roman Empire defeated Greece, then they kept on a lot of the Olympic games, and they brought them along, and they brought them right through. I think they were up to about 200 AD when Theodosius then canceled them all. We re-erected, resurrected them a number of years ago, and we still do them today. Nothing like on the grandeur back then. It is an incredible thing.

He talks about the five in verse 25 that we are striving for the mastery, and we are running to win a prize, and that prize of course is a crown, an incorruptible crown. There shows you again the balance, an example of an athlete in training using at these long-distance marathon runners back in the Olympics, they would train and train and train, but they did it for a corruptible crown. We run the race, the race of the Christian life, for an incorruptible, and of course, you know that is one of the five crowns that you get at the judgment seat of Christ.

He says there, he says verse 26, "Run not as uncertainly." Some of God's people do not even know what they are running for today. Some of them do not even know they are in a race. It is like the old cliché we use today, "You know what, they are not even in the same ballpark." That is what he is saying. Some of God's people, they run as uncertainly. You do not even know why you are running. You do not even know there is a race.

Verse 26 says, "Not as one that beateth the air." God's people, some blessed a heart, all through their life they just swing and hit nothing. They are like a boxer that cannot hit their opponent, and all they ever hit is thin air. In the old days, and this whole prize, this whole concept is built around the judgment seat of Christ. In the old days, the old guys used to call the judgment seat of Christ the Bema Seat. Nobody ever uses that anymore, and that is why we have come a long way and do not think in those terms anymore. But the original concept of that Bema Seat goes back to the Olympics. I do not know if you know it or not, but in Corinth itself where this church is at that we are studying, it was one of the great Olympic games. When the Greeks had it, it was the center of it all. They called it the Isthmus game because Corinth is the land masses in Isthmus. It was called the Isthmus games. It was a time when the Bema Seat back then in those days, once Rome took it over, when the runners came in and everything was done, there was a platform that they came up, and when they come out of that platform, that is where they got their crown. There was a man there who was in a seat that judged whether they came in first, second, or third. That is where the concept of the Bema Seat first got its start because in relationship to the Judgment Seat of Christ, because there is going to come a day when we stand before God, and we also

receive a crown. They did it as an incorruptible, we get it as an incorruptible. That is the whole concept. So this idea of the ancient Olympics, Paul using that as an analogy of the race that you and I are in.

He says in verse 27, "Keeping your body under subjection." There again, that is the liberty that you have, but the good sense to know how to use it. You get knowledge from the Bible, but you do not leave it, stay at knowledge. You develop that knowledge into wisdom and understanding. You develop a servant's attitude. He said when you do not do that, when you preach one thing like many pastors do, but in your practice you do something else, you become a castaway. Nobody wants to listen to what you have to say.

Then lastly, I am going to give you this. I heard this as a message many, many, many years ago. Boy, it is true. I have them in my Bible, and I just simply got it in the same passage right here, and it simply says the rules of the race. You know, there are rules to every race. There are rules in the Olympics. There are rules if you run track, and many of you guys have ran track, you know there are rules. This race for Jesus Christ, for the prize, the judgment seat of Christ, the incorruptible crown, there are some rules. The rules are strikingly parallel.

1. Run as hard as you can. Give it everything you have. A runner does not hold back. A runner knows that he has got to maybe pace himself, but he knows that he never gives up. He always runs as hard as he can.
2. Stay in your own lane. Mind your own business. Do not get focused on what other people are struggling with or doing with if you are not going to help them. Do not let what somebody else's failures deter you in your race. Let me tell you something. If I let other pastors and other Christians that wanted to quit along the way and give up along the way, if I let them affect me, I would have been out of this race the first year I was in it. You know what, I am not running for them. Your failure in this race is not going to stop me in running my race. So get over it. I am running this race. You have got to run with me. You may start to run this race with me, and you may lapse off someplace along the line. Have at it, baby. I am running the race.
3. Do not look at the hurdles. I think that is probably what gets most God's people in this race. There are going to be hurdles in this race you have got to get over. You know a hurdler does not look at the hurdles. He is looking straight ahead. It is almost like an automatic thing. He lifts that body up, and he is over those hurdles, and he does not even look at them. As a child of God running this race, do not look at the hurdles. Keep your eye on the Lord Jesus Christ and the finish line.
4. Do not look at the crowd that is watching you. There were many a race lost because somebody is running hard, and then some sweet little chickie on the sideline calls out his name. Just for a split second, he looks over and smiles. Then he gets passed in the race. Do not care about the crowd watching you.
5. No false starts. You get in those blocks, you go in the gun cracks, and you run as hard as you can. You run as, no false starts. You do it exactly the way you are supposed to do it.
6. You run lawfully. You do not cut across the infield to win. You do not put little jet packs in your shoes to make you run faster.

2 Timothy 2:5

*And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully.*

You have got to run this race by the book, folks. A lot of people do not like that. A lot of people start out liking that, do not wind up liking it, I do not know what to tell you. The race is the race. The race is run based on the fact that you run it lawfully. This thing here is a picture of a church and a bunch of Christians that had knowledge, puffed themselves up, and never got to any place else. Now it has caused them problems. By contrast, Paul shows you some great principles. It is an incredible book. Next week we will go in chapter 10 and 11. Then we will get into the great chapter on 12, 13, and 14, which deals with spiritual gifts. That will be a great section unto itself. We will shoot a lot of sacred cows in that particular pasture or field.

Let us pray. Father, we do thank You and praise You, Father, Lord Jesus, we do love You. Thank You for today, thank You for the Word of God You have given us, thank You for its truth. Thank You for the race that You have called us to run. Help us, Father, to run that race.