

LESSON 20: I CORINTHIANS 1-7
FEBRUARY 1, 2017

OVERVIEW

- . Introduction
- . Wisdom

INTRODUCTION

- . Origins of the church in Corinth
 - . Paul started the church during his second mission trip
 - . The time that has elapsed since the founding of the church and this letter is about seven years
 - . The vast majority of the people who make up the membership of this church had pagan backgrounds, from Greek heritage, with virtually no understanding of the scriptures (Old Testament)
 - . Much of what man knew of God's personal character and His moral standards for humanity were revealed in these scriptures
 - . Their lack of knowledge of scripture, combined with their Greek heritage and loose moral standards made them especially vulnerable to sexual and other earthly lusts
- . The Greek heritage also put a very high premium on knowledge
 - . When Apollos visited the church, many were drawn to his depth of knowledge and his style of teaching
 - . Eventually Apollos decides to leave Corinth because of his concern for his popularity and it becoming a distraction
- . Paul learns of some of the issues the church is dealing with during his third mission trip and his time in Ephesus
 - . While in Ephesus Paul receives a letter from the church in Corinth
 - . In addition to giving a glowing review of the growth of the church, they also asked several questions related to church life
 - . The lack of spiritual depth of the questions concerned Paul
 - . The nature of the questions led Paul to believe they were completely blind to several sins
 - . Around the same time two early leaders of the Christian movement, Stephanas and Fortunatus returned to Ephesus from Corinth and reported to Paul on some of the issues

- . Apollos also returns to Ephesus from Corinth and reports on the rift that has developed between Paul backers and Apollos backers
 - . Although Paul and Apollos become very close friends and Paul encourages Apollos to go back, he never does
- . Paul's first letter to the Corinthians is not what we call I Corinthians
 - . It appears Paul wrote a letter to the Corinthians sometime before 53 AD I Corinthians 5:9, 11
 - . From the tone of the verses highlighted above, it appears as if some of the content of this letter were misunderstood
- . Paul sits down to write I Corinthians in 53 or 54 AD to clear up some misunderstanding, to clearly call out some inappropriate and spiritually dangerous behavior and to spiritually feed them with some fundamental truths that will represent the core of their belief system
 - . Paul addresses the sin of pride (chapters 1-4), outrageous gross immorality (chapter 5), and lawsuits between Christians brought before pagan judges (Chapter 6)
 - . He then goes on to specifically address each of the questions they asked in their letter to him (chapters 7-16)
 - . Paul uses the variations of two key words repeatedly
 - . Pride (4:6, 18-19; 5:2; 8:1, etc.)
 - . Know (2:11-12; 3:16; 5:6, 6:2-3, etc.)
 - . Paul emphasizes the following threefold theme
 - . The Lordship of Jesus Christ
 - . The cross of Christ
 - . The application of Christ's lordship and cross to personal situations
 - . Whenever Paul rebukes a particular sin, he always gives the cure for it by a presentation of the particular aspect of the person and work of Christ that best corrects it

WISDOM

- . Sanctification
 - . Throughout the book of I Corinthians Paul stresses sanctification and the Lordship of Christ
 - . To be sanctified means to be set apart, set apart from sin
 - . We are called to be holy, as holy as God
 - . We all are born with the nature of sin in us
 - . We are born with the inherent knowledge of good and evil
 - . God is good, what God isn't is evil
 - . When we consciously start making decisions that chooses evil over good we sin
 - . God can not be in the presence of sin

- . The only way we can be separated from sin and in the presence of God is through the Holy Spirit
 - . We are not born with the Holy Spirit
 - . We can not be given the Holy Spirit by any human being
 - . We can not inherit the Holy Spirit
 - . Through the ultimate sacrifice that Christ made on the cross and His subsequent resurrection and ascension in to heaven, seated at the right hand of the Father, we now have a means to be in the presence of God through the mind of God, the Holy Spirit, that is freely given to those who choose to believe in Christ and ask to receive this life changing gift
 - . As Christians, born in to this new life, now with the presence of the Holy Spirit in us, we are still in possession of our human spirit with it's knowledge of evil and its desire to go there
 - . Paul understands this condition, which is why he says we need to be sanctified, set apart from this evil condition
 - . At the heart of Christianity is the belief of the Lordship of Christ, which allows us to attain this Holy Spirit, which is the only way we can be set apart, and be holy
 - . **It is only through the Holy Spirit that we can acquire the wisdom of God, which will then show us how to be holy**
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- . Worldly wisdom vs. godly wisdom
 - . The Greek word for wisdom is *sophia*, which is where we get the word sophistication
 - . The quest for worldly knowledge is not a bad thing and can provide us with a lot of joy
 - . Most people, at some point in life, find themselves asking what life is all about
 - . What is the reason for acquiring this knowledge
 - . Knowledge can and should lead to wisdom
 - . A young child learns that touching a hot kettle will cause a burn
 - . This knowledge will lead to wisdom only if the child understands not to touch a hot kettle without protection
 - . Solomon, the wisest man in the Bible eventually came to the conclusion that all the world's riches and worldly knowledge, just by themselves are absolutely meaningless
 - . If one is going to go in search of godly wisdom, they will need to rise above their pride
 - . Human knowledge and wisdom gives one this sense of sophistication and this feeling that something divine, that can't be explained, must be foolish

- . Folly is the opposite of wise
- . If someone believes in God but doesn't want to know God, that is folly
 - . Fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom
- . God's wisdom is only known to the human heart through the Holy Spirit
I Corinthians 2:10, 14
 - . Sometimes people decide they are going to master the Bible as a book
 - . Relying only upon their innate intelligence, without prayer, they study these chapters only to find them meaningless
 - . If they do superficially understand the meaning, they still seem to feel outside it all, always finding something they fail to grasp
 - . The reason is clear
 - . **Before someone can understand God's thoughts, one needs to have an open mind to the possibility that there is a God and that He is willing to reveal Himself to the true seeker**
 - . Once we have the Holy Spirit, which is the mind of God, we have the opportunity to be led in to all truth, learning how to live our life in a manner that will be in absolute accordance with His will
 - . That is what it means to be sanctified, set apart, being holy
 - . Sanctification can only be accomplished by acquiring the wisdom of God, which requires work, discipline, dedication, perseverance, commitment

NEXT LESSON: FEBRUARY 15, 2017 – I CORINTHIANS 8-16