

Words of “Wisdom” from 1 Corinthians

There has been a lot said about the first letter Paul wrote to the people of Corinth. Most all know about **chapter 13**, where Paul describes to the Corinthian people what Christian love should look like. But **chapter 13** follows twelve chapters filled with Paul's words of encouragement to a people who have just escaped the influences of the sinful world. Many are confused and have misunderstood the freedom they have in being God's children.

In **chapter one**, there is division within the church. The people are counting the messenger more important than the message. Paul tells them to better understand God's wisdom rather than to rely on human wisdom. “**Christ crucified**” is the message, and that message, Paul says in **1 Corinthians 1:30**, teaches us “**righteousness, holiness, and redemption.**” Human wisdom could not do that. He continues the same thought in **chapter two**.

Chapter three adds to Paul's discussion about division. He says that all who have taught them did so to cause them to become more and more mature and wise in the ways of God. They have been given Jesus Christ, and Christ and the gospel concerning Him is all they need. However, there are indications that some have come into the church and taught them error. Much like the Galatian church, the Corinthians have believed a perverted gospel and misunderstand much of what God has revealed about what is pleasing to Him. In **chapter 4**, Paul is forced to defend himself against the false teachers who had discredited him.

Beginning in **chapter 5**, Paul addresses issues that have caused the church to be looked on in disfavor by the outside world. Their example is not one that God wants them to show. In **chapter 5**, there is sexual immorality within the church. In **chapter 6**, they are suing one another in pagan courts rather than handling their disputes in-house. In **chapter 7**, marriage that is pleasing to God is discussed. In **chapter 8**, the Corinthians' view of “freedom” is addressed. Paul also mentions this in **chapter 10**. Although free to do many things, Paul tells them that they should not use their freedom to cause a weaker brother to stumble.

In **chapter 9**, Paul again defends himself against those who claimed he was not an apostle who freely revealed God's word to them. In **chapter 10**, Paul warns them (based on the history of Israel) that their actions could cause their alienation from God. And in **chapter 11**, proper worship is the subject. All of these issues and Paul's teachings about them are concerned with the Corinthian Christian example.

The subject matter of **chapters 12 and 14** is spiritual gifts and how they had been misunderstood and misused. The Corinthians who have been given miraculous gifts

have begun to brag about them and look down on those who have lesser gifts. The answer to the problem? God's love, plain and simple.

Space really doesn't allow for us to look at **chapters 12-14** and see, in context, what God tells us about His love. In next week's **NEWSLETTER**, we'll look together at **1 Corinthians 13** so we can better understand how God's love is the solution to all of our problems.