***Spiritual Unity
RO183-01***

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We are studying Romans 15:1-6. Our subject is "The Spirit of Christ," and this is segment number six.

The apostle Paul, in this segment of the book of Romans, has made it clear that the Old Testament is not a mere compilation of the best in human thought about God. He indicates that the Bible as a whole is not the record that man has made on his own, of his grasping after God through darkness, which he cannot penetrate. God is perfect, and the Bible is His perfect production. It is complete, and therefore, it is inerrant as a revelation from himself to mankind.

So, again, when you read the writers of Scripture, they make it very clear that the information they are giving has not been humanly produced. And they are confident, and this applies to the New Testament as well, that when the information was recorded, God the Holy Spirit, superintended their work to preserve them from recording what was erroneous and not true.

So, we can confidently say today that anyone who does not read the Bible as true truth from the Creator God, who is really out there beyond man, is simply a fool who ignores the most compelling evidence. We will not go into that evidence today, but don't forget for a moment, no matter what fun people make of the Bible, or how they seek to dismiss it, the evidence for its authority from God, and its inerrancy is compelling. And only the most willfully, deliberately rebellious would reject that. And such a person rejects it simply because they want to do their own thing which the Word of God condemns. The Lord Jesus Christ, of course, Himself repeatedly used the Old Testament Scriptures, which Paul is referring to here specifically – Christ used the Old Testament Scriptures to prove His teachings.

in Luke 17:32, He referred to Lot's wife in order to warn people against indecision on their part in being obedient to the Word of God. He would not have done that if he thought that was a made-up story, and something that really didn't happen.

In Matthew 24:37-39, Jesus used the incident of Noah and the flood to warn people against a life which ignores God, and centers itself upon the interests of this world alone. Now, he would not have used that as an illustration if there had never been a worldwide flood that had totally covered the highest mountains of the earth. He would not have used that illustration if someone like Noah had never really lived. He used it because it is true truth.

In Matthew 12:39-40, Jesus refers to Noah and his experience of being in the fish for three days. He uses this as an illustration of His own entombment in the earth before His own resurrection, comparable to Jonah coming back out of the fish.

**The End Times**

Also, in Matthew 24:15-16, Jesus refers to the prophecy in the book of Daniel about the time when the antichrist sets himself up as God to be worshiped by the whole world in the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem in the middle of the tribulation era. And Jesus pointed to that prophecy in Daniel, and said, "Remember what Daniel told you – that when you see this image being placed in that temple, which the Jew has rebuilt in the city of Jerusalem, you will know that my return is very, very near. He is, of course, not talking about the rapture because that return, we don't know. That timing we have no guidance to. But the Second Coming, when He comes to this earth, that's very precise. And anybody who reads the Scripture, and who pays attention to the Bible, the day he hears on TV that the antichrist has set his own image up in the temple, and has demanded that he be worshiped as God, that person can start counting off three-and-a-half more years, and know for a certainty that Jesus Christ is going to return with the church at that time.

Paul says that the Old Testament is a source of spiritual instruction for church-age believers. He gives us this as illustrations of eternal spiritual principles. He says that the Old Testament gives us examples of human viewpoint and divine viewpoint conduct.

The truth of the matter is that it's impossible to find God apart from the Bible. Remember that the Holy Spirit only leads through doctrine. He leads through the Word of God, from salvation to sanctification in the very presence of God. God does not lead in any other way today. He leads only through Scripture.

Now, what people are finding out, through the influence of people like Shirley MacLaine, who is one of the all-time great channelers (which is the new word for "medium"), and several others who have had fantastic experiences that are clearly from the demonic world, it is becoming very clear that something is out there. But what is out there that is above human capacity, and that is super-human, no one can understand unless you read the Bible. Once you read the Bible, then everything becomes clear.

I'm interested, in reading the reports of people who have had these visitations, that one of the common ties that they all have is that they're overwhelmed with a feeling of love. They're just overwhelmed with a desire to express love. And they just feel engulfed with love. Ordinarily, you don't think about Satan and love. You don't think about the demons and the quality of love. I'm also interested to read that, as these people get deeper into this experience, they have some horrifying nightmares that almost drive them insane, as more and more of the true nature of Satan and his demons is exposed to them. But I think it's very interesting that the people who reject the Word of God, and who do not want to be told, "This is what the Bible says," always want to cover their tracks by saying that what we need is love, or to justify themselves that some Christians aren't as nice as they should be, in spite of what they know.

However, the charismatic movement has made a great mistake because it counts on this same feeling. I don't know how often I've had charismatic say, "I know that what I'm doing is from God, because I just feel so engulfed in a spirit of love when I do these things. When I let go of my vocal chords, and I babble away in gibberish, I just feel overwhelmed by the love of God." Well, they do. They do have that emotion. But it's not the love of God. It is the love of Satan.

So, the apostle Paul is coming down very hard at the beginning of the 15th chapter of Romans in stressing the fact that it is the Word of God that is the source of all true information about God. Without that, your meandering and wandering and muddling around in a bunch of darkness and air that's going to go nowhere.

**Our Instruction**

He does point out, in verse 4, two things that God the Father wants the Christian to receive from the complete Bible. Verse 4 says, "For whatever was written in earlier times (referring here to the Old Testament Scripture) was written for our instruction. It was written in times past, and it was written for a specific purpose. And he stresses, in the Greek Bible, the word "our;" that is, for all of us Christians, it was written for a specific purpose. And he calls it "our instruction." The Greek word is this word "didaskalia." The word "didaskalia" means "a teacher" or "a doctrine." The Bible was given to us for our learning; for our teaching; and, for our doctrine. The words, "our instruction" mean for the Christian's personal, spiritual enlightenment. The words, "our instruction" does not mean to give you content to teach a class, or to teach somebody else.

**It is Written**

When he says that the Old Testament Scripture (and the same is true of the New Testament later) was provided by Almighty God to give us doctrinal understanding, the fact that instruction from God comes through the Bible only, is further emphasized by the fact that he repeats the word "written:" "For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction." And I've already mentioned to you that in the Bible, this word "written" is a technical term that refers to inerrant Scripture. Every time you find "It is written," it is a technical term for the fact that something authoritative from God is being said. So, he wants to stress again here, in the very use of this word, that this is not just what people think, but this is really what God thinks. The phrase "it is written" covers both the Old Testament and New Testament.

So, it is the Bible which is our source for this instruction for spiritual enlightenment unto maturity. And please remember that the context here, of the verses earlier in this chapter, has to deal with Christians who are weak and mature spiritually (they don't know much about the Bible – they're hung-up legalists), and Christians who are strong, who know a great deal about the Word of God, and have gone to super-grace maturity, and understand the freedoms of the Christian life.

**The Old Testament**

The Old Testament is of specific value, then, as illustrations of spiritual principles. The apostle Paul points this out for us in 1 Corinthians 10:6, where he says, "Now these things happened (referring to Old Testament incidents) as examples for us, that we should not crave evil things as they also crave." You can learn in two ways: you learn from your own mistakes; or, you learn from the mistakes of other people. It is always better to learn from the mistakes of other people, not from your own. And this is what Paul is saying. These mistakes, and what these people did (and the good things they did) were recorded so that we could learn something. We could understand a totally spiritual principles.

1 Corinthians 10:11 points that out also: "Now these things happen to them as an example. And they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come." It is the Bible alone that gives man the information he needs about all human relationships which cannot be violated with impunity. The Bible is the only source in the world of information about God, because it comes directly from God, and therefore it is true. All other sources of communication or knowledge about God are totally false.

Now, you can be very intellectual, and feel free to discuss these matters, and to resist the idea that only the Bible can speak for God, and be very broad-minded about these things, but either this is true or it is not true. And if this is true – that only information about God that we have comes from the Bible, then only what the Bible says is true. And by that same token, since all the religions of the world are in conflict with what the Scripture says, they are false.

You may feel free to kick this around, but sooner or later you're going to come into your life crisis where knowing what is right, over against what is wrong, is going to be absolutely, monumentally important. There is no tomorrow.

As you know, one of our young men has been in Oklahoma City, going to school to become an air traffic controller. And he came to camp, and he'll be in camp with us this next week. And he finished the last session that they had. And he said that one of the things that they experienced in their classes was listening to the black box communication on the aircraft of planes that were about to crash. He said, "That was really awesome, because these are people who are sitting in a cockpit. They know there is no tomorrow. They know that they're under conditions such that they're going to crash. And you hear all of this conversation going around of people who are uttering their last words, and flying their last thoughts through their minds."

He said that one particularly stuck in his mind as they reported the problem, and it was clear that a crash was imminent of this airliner. And they suddenly heard the copilot turned to the pilot and say, "This is bad. What are we going to do?" And the pilot said, "Fold your hands, and bow your head. You are about to meet your Maker." And when I mentioned this at the campfire to the boys, I said, "What was the pilot saying? That they were going to die?" And these kids that come through our clubs and through our school are really sharp kids when it comes to biblical principles. And they caught it: "No, he was saying that only their bodies are going to be put to death, but they are going to stay alive, and they are going to have to face that God." How did they know that? Because of my brilliance? Because of the brilliance of all of our counselors who told them that? No. We know that that's the case, and we know exactly what happened to the men in that cockpit, because the Word of God tells us that the soul and spirit never die, and they go on forever.

You can have all of your kooky ideas about God, and what God should do, and what God shouldn't do, and how God is going to treat the human race, and how he isn't. But you better remember that there comes a time when we're going to find out who's right and who's wrong. I couldn't help immediately thinking to myself, "I wonder what that copilot thought next when that was said to him, and whether he was prepared to meet his Maker." If he's like most Americans, he was far from it.

So, the apostle Paul is treading on some very critical ground when he says, "We have to solve this problem of the relationship between strong and weak Christians, but it has to be solved on the basis of authority relative to what is the right thing to do and the wrong thing to do. And the only authority we have for that is the Word of God itself, which is given to us as illustrations and guidelines concerning spiritual principles and the way God works. If you coordinate and become compatible in your life with the way God works, the result can be nothing but blessing – hard times, but blessings within hard times. If you are incompatible with the Word of God, and you arch your back and resist it, you will have nothing but difficulties all the way down the line. And you may get into heaven and look back and realize that you've had a frittered-away life. That would be that great tragedy and the great sadness.

**Patience**

So, the apostle Paul says, "These things are written for our instruction," so that two things could result that he has in mind. The first one is "perseverance." The Greek word looks like this: "hupomone." "Hupomone" means "endurance." It literally means "to remain under something." You don't try to get out from under a burden. It connotes a patient enduring on the part here of the mature believer. This is an essential quality for strong Christians who must bear the burdens of the weak. If you are a mature Christian who has gone on in the Word of God to super-grace living, weak Christians, with all the legalisms and their hangups, are very irritating people. And it takes a great deal of "hupomone" – it takes a great deal of patient bearing under and staying under, in order to help the weak to grow strong. It's a patient continuation with the weak brother to edify him with doctrine. A Christian needs this spirit of perseverance in his own study of the Word of God, so that he sees things God's way. When he sees things God's way, then he has the encouragement to hang in there; to keep persevering; and, to keep working away with those who need this kind of support.

Furthermore, he says, "As a result of instruction in the Word of God, you will not only have this kind of perseverance and endurance, but you'll also have an encouragement." This is the Greek word "paraklesis." "Paraklesis" means to inspire to a course of action. It is a doctrine that encourages a Christian in a godly lifestyle, which brings him both temporal and eternal blessings and personal satisfaction.

**Hope**

So, the apostle Paul says, "From the Word of God, instruction in doctrine, we seek and we will receive the capacity to hang in there in the service of God, and we will have the encouragement of Scripture;" that is, the encouragement of the written Scriptures to what end? So that we might have something. And that is hope. The Greek word is "elpis." "Elpis" means "hope," but this Greek word is not "hope" like in the English language. In the English language, when you say you hope for something, you indicate that it's only a possibility, and it might not happen. When the Bible speaks about our having a hope, it always indicates a hope that is going to be realized. And you must understand that. It is a sure thing. So, the thing that we will have, as a result of knowing doctrine, is that we will have this enduring quality in staying under the load of our Christian service, and we will be encouraged by the Word of God that we have hope of something; that is, a confident expectation of our personal glorification in heaven with all that God has promised to us. Hope in the believer is the product of perseverance in the Word of God, producing encouragement to do right in our lives.

Centuries ago, God the Holy Spirit stored the thinking of Almighty God in the Bible so that the Christian, by reading the Scriptures, could have a basis of hope about the future, even while he is in Satan's world. Notice how this works from a few passages of Scripture.

Acts 24:15: "Having a hope in God, which these men cherish themselves, that there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked." This is a hope that there will be a resurrection of the righteous and the wicked. Does that mean that the apostle here is speaking of hoping that someday there'll be a resurrection, but maybe there won't be? No. He says, "There is going to be a resurrection," because it's a hope that makes it a sure thing. And it's going to be a resurrection of those who are going to heaven, and those who are going to the lake of fire. Those who do not have Jesus Christ as personal Savior are going to the lake of fire. That's where most of the human race will spend eternity. That's what the Bible makes very clear.

**The Narrow Gate and the Narrow Road**

Jesus said, "The way into eternal life is through a narrow gate, and the path to heaven is a narrow road." And then He says the chilling words: "Few that be who find it." Now, either he's a liar, and He doesn't know what he's talking about, or He is what He claims to be, the true Son of God, and he is indeed our Savior who knows what He's talking about.

**The Broad Road**

However, He said that there's a broad road. The entrance to it is easy. Most people find it. There's lots of room on it, and it leads into the lake of fire. Now, either He's a liar, and He doesn't know what he's talking about, or that is the truth. And you must decide which it is. You can't play both sides of the fence. So, here's the hope of a resurrection: for some, a very happy occasion; and, for others, it will be pure horror.

1 Corinthians 3:14 also presents an illustration of this concept of hope as the result of knowing the Word of God: "If any man's work (that is, his Christian service work) which he has built upon it (that is, upon his salvation in Christ), he shall receive a reward." If what you have produced is the product of God the Holy Spirit (divine good work), then that's what God counts as valuable for all eternity. And for that you will have a reward. And it is a certainty that you will have this.

2 Corinthians 10:15: "Not boasting beyond our measure that is in other men's labors, but with the hope that, as your faith grows, you shall be within our sphere, enlarged even more by you." Paul says, "I am not looking for something that other men produce in you, but I am looking as a result of what I have invested in teaching you the Word of God, and I have the hope (a certainty) that your faith will grow, and that you will be enlarged in your own personal spiritual development.

Ephesians 2:12 presents the same concept of hope as a certainty based on the Word of God: "Remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel (in your unsaved days), as gentiles and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." When did they change from having no hope? The gentile world changed from having no hope, as verse 13 says, "But now, in Christ Jesus, you, who formerly were far off, have been brought near by the blood of Christ. That's when you have hope that you did not have before – hope that you will not spend eternity in the lake of fire.

Yes, the Ayatollah Khamenei wishes now that he could speak to all the Muslim world, and tell them how terribly wrong he was, and that their following him is going to bring them into the same terrible place in which he now finds himself as a rejecter Jesus Christ.

1 Thessalonians 4:13: "But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve, as do the rest who have no hope." When someone dies who is important, and close and dear to you, the grieving is there, but the grieving is not hopeless. And if you've ever been to a funeral where the grieving is hopeless, it's a nightmare. But where the grieving is on the basis of hope because there's going to be a resurrection, and this is only a temporary (while sad) interruption of relationship, the only way you can say you have that hope is because the Word of God has taught you that. That's where you learned it.

Let's look at one more in 1 John 3:3: "And everyone who has this hope fixed on him purifies himself just as he is pure." What's he talking about? Look at verse 2: "Beloved, now we are children of God. And it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that when he (Jesus Christ) appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is." If you are a child of God, born again through faith in Jesus Christ, then the time will come, when you see Him, that you will be completely like Him. "Everyone who has this hope, then," John says, "fixed on Him, one who is going to be as perfect as the Son of God, by nature, esteems this, unless he is really off-base spiritually. Anybody who realizes: "Someday I'm going to be just like that perfect, tremendous man, Jesus Christ," then the Word of God says, "You naturally will be inclined to want to act like Him." You purify yourself just as He is pure. And you live such that, in your mind, you can say, "This is what Jesus would do. I live in this way. I act in this way. I talk in this way. I go to these places. This is what I do because I have no doubt that this is what the perfect God-Man would do." John says, "Since you're someday going to be as perfect as He is, your natural inclination is to start acting that way now."

So, it is this hope that Paul speaks of that protects a mature Christian from discouragement. It keeps you persistently in God's service. It enables you to have the encouragement from the Word of God to hope in things that you are really going to receive.

**Perseverance and Encouragement**

Now, in Romans 15:5, Paul expresses a prayer as he ties up the section. He says, "Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement" (these two qualities that he has just said come from the Word of God).

**God Works through the Bible**

However you notice that now he says, "God gives us this perseverance in His service and this encouragement in His service." Now he says, "It comes from God." Do you see the connection? God works through the written Scriptures. You can say that it comes from the Bible, and you can equally say it comes from God. It's the same thing. God works through the Bible.

So, Paul says, "The God who gives you this, I pray that He will grant you something." The word "grant" is the Greek word "didomi." "Didomi" means "to give a person something." This is in the Greek aorist tense, which means at some point in time, when a Christian has accumulated the knowledge of doctrine, then God can give him something. It is active. It is that God's grace will provide this. God gives you this something. Then here is a mood called the optative mood. You've hardly ever heard me say that, because it's rarely found in the Greek Bible. A few times, this fourth mood is found in the Bible, and it is a mood that a person uses when he wants to express a wish that he has no assurance is going to come to pass. He's just asking for something. It expresses something that's conceivable, but not really likely. It contains no definite anticipation that you're going to realize it.

**The Same Mind**

Now, we've talked about the mood that is above this, which is that subjunctive mood. That's a little more solid. It's potential, and it's likely to happen. But this one is way out there at the fringes. So, the apostle Paul wasn't really sure how these Romans were going to rise to this. And he uses this strange mood, that is hardly ever used, to express to us that: "I just wish that somehow God would do something that would bring this about in your life." And what is it that he wants? That God would give to you the same mind? This is actually a verb: "froneo" – that God would give you the same way of thinking. The idea is that God would give you to be minding the same thing. It is a wish here for spiritual unity among Christians – both strong and weak believers. This is a prayer wish that they would have a common ground of beliefs with one another.

**Spiritual Unity**

Paul is praying for spiritual unity among Christians who have received from the Father perseverance and encouragement. It is calling for oneness in divine viewpoint truth. How can they have that kind of oneness? Well, it has to come from the Bible. And how could it come from the Bible? People who believe the Bible have all kinds of conflicts among themselves as to what the Bible says. Now you're back to those principles of the HICEE technique we talked about, by which the Bible must be interpreted if you're going to find out what God the Holy Spirit has really said. Otherwise you're going to be the victim of a preacher who gives you his personal opinions and feelings on a thing, rather than what God has said. In John 17:17, Jesus says that God's word is the truth.

Now, this is not a call merely on the part of the apostle Paul for unity of religious beliefs, per se, because he immediately qualifies that unanimity of beliefs is not enough. There are many religious groups where they all have a common belief in something, and it is totally wrong. It is totally incompatible with the Word of God. So, just because everybody believes the same thing does not mean that that indicates that it's acceptable with God.

**A Common Belief**

So, when he says, "I want you to have a common belief (a common viewpoint) among yourselves, he qualifies it by saying, "According to Jesus Christ." And by that he means that the thinking has to be on the basis of what Christ has taught. He uses here the name of the Son of God: "Christ Jesus." When you see that combination, "Christ Jesus," it is stressing the fact that He is the preexistent One who set aside His glory and became a Man. It is stressing the fact that He didn't have to come to do this. The name stresses His grace in bringing us salvation. And the unity that Paul prays for is the unity that is based upon the teaching of this one who was God; who took on humanity; and, who set aside the visible display of His glory.

So, what he is calling for is religious convictions which harmonize with the views that Jesus Christ has expressed in Scripture. We do know what Jesus thinks. We do know what He has taught. We have the record of that in Scripture. And what the Holy Spirit has recorded is what the Son of God believes.

1 Corinthians 2:16 says, "For who has known the mind of the Lord that he should instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ." That is an amazing statement. The person who understands doctrinal principles thinks just like God does.

So, you can have a great deal of confidence, if you know doctrine, in what you say. The person who does not know doctrine does not think the way God thinks, and therefore, he should not intimidate you for one minute because what you have are intellectual regurgitations of the sin nature, and they are meaningless; they're evil; and, they're wrong. Such a unity of belief in Christ Jesus must include, therefore, a common devotion to the Bible as the source of information – God's inerrant and understandable Word. And what he calls for is unity of conviction from God the Father, not from human conjectures.

In verse 6, as we close our section, Paul says, "That this kind of unity, for the purpose that you may (you Christians), with one accord" (meaning togetherness). This is suggesting a unanimity among the Christians in some expressions. For example, this same idea is illustrated in Acts 2:46. Let's just read that to get an idea of what this what this verse is calling for. Acts 2:46 is describing the New Testament Christians: "And day-by-day, continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart." That is the spirit of which Paul is referring to in Romans 15:6, when he says, "That with one accord, you may, with one voice." And the word "voice" here is actually the Greek word "stoma," which is the word for "mouth:" "that you may, with one mouth." Now, if you're all going to say the same thing as Christians, you have to have a source of information upon which to base that. You will not say the same thing if you're all making up your own stuff.

Therefore, again, we're brought back to the fact that the Bible is a basis for Christians to say the same thing – a oneness of speaking a unity on doctrine. When there is lack of unity on a principle of doctrine, someone is right, and someone is wrong. Somebody may come along and says, "I don't believe that you can be born into the family of God by trusting in Christ as Savior, and permanently be born into that family. I believe that you can be unborn again." And somebody says, "No, it's a birth process. You cannot reverse a birth process. Once you're born into the family of God, you're in there. You may become a prodigal, but you're still going to go to heaven. You're in there." And somebody says, "No, if you sin (if you do something bad), you're back up."

Now, somebody's right, and somebody's wrong. They can't both be right. You have a difference of doctrine. And Paul says, "That should not exist among Christians. There should be a unity of doctrine. If there isn't, somebody is wrong. And the purpose of this," he says, "is that, with one voice, we need glorify God the Father." The word "glorify" means "to honor Him." God is not honored by false doctrine. God is not honored by human viewpoint practices. The idea is for Christians to speak unitedly in a way that makes God look good – not to bring ridicule on Christianity.

I need not remind you how much ridicule is brought upon Christianity, and upon our Savior, by the prominent charismatic TV evangelists. Those men are so gross; they are so bold; they are so benighted; and, they are so absolutely monstrous that you cannot believe they have the gall to stand up on public television and do what they do, and say what they do, and teach what they do. And, of course, the unbelieving world points to them, and laughs at them, and they are ridiculous. And they have good cause to be ridiculed. And this is the very thing that God is saying here – that what we as Christians put out as what we stand for, and what we believe – that this is what God stands for, and this is what God teaches, should not bring ridicule upon the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is a great tragedy when Christians do not bring honor and glory and praise to God the Father, because of the kinds of things that they are saying, and the kinds of things that they are teaching. The minds of Christians in the unity of true doctrine, based upon Scripture, will bring honor to God the Father as they speak with one united voice.

So, Paul is admonishing us for a consistency of Christian service with the firm expectation that God's Word will bring eternal results in people's lives. We have a basis of a real hope. The potential conflicts that exist between the arrogance of the strong Christian and the stumblings of the weak Christian must be born with grace to God's glory.

**Corinth**

Please remember that, as Paul writes this very book of Romans, and as he sits and writes this very passage of Scripture about our having a common united ground of beliefs and of testimony as Christians, and our having this kind of patient endurance and perseverance, he is sitting in the city of Corinth. He is writing this book to the Romans Christians from the city of Corinth, and he himself is going through one of the most miserable times in his ministry. If there was any place that was a horrible place to teach the Word of God, and if there ever was a terrible congregation in the house churches that met in any place in the New Testament world, it was in the city of Corinth.

As one reads the book of 1 Corinthians, you can see how the incipient errors of today's charismatic movement were already in place. They were already babbling in gibberish. Women were already standing up in the pulpit and proclaiming the Word of God. And the apostle Paul had to go through that whole mess and try to straighten it out. Now, what would most of us have done? About that time, most of us would have felt that God is now calling us to California to minister to a new flock, preferably someplace near Malibu, where the surfing is good. About that time, you'd feel very strongly that the Lord is leading you in a different direction, because you're sick and tired of these clowns. And if there ever was a congregation that was a bunch of clowns, it was in the city of Corinth.

**Glorify God**

And yet the apostle Paul says, "We stand together so that we can speak with one voice, so that we can strengthen those who are carnal among us. We can realign them with the Word of God so that, with one voice, we Christians can be a glory and an honor to God instead of a disgrace, because He is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the God stressing the humanity of Christ. He is the Father stressing the deity of Jesus Christ – One in essence with the Father.

So, the apostle Paul writes this book under extreme personal stress. Paul knew what it meant to hang in there in God's work among spiritually immature people – people who are willing to be taught the Word of God have hope of rising eventually to super-grace living. And you will notice that Paul's eyes, in all of his Christian service, are clearly on the Lord.

Just notice these six verses that we've looked at. In verse 3, he speaks about Christ Who did not please Himself. In verse 5, he speaks about a mind according to Christ Jesus. In verse 6, he speaks about the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Here, again and again, in this small passage, his eyes keep going back to the Lord. I guarantee you that you will very quickly get out of Christian service if your eyes are on people, because you will soon be turned away from your calling.

The HICEE technique, and the pastor-teacher's role in informing the local flock of the Word of God, is a basic principle. You have to interpret the Bible as a piece of literature that means what it says according to the background of the times; the meaning of the words; and, the grammar. And all that goes together in communication. If you don't do it that way, then you have nothing to say. And once a congregation understands how much their personal, eternal well-being, and their eternal rewards, are dependent upon the performance of the pulpit, they become very serious about what's happening in those Sunday services.

When I got back from camp this week, I had a letter from a church in California that has listened to some of our tapes. And the congregation has awakened to the fact that what has been happening with them has been leaving them out in left field, high and dry. They do not have a pastor, and they're asking me to make a recommendation to them of someone who will perform what they hear on Berean tapes. And they've asked for permission to copy the pastor-teacher series, so that the congregation, as a whole, can listen to this, when they select a pastor, understanding that, if you do not have someone who is centering and capable of teaching people the Word of God from beyond the English Bible, they've got nothing. And they are aware of the fact that they run a great danger, because they sit in a wealthy area just east of Los Angeles, where the average home starts at $200,000. Now, here is an opportunity for great evil, or for a great good. And I commend them for the fact that they understand that it's all going to begin in their pulpit, and their testimony can be blown entirely.

This is all the apostle Paul is trying to tell us. If you do not understand what the Bible is where it's at, you don't understand anything at all.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1988

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