*“*Live by the Spirit, not as *mere humans”*

*A Study of 1st Corinthians*

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This is a letter to “The Church”. “Church” is a translation of the Greek word *ekklesia*, which is defined as “an assembly” or “called-out ones.”

*Specifically, those “called out of darkness into His Marvelous light” (1st Peter 2:9).*

Unfortunately this church (*like all churches*) had problems.

Paul wrote the letter while he was in Ephesus to “the Church” in Corinth addressing some of the problems reported to him by someone named Chloe (1st Corinthians 1:11), specifically “jealousy and quarreling” and divisions among the congregation.

He wrote in the first chapter that they were in *some ways* they were;

**1st Cor. 1:5,7** “…enriched in every way—with all kinds of speech and with all knowledge— and, do not lack any **spiritual gift.”**

But here we will see that in *other ways*, they were *immature* and *childish*.

There is a common misconception, that churches and/or individuals who are highly gifted or knowledgeable and articulate, are therefore also mature and “spiritual”. Sadly, that is often not the case. We all have witnessed extreme immaturity among leaders and churches, even though they have a high level of giftedness and in many cases church growth.

This is definitely the case with the Corinthian church plant and Paul addresses it directly.

**1 Cor. 3:1-23 “**Brothers and sisters, I could not address you as people who live by the Spirit but as people who are still worldly—mere infants in Christ. **2**I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. **3**You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere humans?

Paul used the example of *milk* and *meat*.

Milk is given to young immature children to help them grow past infancy into a level of maturity where they can digest solid food, in this case meat.

They can’t grow in strength, stature, maturity and become fully developed on milk alone. Sometimes a child’s development can be stunted if they stay only on milk too long.

*[ Grizzly Bear cubs (Nat. Geo.) – can eat salmon out of the river at 6 months old, but some subsist on milk for up to three years, but will not grow in size and maturity like those who are eating meat. There arrested development effects their ability to survive. Making them vulnerable to predators and other risks.* They remain like Teddy Bears, not Grizzly bears *]*

We as a church live in a battle zone. There are spiritual predators all around us. Their main weapons are *deception and division*. We are able to overcome our enemies IF we’re strong in the Lord, and are able to skillfully wield;

“sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” (Eph. 6:17)

If we remain weak and immature however by not getting into the meat of the word, **we** will be like Teddy Bears, not Grizzly bears, and the enemy will divide and conquer us.

These Corinthians were still very immature, and Paul was directly making that known,

**“1a**Brothers and sisters, I could not address you as people who live by the Spirit but as people who are still worldly…, **3b**are you not worldly? Are you not acting like *mere humans*?

“Mere Humans”? (*Other versions say “people of the world”, “Ordinary People”, “Carnal men”)*

Mere Humans - What does that mean?

Simple, it means that they were acting like people who did not live by the Spirit. They were merely operating in the resources of their soul and flesh, NOT their Heart and spirit.

*[Ex. Jet Pilot versus Taxi Driver. (private jet) Imagine getting in the plane and the pilot decides to drive to the destination. Taxiing back out the parking lot and down the street? If pilot does not  pulls back on the control column, the elevator will not engage and the plane won’t leave the ground.*

*This is an example of NOT using the powers and abilities the Holy Spirit equips us with to overcome conflicts and not be entangled in the things of the world.]*

The Corinthians were doing this, because they were not living by the Spirit.

Their jealousy, their quarrelling, their divisiveness was not of the spirit, it was of the flesh, and was destroying the church.

**James 3:14-15** “But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be *false to the truth*. This is *not the wisdom that comes down from above*, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic.”

*“’false to the truth’*, NOT  *‘the wisdom that comes down from above’*”!

Here’s what this means.

This describes those who may “know” the truth of God’s word, but are not living it.

They are not being *True to the Truth* but *False to the Truth*.

Once again, the Corinthian church.

We’ll see later in the epistle that these folks *may* be moving out in the gifts of the spirit, (word of wisdom, word of knowledge, prophesy, etc.) but they are not *living* “by the spirit”.

They may even know the scriptures, but knowing the scriptures is not producing the fruit of the spirit in their lives.

**James 1: 22“**Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.”

I would add;

* Do not merely study the word, do what it says”
* Do not merely agree with the word, do what it says”
* Do not merely memorize the word, do what it says”
* Do not merely sing about the word, do what it says”
* Do not merely follow *people* who teach and preach the word, do what it says”

**1st Cor 3:4-9“**For when one says, “I follow Paul,” and another, “I follow Apollos,” are you not mere human beings?

**5 “**What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. **6**I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. **7**So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. **8**The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor. **9**For we are co-workers in God’s service; you are God’s field, God’s building.”

‘*Co-workers in God’s service’*. ‘*I planted, Apollos watered’*… “*only God, makes things grow*”.

Paul was explaining that he planted this church, and God provided Apollos to come along to water it. They are not in competition with one another, they are “co-workers” in God’s service.

*[ Who is Apollos? Apollos is a highly-respected leader from Alexandria Egypt who had come to Ephesus (probably in AD 52 or 53), where he is described as "being fervent in spirit: he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning*[*Jesus*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesus)*. He was used to establish the church in Ephesus, and when Paul came to Ephesus, he went over to Corinth to continue the work Paul had begun. (they sort of switched places):*

***Acts 19:1 “****While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus.”*

All of us who are believers in the Lord Jesus and are called to His purposes and are on One Team. We all have different roles at different times, but we are all working together. Not just leaders, but entire churches, not just churches but individuals. We are *co-laborer’s, not competitors.*

*[ It blesses my heart to be able to work together with other churches and believers in this area for the purposes of the Kingdom of God. We won’t always agree upon every method and point of doctrine, but that should not stop us from co-laboring in kingdom work in the area God chose for us all to live.*

*It is also very humbling when pastors recommend folks to another church in the area that is nearer or can serve them better. ]*

**1st Cor. 3:10“**By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care. **11**For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. **12**If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, **13**their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person’s work. **14**If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. **15**If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames.”

All of us are working on the same building, a building whose foundation is already laid.

*“For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.”*

So we build upon the foundation using what we are given by the Holy Spirit, and any part of it that is of Him will last, any part of it that is *not* of Him will not.

The people of Corinth, Athens and Ephesus were likely very moved by *building analogies*. They lived among the most impressive structures in the ancient world;

* Temple of Apollo – In Corinth
* The Temple of Artemis – in Ephesus
* The Parthenon – In Athens

Also, those among them who had traveled to Jerusalem would have seen the recently renovated *TEMPLE in Jerusalem* that was reconditioned under Herod the Great.

This temple was “THE temple” that housed the Holy of Holies, where the Spirit of God dwelt.

However, after Jesus died, the veil of the temple was ripped in half rendering it obsolete.

It was not needed any more because according to…

**Acts 17:24** “God…*does not* dwell in temples made with hands.”

In fact it was destroyed by the Romans in 70AD (about 15 years after this letter was written).

So then what happened?

If God’s spirit doesn’t dwell in temples, where does it dwell?

Remember the prophecy of Joel that Peter quoted in Acts 2 on Pentecost?

**Acts 2: 14-18“**But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, “Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words. **15**For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is *only* the third hour of the day. **16**But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: **17**‘And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God,  
That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh;  
Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions,Your old men shall dream dreams.  
**18**And on My menservants and on My maidservants, I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy.” *(Joel 2:28-32)*

You see God didn’t simply *pour out His Spirit onto the earth*, he didn’t pour it out on buildings, synagogues or houses,

**Titus 3:6** “He generously poured out the Spirit *upon us* through Jesus Christ our Savior.”

*We are the Temple!*

*(continue the text)*

**1st Cor. 3:16-17“**Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in your midst? **17**If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy that person; for God’s temple is sacred, and you together are that temple.”

[ This building is filled with the Holy spirit when those who are filled with the Holy Spirit dwell here. When we are not here, it’s just a building. God does not dwell in buildings, cars, shoeboxes, etc. He dwells in us. He poured it out on us who believe!]

**1st Cor. 3:18-23“**Do not deceive yourselves. If any of you think you are wise by the standards of this age, you should become “fools” so that you may become wise. **19**For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God’s sight. As it is written: “He catches the wise in their craftiness”; **20**and again, “The Lord knows that the thoughts of the wise are futile.” **21**So then, no more boasting about human leaders! All things are yours, **22**whether Paul or Apollos or Cephasor the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, **23**and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God.”

Inasmuch as this chapter was one of rebuke and correction to the church for acting like “mere humans”,

Paul was also very forthright in also encouraging them and reminding them in a positive way of who they are in Christ.

* "you are God’s field, God’s building.” (verse 9)
* “you yourselves are God’s temple and God’s Spirit dwells in your midst.” (verse 16)
* “you are of Christ, and Christ is of God.” (verse 23)

How about us?

Would Paul direct the same rebuke to us as a church, or us as individuals that he did to the Corinthians?

1:1 “I could not address you as people who live by the Spirit but as people who are still worldly…, **3b**are you not worldly? Are you not acting like *mere humans*?”

Only if we ignore the Spirit of God and choose to pursue worldly wisdom, human reasoning and false arguments.

And NOT if we choose to be doers of the Word, not just hearers, even if the Word says *“Walk in the Spirit and not in the flesh”.*

**Gal 5:15-17****15**If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other. So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. **17**For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want.”

In other words; “live by the Spirit, not as *mere humans”*

We ARE human, but we don’t live as normal humans do, we live by the spirit in the way we worship God, treat each other and engage the world.

**2 Cor 10:3-5 “**We are human, but we don’t wage war as humans do. **4**We use God’s mighty weapons, not worldly weapons, to knock down the strongholds of human reasoning and to destroy false arguments.”

Let’s make a fresh commitment in this new season to live by the spirit.

Living by the Spirit means that;

* We will enjoy the Fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5)
* We will operate in The gifts of the Spirit (1st Cor. 12)
* We will have a clear understanding of what is of the Spirit and what is of the World, and be able to accurately identify the deceptive schemes of the enemy.
* And we will be victorious through the power of the spirit in the warfare that we face every day.

**Let’s *walk by* the spirit, and also *Live in* the spirit every day of this new year.**