

The Context of Corinthians 10-18-09

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Amen. May the Lord depend on you? What a blessing. [the hymn referenced will be at the end of the sermon.] If the Lord can depend on you, just like Job, He may bring you to a test ... *if* He can depend on you. May we look at things that way. What a blessing to be able to be depended on by the Lord ... to be put through a strong test and come out faithful.

We are going to turn to 1 Corinthians and look at a few things. I was asked once when talking with a man, and I shared with him and tried to teach him about some of the things the modern church has completely forsaken, and he got a bit of a chuckle about what I believed about it. He said, "But do you know the historical context from which this was taken? You've got to understand the historical context in Corinthians to understand what Paul meant whenever he was giving them instructions." He went on to tell me about some of the customs of Corinth - supposedly - I don't know whether they are accurate or not, I've heard several different versions. I thought about the historical context of the book of Corinthians, and I thought, "Well, why not just go to the book of Corinthians and see what the historical context of the book of Corinthians was?" So I opened the Bible this morning and started in 1 Corinthians chapter 1.

*1 Corinthians 1:17 For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. 18 For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. 19 For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. 20 Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? 21 For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. ... 2:1 And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. 2 For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. 3 And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. 4 And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power:*

Several times here in just these few verses, Paul was giving instruction that his teaching was not in worldly wisdom but in the foolishness of preaching. So we can gather that because he was teaching these things to these people, they were caught up in worldly wisdom. They were using the wisdom the world had to offer to come to their conclusions of how they lived. But Paul said it's simply by the foolishness of preaching that men are saved; simply by preaching and teaching the word of God. The church in Corinth was full of worldly wisdom. They had ways of explaining what the bible meant so that they didn't listen or follow.

What else did the church of Corinth have?

*1 Corinthians 3:1 And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. 2 I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. 3 For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?*

Romans reminds us if we walk after the flesh we will die, but if we walk after the spirit we will live. (Romans 8:13) So what was the historical context of Corinth? They were proud and full of wisdom, and they were walking in carnality ... walking after the flesh.

*1 Corinthians 5:1 It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. 2 And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you.*

The church at Corinth didn't deal with sin. It teaches that they were puffed up. I believe that what it is saying here as you read this

verse and study it, they probably thought they were acting charitable and full of love by allowing the sinful men in their congregation. Allowing this sin to go on because they 'loved him. And didn't want to offend him; so they allowed sin in the church.

In 1 Corinthians chapter 6 they were going to the law one with another, fighting among themselves.

*1 Corinthians 6:1 Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? 2 Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? 3 Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life? 4 If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church. 5 I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren? 6 But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. 7 Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded? 8 Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren.*

They were fighting, going to law, defrauding one another. Often we hear about churches suing each other over certain things. We have people that copyright messages and copyright their songs and then sue people if they use them wrongly, or print copies of them or record them without paying for them. That's sinful. Yet, this is what was happening in Corinth [going to law, fighting, etc.].

Chapter 7 talks about immorality again, about avoiding fornication. There was a problem with it there. Paul talked about it explicitly and about how to deal with it. He talked about marriage:

*1 Corinthians 7:39 The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord. 40 But she is happier if she so abide, after my judgment: and I think also that I have the Spirit of God.*

"The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth" - it doesn't matter how he has treated her, she's bound to that man as long as he lives, and visa versa. Paul gave instructions. Why? Because that was a problem in the church at Corinth with people that were calling themselves Christians and he called them out on it. Today the divorce rate (the way I understand it) is higher in the church than it is in the world. In the pulpit it's equal to what the world is - over 50% of them are divorced and remarried people. It must have been a problem at Corinth.

Chapter 8 deals with idolatrous practices. The man who was lecturing me about this [understanding the historical context of Corinthians] had a Dallas Cowboys hat on his head. He was a Cowboy fan-atic. He was a football fan-atic. A fanatic for their team that's idolatrous. That was going on in Corinth.

Chapter 9 says they were abusing the offerings. Paul says:

*1 Corinthians 9:16 For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel! 17 For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me. 18 What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel.*

That was Paul's testimony to the Corinthians. There's more instruction in chapter 16:1-2

*1 Corinthians 16:1 Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. 2 Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.*

They were gathering money for the poor, not for the preachers! They were gathering money for the poor! They were abusing the

Gospel in Corinth, they were making a profit, making a gain; people were living off of the Gospel. That was a problem in Corinth.

In chapter 11 speaks about women having their hair cut off; having bobbed hair or shaved heads. Today if you look at the older women in church, I notice you rarely see shoulder length hair on a woman anymore. It isn't the common practice anymore, especially as they get older. Men having long hair in ponytails; Paul said to the Corinthians that it was a shame for that to happen. Why did he tell them that? Because it was a problem in Corinth - it was happening in Corinth. This is the historical understanding, historical context of Corinth. Women were running around without coverings. Maybe they thought they had liberty? I don't know, but it was a problem there because that's where Paul addressed that problem. The reason we don't hear about it in any other churches is because it wasn't a problem there in those churches. Paul wrote his letters to churches and encouraged them where they were doing right and gave instructions to where they were doing wrong.

Chapters 12-14, they were abusing the gifts. They were taking the gifts - claiming they had gifts - and abusing them. I was reading an interesting thing about the early church about how if a man came and produced a miracle, he came under close scrutiny of the church. Any man that came among them doing miracles, they put him under a magnifying glass because they didn't want to be deceived, and they didn't want him deceiving others by his supposed miraculous gifts. Today when someone comes along and does a miracle, people start following after them, worshipping them, and sending them money. Corinthians were abusing the gifts by speaking in tongues. Paul gave them instruction, not be used as a springboard for speaking in tongues, but as a correction for it because it was being abused. What they were practicing wasn't from God. I don't know if it was just like what we find happening today, but Corinthians chapters 12-14 is not to be used as a foundation for speaking in tongues, it is a correction for it.

Chapter 14, during the time of the Corinthians, they had a problem with the women:

*1 Corinthians 14:32 And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. 33 For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints. 34 Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience as also saith the law.*

There was a problem with the women being out of order. They were leading out and teaching.

*1 Corinthians 14:35 And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.*

You know the feminists, as soon as you mention 'women', they go ballistic. But in most contexts, whenever God talks about women, and shame - for example when Jesus said whoever marries her who is divorced is committing adultery - the women run up and immediately ask; "Well what about the men?" Well what about the men? Read it again and see who is guilty in this verse: "Whoever marries her that is divorced." That is the man. They are so sensitive that you can't say anything with 'women' in it without them getting all in an uproar. They are out of order. They're condemned by it. They are guilty by it. Yet, it's actually condemning the man in that verse. The woman is just as guilty, but it is calling the man who has taken another man's wife an adulterer in that particular scripture. It says 'let your women be quiet in the churches for it is a shame for women to speak in the churches', why is it a shame? Who does the shame belong to? The shame belongs to the men because they don't have the answers at home. This was a problem in the Corinthian church.

*What? Came the word of God out from you, Corinthians? Did God speak His word through you, Corinthians? Or came it unto you only, Corinthians? (14:36)*

*1 Corinthians 14:37 If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord. 38 But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant.*

The women were out of order in Corinth. You say, "Well, that sounds just like today's church! That sounds just like the things that are going on today! Huh. I'm glad that was just for them!" Paul wrote it to correct a corrupt church, and that is why we still have

these instructions of correction today. It is to correct a corrupt church.

What was the historical context of the church at Corinth? I just laid it out for you - that's where the church was at. Today that's where the modern church is at.

*What? came the word of God out from you? or came it unto you only? If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are just for the Corinthians. No. These are the commandments of the Lord. But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant.*

*1 Corinthians 16:22 If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha.*

What is "Anathema"? "Let him be damned." If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be damned. "Maranatha" - "Praise the Lord; rejoice."

That is the historical context of Corinthians and it fits today. That is the blessedness of the scriptures. That's why we find comfort in the scriptures - we use them so that we can correct our lives and not be condemned by them. People come up to us all the time and condemn - they say, "Why we have nothing but condemnation?" To those who are under condemnation, those who are going to be damned, the words of life that Christ offers are condemning (we get asked a lot, "Why are you condemning all these people?"). I can tell in just a few seconds, by the way people look at scriptures, whether they are walking in light or darkness. Anyone who comes up and says, "Why we are condemning people?" is walking in darkness no matter how many scriptures they can quote, or how big an experience they've had, or whatever they may think they believe about Jesus. If they see condemnation in the life-giving words and commandments of our Lord, they are walking in darkness. It doesn't mean they can hear and understand and then turn to the light, but wherever they think they are right now, if they are rejecting the life-giving words of our Lord, the words of correction, they are walking in darkness even until now. When they reject the commandments of the Lord, let them be damned. These are Paul's words. Paul taught the commandments of the Lord.

May the Lord add His blessings to His words.

Prayer: Father, we again come before you and thank you for your word. The simplicity of it if we will just simply trust and obey. Lord, help us not look for excuses but look for opportunities to yield ourselves to you. To make ourselves more like you. ... in Jesus' name, Amen.

Hymn #847

In the warfare that is raging  
For the truth and for the right,  
When the conflict, fierce, is raging  
With the powers of the night,  
God needs people brave and true:  
May He then depend on you?

*Refrain*

May the Lord depend on you?  
Loyalty is but His due;  
Say, O spirit, brave and true,  
That He may depend on you!

See, they come on sable pinions,  
Come in strong, Satanic might,

Powers come, and dark dominions,  
From the regions of the night.  
God requires the brave and true:  
May He then depend on you?

*Refrain*

From His throne the Father sees us;  
Angels help us to prevail;  
And our Leader true is Jesus,  
And we shall not, cannot fail:  
Triumph crowns the brave and true,  
May the Lord depend on you?

*Refrain*