

Epistle of First Corinthians VII Chapter 3

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Let's go to 1-Corinthians 3, and in this chapter we will see contains quite bit. There are some excellent lessons for us today, and it will help us to understand some of the problems that are in the Church of God—that includes all names, types, brands. This Epistle to the Corinthians—this first one—is one of the toughest epistles in the whole New Testament. It's very corrective, and yet, the Apostle Paul gives them an extra leeway; always he gives them a little extra leeway.

We'll see when we get to 2-Corinthians that as soon as this fellow repented then everything is all right and everybody comes back and this nice. But I just wonder what the history of the Church at Corinth was after Paul died. I just wonder what happened to this Church, because we're going to see what was in this church, part of it, today.

1-Corinthians 3:1: "And, I, brethren, was not able to speak to you as to those who are spiritual, but as to those who are carnal—even as to babes in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, and not meat; for you were not yet able to receive spiritual meat; and neither are you able now, for you are still carnal...." (vs 1-3).

I think that has an awful lot to do with a lot of the problems that you find in the Church of God; an awful lot of carnality. A lot of the carnality in this we have learned by experience and observation and by learning of God's Spirit. A lot of the carnality that comes into the Church of God is the carnality of the 'goodness' of human nature; the good things that human beings can do. Then they equate this with being spiritual.

They had a lot of this carnality there in the Church at Corinth, "...For since envy and contention and divisions are among you..." (3). How come there's so much strife in some of the churches and things like this if the Truth is to make us free? I think part of the answer is that the Word of God is not used truthfully. The Truth will make you free as long as you use it truthfully.

The Truth of God can be used deceitfully. The Apostle Paul wrote that the law is good as long as you use it lawfully (1-Tim. 1). And it talks about those who use the Word of God deceitfully (1-Cor. 4). You combine those two together and what are you going to come up with? Someone using the Word of God deceitfully?

Here's how you can use the Word of God

deceitfully. It does say in Exo. 20 concerning the Sabbath that you are to do no work on the Sabbath. Then someone comes along and says, 'Aha! The Word of God is no good because it's contradicts itself.' *Because*

John 5:17: "But Jesus answered them, 'My Father is working until now, and I work.'" This was supposed to be on the Sabbath. Aha! Working on the Sabbath! If Jesus worked on the Sabbath, therefore, I can work on the Sabbath—isn't that correct? That's the logic that is used—isn't it?

Verse 18: "So then, on account of this saying, the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, not only because He had loosed the Sabbath... ['Aha! Jesus was a lawbreaker.'] ...but also because He had called God His own Father, making Himself equal with God."

Now then, we're going accept what this Scripture says; we will work on the Sabbath. God the Father works on the Sabbath, and Jesus works on the Sabbath. Jesus broke the Sabbath. It doesn't mean anything to keep the laws of God. We can go to Rom 10 and it says that Jesus is the 'end of the law.' 'So therefore, brethren, you are free from any law!' I've heard sermons almost like that. ***That is not using the Word of God truthfully!***

Where Jesus said, "...My Father works and I work."

- What kind of work were They doing? *Preaching!*
- What is the work of God the Father? *Directing the Holy Spirit!*
- Is that a spiritual work? *Yes!*
- Was God then breaking he Sabbath doing a spiritual work? *No!*

The next part of the answer: 'The Sabbath was made for God, so that man can do anything he wants'—correct? ***NO! The Sabbath was made for man!*** The work that we do, *spiritually*, is not physical work. As a matter of fact, on the Sabbath you should be doing more spiritual work such as reading your Bible, thinking on God's Word, teaching your children, talking to each other about it.

We had a discussion last night about the Sabbath. What is that you can and cannot do on the Sabbath? As your children grow up, they don't know the things you know. We automatically assume they had their ears open for every service. NO! So, we had to go through the whole thing on what you can do and not do on the Sabbath. On the Sabbath we

did a lot of work—mentally, talking—doing spiritual work. I wasn't buy or selling. I wasn't writing up any loan applications, I wasn't taking any phone calls, I wasn't doing my own pleasure, wasn't doing my own business. But today, I drove up here and I'm going to drive home. I'm not doing the work, and my car is not an animal. I've had people say that 'all your animals can rest, too; your manservant, your maidservant,' and all that. I'm just sitting there driving. Any physical effort that is necessary to associate on the Sabbath is not work. You're not being paid for it. So, when Jesus answered them, He was telling them something that they didn't understand.

What we're doing right now in studying the Bible, we are doing a *spiritual* work. Our minds are working, we're reading, we're thinking, we're absorbing God's Word, God's Spirit is working in us. That is work! That is not the labor of your own endeavor; it's a totally different thing.

"...the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, not only because He had loosed... ['broken' (KJV)] the Sabbath..." (18). That's quite an unusual word, 'broken.'

What was it that He was accused of in 'breaking' the Sabbath? *By telling the impotent man, that He had healed, to take up his bedroll and walk!* You cannot carry your bed on the Sabbath. That's just a bedroll. It's not a mattress, not box-spring, it's just a little bedroll, sleeping bag.

But that was against the *Pharisees'* Sabbath regulation to not carry something like that on the Sabbath. Had nothing to do with the Sabbath and the regulations of God, but a Pharisee regulation. We could sit down and figure out, lay out a regulation limiting the Sabbath. If that breaks the *spirit* of the Sabbath it isn't valid before God. We may, by our own self-endeavor, keep it. That's a carnal rule. That's where strife comes from. Here's a carnal rule: you can't carry your knapsack on the Sabbath. Well, the man had been laying sick for 38 years, and he was walking through the temple area.

What does the word 'broken' mean? Where does it come from? *It comes from the Greek word 'luo'*—the verb that they use as the model paradigm in basic Greek. Your very first paradigm on the verb in any New Testament Greek is going to be 'luo'—meaning *to loose*. What did Jesus loose of the Pharisees? *He loosed that law of 'you shall not carry your bedroll on the Sabbath'*—which the Pharisees made.

Let's go to Matthew 23 and see one other thing and this will help clarify that. I've had people do that to me when I was on the radio and talked about the Sabbath, people would write in and say,

'Jesus broke the Sabbath; Jesus worked on the Sabbath.'

Matthew 23:1: "Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, saying, 'The scribes and the Pharisees have sat down on Moses' seat *as judges*; therefore, every judgment that they tell you to observe, observe and do. But do not do according to their works; for they say and do not. For they bind heavy burdens and hard to bear..." (vs 1-4). This tells us anything that they give that's in conformity with God's Law, fine, do it. It's basically what it's telling us.

Anything of they have of *their own rules* and regulations and 'grievous burdens to be born' is exactly what it was right here. They laid upon this man!

Verse 4: "For they bind heavy burdens and hard to bear, and lay *them* on the shoulders of men; but they will not move them with *one of* their own fingers." This is what Jesus was *loosing*. He wasn't breaking the Sabbath.

However, have you ever been associated with a church group that if you 'break *their rule*' you're breaking a Law of God? *Yes!* That helps us see how you can have a lot of strife. It is true. I think the answer to that question is the reason why we're here. Why it is that there's so much strife? I do not want any strife! I don't want to argue about religion! When we're in a situation when it was desirable to not stir up strife, we didn't stir it up. I don't want to argue about it. It doesn't mean that I'm not seeking the Truth. But I want the Truth without strife! Hopefully we can get that.

1-Corinthians 3:3 "For you are still carnal. For since envy and contention and divisions *are* among you, are you not carnal? And *are you not* walking according to human *ways*? When someone says, 'I am of Paul,' and another one *says*, 'I am of Apollos,' are you not carnal? Who then is Paul? And who *is* Apollos? *They are* but ministers through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave to each one. I planted *and* Apollos watered, but God gave the increase" (vs 3-6). He gives the answer right here: ***always look to God!*** God gives the increase!

Verse 7: "Therefore, neither is he who plants anything, nor he who waters; for ***it is God Who gives the increase.*** Now he who plants and he who waters are one, but each shall receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are God's fellow workers; *and* you are God's husbandry, *even* God's building. As a wise architect, according to the grace of God that was given to me, I have laid the foundation, and another is building upon *it*. But let each one take heed how he builds upon *it*" (vs 7-10). Then it gets down their own individual lives.

Verse 11: “For no one is able to lay any other foundation besides that which has been laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay *or* stubble, the work of each one shall be **manifested...**” (vs 11-13)—*to reveal!* {Note part 5 of this series} Everyone’s work is going to be revealed! Every person that God calls is going to have his work revealed. We are going to be tested. We’ve gone through quite a few tests. We’ve endured quite a few things.

“...for the day *of trial* will declare *it*, because it shall be revealed by fire...” (v 13). This is symbolic fire; this is not a flamethrower. I have yet to know of any church member having to walk through a flame-throwing contest.

“...and the fire shall prove what kind of work each one’s is. If the work that anyone has built endures, he shall receive a reward. If the work of anyone is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but *he* himself shall be saved, yet as through fire. Don’t you understand that you are God’s temple, and *that* the Spirit of God is dwelling in you?” (vs 13-16)—*living within you.*

Verse 17: “If anyone defiles the temple of God, God shall destroy him because the temple of God is Holy, which temple you are. Let no one deceive himself...” (vs 17-18). The first big problem that comes with false prophets is that they *deceive themselves.*

“...If anyone among you thinks *himself* to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, so that he may be wise *in God’s sight*. For **the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God...**” (vs 18-19). Just sit back and think about the world and think about what goes on, and think how men react and so forth; that is so true. One example: simplified tax reform.

“...for it is written, ‘He entraps the wise in their own craftiness.’ And again, ***The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain***” (vs 19-20). That’s an awesome power that God has; He knows our thoughts. Think on that for a minute. ***God knows our thoughts!*** We’ll see later that *He tries our hearts and our reins.*

Verse 21: “ Therefore, **do not let anyone boast in men**; for all things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or *the* world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come—all are yours; and you *are* Christ’s, and Christ *is* God’s” (vs 21-23).

We could have saved ourselves an awful lot of strife and turmoil. Let’s just use an example of what happened in the Worldwide Church of God.

There was a time when they didn’t glory in men. Then came the carnality, the goodness of human nature creeping in, and then they began glorifying men.

Here is a clear command not to let anyone ‘...glory in men...’ There is an automatic self-destruct penalty that happens with that when you start glorying in men. Then you have the little clique that gives more glory and more favor to the one. Then you have the little clique over here that’s left out because they’re not included on the list to have dinner with so and so, who used to be. That’s the way it was. The same thing worked with putting ministers in different locations. What happened? *Because of that one thing*—and the vanity of that one thing—*came every sin in the hierarchy of the Worldwide Church of God!* Because of that one sin came all the rest.

Then came *an* apostle, then it was *God’s* apostle, then it was *God’s only* apostle; and alongside that vanity came adultery, lying, cheating and stealing. Along with that came strife and argumentation, because there were people who didn’t want to put up with it and saw that it was clearly not the way it should be with God. That one thing, right there; if they had not broken that one command it would make you wonder what the Church would have been like.

Let’s go back and look at several of these sections. The first one we want to take is v 3—about all the strife, envying and things like that and carnality. A lot of this I’m just going to refer to because we’ve studied it.

Romans 8:7—“Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God; neither indeed can it *be.*” Enemies of God—carnality!

Galatians 5:19—here again is a basic Scripture that tells all the works of the flesh: “Now, the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these: adultery, fornication...*” Just think of all the problems we have in the world just because of those two things; those two works of the flesh...”

“...**uncleanness...**” Think of how many problem, sickness and things we have of uncleanness. I saw a whole report on cholera. The first scientific survey ever done was in the 16-1700s in London, where someone sat down and figured out and analyzed from where the people were getting the cholera, where they would get sick. They were all along the river. The ones on the high ground were not getting it.

Then they began to analyze different things and they finally came up with that it was the water.

Why was it the water? *Because of the sewerage getting into the water stream. So therefore, with the big cities—London was one of the first—to have underground sewers where they would flush it all out to the sea.* That was finally finished in the 1800s.

There's a saying, 'cleanliness is next to Godliness.' There is a true saying. I've come into some places, brethren, if I described some of those things that I drove up to way back, it's just the typical thing you would see in a movie, you drive up and here's a rooting hog, and there are dirty everything everywhere. It smells to high heaven. You walk through a cloud of flies. This happened to me up in eastern Oregon. I would never have believed it. It was a typical Ma and Pa Kettle thing. The guy had written in for baptism. 'I've listened to Herbert for 35 years.' He sat there rocking in his rocking chair and his bib overalls and said, 'Yep, you know, I think I ought to be baptized.' I was just waiting for him to do his next spit with his tobacco. It was really something!

But it is true! *Uncleanness!* How much sickness, disease, and miserable things that come with that? That has other overtones into sexual habits and relationships, too.

"...**licentiousness**" (v 19). Taking license to do evil. No one has license to do evil. That is creating a license to do evil. Just like a friend said when you were younger, and said, 'Come on down to confession with me.' You asked what that was, and they said, 'Well, I go confess all of my sins this week and I can do anything I want to next week.' That's a good example of *licentiousness*.

Verse 20: "**Idolatry**... [they love their little idols and things] ...witchcraft, hatred, strifes, jealousies..." We have a society today filled with emulators, reflected in shirts, styles, music, hairstyles, language.

"...indignations, contentions..." Just this week someone got angry and took a gun and killed someone, and then just sat there and waited for the police to come get him. Terrible!

"...**divisions, sects, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings**, and such things as these; concerning which I am telling you beforehand, even as I have also said in the past, that those who do such things shall not inherit *the Kingdom of God*" (vs 20-21).

Doesn't sound like the churches in Galatia were all too pure, either—does it? He had to warn them. Have I ever sent you a letter warning you like this? *NO!* I have never written a letter like this. Think of it!

Driving in the car gives me a lot of time to think. I can't stand listening to the radio all the time, and all those stupid commercials; dumb-headed commercials; same way on TV. When I want to be inspired, I have my *Messiah* tapes and put those on. It really helps me in just out there driving around, to be able to think; *to think on God's Word*. The more I see, the more I think, and the more I experience, the more I know that these things are true.

One thing I try to do when we're studying, I try and think about what was it like for Paul at Corinth. What would it be like to stand up in front of a congregation like what was in Corinth? *or* Some of these congregations in Galatia? Where Paul wrote them; remember the first part of the chapter when he said, '*I marvel that you are so soon removed from Him unto another gospel.*' I thought, man, that's really something—isn't it? Think about it!

You go raise up a church, God raises up a church, and you say, okay, brethren, be true to God, love each other, follow the Bible and fare thee well—because he couldn't travel back and forth like we do today—I'll see you in a couple of years. Lo and behold, someone sends a letter, 'Paul, you can't believe what's happening in this church.' Then he emphasized the 'fruit of the Spirit.'

Verse 22: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control; against such things there is no law. But those who *are* Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and lusts. If we live by *the* Spirit, we should also be walking by *the* Spirit. We should not become vain-glorious, provoking one another *and* envying one another" (vs 22-26).

Why are people carnal? *Because their conversion is not very deep!* We all have a certain amount of carnality we carry with us—don't we. Even Paul said that he was carnal and 'sold unto sin.' That is talking of himself. Why?

There's the key right there, v 24: "But those who *are* Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and lusts." How do you do that? *You let the Word of God do the correcting!* The easiest way to receive correction is to receive it from the Word of God. All you have to do is read it:

- It's *between you and God* and the words you read. And you say in your mind 'I'm going to change.' That's the easiest correction.
- The next easiest is to have *a minister tell you*
- Next would be to have *a letter*, like one of these epistles
- The next easiest is *to have your husband or wife* tell you. Sometimes neither one

likes it, but that's still easier

- The next easiest—and by now it's getting pretty severe—*God is going to confront you with circumstances* so that you must choose
- Then the one is going to be the worst is where *God has to personally deal in your life* to bring about the correction.
- And absolutely the hardest, toughest correction is what Job went through, where God had to personally talk to Job

Talk about a correction! So, there are all the degrees of correction, and in between it there are the trials and things we'll see in a little bit.

Luke 14:26 tells a little bit about the carrying of our own cross, which means *crucifying the flesh*: “If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brothers and sisters, and, in addition, his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.... [that's one condition] ...**And** whoever does not carry his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple” (vs 26-27). You have to bear your cross. Bearing your cross is not going around with a persecution complex. Bearing your cross is crucifying the flesh daily—that's what it means.

In that then, that's the easiest correction that you can have if you're doing it. Remember where the Apostle Paul said that if you 'judge yourself, you won't be judged of God'? (1-Cor. 11). I know exactly what's going to happen, because I've experienced it. When you let that kind of correction happen, *you then begin to see it the way God sees it, because you see it with God's eyes*. You think, 'Oh stupid! Oh what a fool!

The psalmist in Psa. 73 said, 'I was envious of the wicked and their wealth and everything, and I got myself in trouble until I went into the temple of God and then I understood. I was a fool before You and I behaved myself stupidly. God, forgive me.' *That is God's Spirit working with you!*

Have you ever had some temptation come upon you that just seemed to be in the minute kind of overwhelming, overpowering or titillating? 'Well, that's interesting. Ah, yes, let me investigate that a little further.' Then you realize what's happening and you repent of it, then you say, 'Oh, what a miserable thing that was.' That is called *crucifying the flesh!*

James 4:4: “*You adulterers and adulteresses...*” This is not just talking about the physical act of adultery; this is talking about *spiritual* adultery. Rev. 17:1-6, where it talks about the 'great whore that sits upon many waters; that all the inhabitants of the earth are made drunken with

the wine of her fornication.'

“...don't you know that the friendship of the world is **enmity with God?**...” That's the same word that used that the 'carnal mind is **enmity with God**' (Rom. 8:7). Why is that enmity? *Because you have to do what the world does!* I think some of these athletic teams are a good example—everything is always positive; everything is great.

You'll notice whenever there is a political speech, what do they do? *They come in and it's called 'press the flesh.'* They go around and actually press the flesh. Watch them shake hands and you watch some of these politicians. They will shake the hand and grab the forearm. That's supposed to be some sort of communication thing that is for people and makes them secure. It's called *pressing the flesh*.

They always tell all about the 'good' things of everybody, except your enemy. What is the 11th commandment for Republicans? *Thou shall not speak against thy fellow Republican!* There is an example of the 'goodness' of this world. You get out in the world and sooner or later you're going to have to be friends with them. I'm not saying to make enemies with them. But the Bible says that 'the world is at enmity with God.' So, when you pick up on *their* ideas and *their* philosophies and *their* ways to make it part of your way of living, then you are committing *spiritual adultery!*

For example, if you wanted to increase your business and you knew that this person went to church on Sunday. You strike up a conversation—I'll apply this to me—and I want to land a big loan here. I want to have a friendship thing, so I invite the guy out to dinner and sort of wine and dine and we get everything all built and we talk about church and he says 'I go to church on Sunday.' *Oh, that's nice, can I go with you sometime, that would be so good.* And I get involved in it and become a total hypocrite. *That is making friendship with the world!*

We have to live in the world. We're not going to go around on the other hand with a great big chip on our shoulder and say, 'Aha! You are the world, get away from me; I don't want anything to do with you.' No, you don't want that either.

“...Therefore, whoever desires to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, 'The spirit that dwells in us lusts with envy?'" (vs 4-5). That's our own human nature. What about Paul when he said, 'I'm one thing to one people, and another thing to another person. Why was he doing this?

Obviously you're to set an example to your neighbors; obviously, you're to love your neighbors as yourself. But you are not to befriend them as part

of the world. You can befriend them as a Christian. In other words, making friendship with the world in this case is giving up your Christian character so that they will be your friends. That's what it's talking about. How many of these little groups are like that? You do what we say. If you want to join this group or this little club over here, here are the rules. What does that have to do with what Paul said?

1-Corinthians 9:19: "For although I am not under bondage to anyone, I have made myself a servant to all, so that I might gain the more." So, the whole purpose what to gain them to Christ. He had a goal in mind. The goal was to gain them to Christ, not to become as they are.

Verse 20: "Now, to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain *the* Jews..." In other words, he could talk to them from the perspective of a Jew, and say, 'Yes, I know, I understand that. Yes, I myself am a Jew. I do understand that. However, to understand Christ you must learn this.' That's what he's talking about here.

"...to those who are under law, as under law, that I might gain those who are under law; to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law to God, but within law to Christ), that I might gain those who are without law" (vs 20-21).

What he's saying is that he would come and sit down and talk to them and speak to them, and he would approach them from their own level; like he did on Mars Hill in Athens. He came and said, 'You men of Athens I see that you are superstitious and you worship your demons over here. I pass by this little monument that you had to the unknown God. I've come to preach Him to you.' So, he starts at their level to preach Christ to them. That's what he means.

He comes to people who don't have any law; they're just kind of lawless and have their own rules and regulations and he says, 'I know what human nature is like. I know what that kind of thing is.' And he would start off right from there.

(go to the next track)

Let's go to 1-Timothy 6:3—here's another place where envy and strife and those things take place. "If anyone teaches any different doctrine, and does not adhere to sound words, *even those* of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the doctrine *that is* according to Godliness, he is proud... [arrogance, vanity] ...and knows nothing. Rather, he has a morbid attraction to questions and disputes over words... [strife; and that can happen] ...from which come envy, arguments, blasphemy, wicked suspicions, vain reasonings of men who have been corrupted in *their* minds and *are* destitute of the Truth—*men* who

believe that gain is Godliness. From such withdraw *yourself*" (vs 3-5).

This just shows how this carnality just breeds up. *A little leaven leavens the whole lump.*

Titus 3:3: "For we also were once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving all kinds of lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful *and* hating one another." Sounds like walking one of the streets of Oakland or whatever city.

Proverbs is really a good book; it's full of a lot of these simple comparisons and understanding. Proverbs 23:17: "Do not let your heart envy sinners... [that's a command for us] ...but *be* in the fear of the LORD all the day long." If you're loving God and fearing God, and it's all the day long...

- Why would you envy sinners in the first place?
- Does it mean that if you envy sinners and what they have that you don't believe that God has what He's going to give you?

I would say it could come in several categories, because you may find yourself in economic want, and yet, you're trying to obey God and you can't understand why you can't have the basic things when all these sinners have everything. That's how it could be. It's your own human nature working, because *you're not really believing that God is going to do it.*

For example: If you are a Christian and unemployed, down to your last dollar and you have no visible means of support coming in, and then one of your friends drives up in a BMW or a Mercedes Benz and invites you over to their house; their kids are running around in the best clothes, beautiful, fine house, the heat is on, everybody is well-fed, there is no strife or problems, but they are pork-eaters, smokers, cursers and swearers. If they go to church they do it on Sunday. Let's say they don't do it at all; we'll just make it worse, they're atheist Jews.

Here you are striving to follow Jesus. I can picture someone letting their envy kind of get away with them. They might even do like the fellow did in the *Fiddler on the Roof*. Here's this poor guy just grubbing on this dirty rotten little farm in his rotten little town and he's out there in the barn taking care of his chickens. He starts dancing around and saying, 'Oh, God, would it really spoil Your plan if I were a rich man?' Things like that!

However, if—in *faith*—you would say, 'God, I know what You have to give me is the whole universe, therefore, what I know I'm going through is to help me to do the things that are pleasing in Your eyes, and I know you will provide.' I guarantee

you, you won't leave that house envious. But that would be hard! Especially if you haven't been close to God and your human nature is tugging a little bit harder on you than otherwise.

I. Strife:

Proverbs 28:25—where does strife come in the Church? *Here's part of the answer:* "He who is of a proud heart stirs up strife... [because when you have emulations of men, you're following men, you have *pride*] ...but he who puts his trust in the LORD shall be enriched. He who trusts in his own heart is a fool; but whoever walks wisely, he shall be delivered" (vs 25-26). I read a lot of those and all I can think of is: 'God, help us!'

Proverbs 17:1—this is true: "Better *is* a dry piece of bread, and quietness with it, than a house full of sacrifices *with* fighting."

Proverbs 16:19: "*It is better to be of a humble spirit with the lowly than to divide the spoil with the proud.*" They base a lot of movies on this. Have you ever seen where there's stolen treasure and there are 5-8 of these people all figuring out how they can get it.

One of them: *It's a Mad, Mad, Mad World*, they're all chasing after money, all trying to figure out how he or she could get it and split off the least amount to someone else. The detective was the one who ended up with it. The way they ended it was something. The detective got up there and had all the money in a suitcase and the suitcase came open and the wind blew it all, and all the crowd watching this thing picked up all the money.

Verse 8: "Better *is* a little with righteousness than great revenues with injustice." Remember the fellow who was arrested and was the kingpin of the drug dealers in Oakland. I commented about his funeral. He was tried, convicted and sent off to Leavenworth awaiting appeal. I didn't know this until the other night, that once you are convicted in a Federal court, you cannot have the conviction stand unless you have the right of appeal. So, that's an automatic right of appeal.

Now I understand how many of these big kingpins get everything reversed. They get with the appellate judges and they're all of those who are masons, in the conspiracy, or in this Jewish thing. I've often wondered how is it that they get these convictions and they find some technicality and the rat gets off. I know now! I was shocked!

Because he was killed in prison he could not physically be there with his attorney for the appeal, therefore, they had to throw the case out and declare him innocent, because you cannot convict a dead man.

Therefore, the millions and millions that the government confiscated—as a taxpayer I'm a little upset about this because I want those millions to go into the treasury—they can't use, confiscate, and sell it because they can only take when the guy is convicted. He couldn't be convicted because he was dead and declared innocent. Talk about a twist of law—the great revenues without right.

Proverbs 15:18: "A wrathful man stirs up discord, but one slow to anger calms strife." The older you get the more you must learn this and apply this, especially as your children get older, when you have to step in the middle of their strife to end their strife. You can't be angry when you do it, but you must be firm. This is one that I like to hang onto as kind of model for me.

II. Concerning Ministers:

I think this is the way it needs to be. The minister is not to be in a hierarchy above the people, but he's also not to be below the people. Just as the members are able to be members in good standing—as long as they're right with God—so also should a minister be as long he's faithfully preaching the Word of God.

Rather than go through all kinds of Scriptures with this, just read especially 2-Timothy about having to do with ministerial instructions. Talks about

- how he's to conduct himself in the house of God
- how he's to be an example
- what he's to teach
- how he's to teach it
- he's to be faithful with the Word of God
- don't get all blown up in your own vanity

2-Tim. is especially good concerning what a minister is to be and how he is to conduct his life. 1-Tim. is also good.

III. Building on the Foundation of Jesus Christ and Trials:

1-Corinthians 3:12: "Now if anyone builds upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay *or* stubble, the work of each one shall be manifested; for the day *of trial* will declare *it*, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall prove what kind of work each one's is" (vs 12-13).

Let's key this into the most important thing that it needs to be. 1-Peter 4:12: "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial... [there it is, trial by fire] ...among you *which is* taking place to test you, as if some strange thing *were* happening to you." When they do come that's what you think: some strange

thing has happened to you. We're guaranteed trials. We're going to see the various kinds of trials that will come:

1. There are trials that you create for yourself

Have you ever created trials for yourself? You create trials for yourself because you don't pay attention, you don't follow God's Word, your own vanity stirs it up or you don't do something you're supposed to. Those you can avoid by just asking God for wisdom.

2. There are trials that come upon you because God is going to test your faith

It has nothing to do with whether you're righteous or sinful; God is going to test your faith. When He tests your faith, He wants to know that you're going to be faithful. That's what it's for. I've heard people say, 'If you have a trial it's because you're sinning. God's purging it from you.' That's one kind of trial, that's true, but not every trial is that way. Sometimes it's *just to test your faith*.

3. It is for God's glory

For nothing else; for a witness!

4. Those which then are going to add to your reward

Let's take a look at the trial in Rev. 2, which is to God's own glory. It wasn't anything that these people had done. It wasn't that they were sinners. He doesn't condemn them for one sin. On top of it, they were poor.

Revelation 2:8: "And to the angel of the Church of *the Smyrneans* write: These things says the First and the Last, Who was dead but is alive. I know your **works and tribulation...**" (vs 8-9). When you go through some of these tribulations, you don't have to wait for the Great Tribulation to come.

I've had people say, 'Why should I have to wait for the Great Tribulation, I have it right now.' Sometimes that's true. Not *the* Great Tribulation when you're laying your head on the chopping bloc, but it is tribulation.

"...and poverty..." Think about it for a minute. If some of these Christians that were in the Church of Smyrna were resurrected now and could see what we have... We would invite them all into our homes and we take them down to our grocery stores and into our department stores and show them all the cars and all the wonderful things that we have. Then we say, 'Will you preach on the Sabbath for us.' I wonder what that would be? I wonder what sort of message they would bring? It says that they had their *poverty*.

We will see that some of their poverty was

being driven from cave to cave. Would you still be faithful, being driven from cave to cave? Caves are not very warm. No thermostats, no carpets.

Then for someone to come along and say, "... (but you are rich)..." (v 9). God doesn't look at things like we do. *He looks at the richness of faith!*

"...and the blasphemy of those who declare themselves to be Jews and are not, but *are* a synagogue of Satan. Do not fear any of the things that you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast *some* of you into prison, that you may be tried; and you shall have tribulation ten days..." (vs 9-10). Ten years and there's an historical period of ten years when that occurred. Does He correct them for any sin? *No! No sin!*

So, the assumption is, if God is trying you, you must be a sinner. *NO!* He says they're rich! He even let's those of the synagogue of Satan and Satan himself do the work to put them in prison. This is a trial to God's glory; nothing that they deserved.

So, next time something happens in the way of trial, I'm not going to say, 'God I didn't deserve this.' It's not for me to decide what I deserve or don't deserve. It's what God decides! Sometimes it's pretty rough. That's why I'm not anxious to bring the Day of the Lord. Jesus said, 'Woe to you that want the Day of the Lord.' It's a terrible, awful time!

"...Be faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life" (v 10). They had a tough life, brethren. I would have to say that we're very comfortable Christians compared to them.

Let's look at the reason for the trials that we go through. We're guaranteed to have them, absolutely guaranteed. So, whenever these things come along, let's keep them in perspective. What happens too many times is that we equate God's thoughts, feelings and emotions on a human level. For example:

- Why did he do that to me?
- Why did she do that to me?

However you want to put it, we equate God with our emotions, and we go completely off the track because we don't understand. I know it's the hardest thing to do.

I know when I was going through what I was going through, I look back and it was miserable! Absolutely miserable! My heart, mind and everything was just all in turmoil. God always provides someone to say something just at the right time. There are those of us who are the outsiders looking in. There is always someone who comes along and says, 'Don't worry, it's all going to work out all right.' By the time we hear that—we like to hear it—we don't appreciate it, because no one

knows what we're going through.

Here is the one Scripture that you can go to, to really give you comfort, because what this does is it puts it in perspective so that you understand *from God's point of view*—and that's the way we need to understand it.

1-Peter 1:1: “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to *the* elect strangers scattered in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia... [Apparently Peter wrote this to the people that Paul cared for after Paul had died. Remember, at the end of 2-Peter, he said, ‘Paul wrote certain things...’] ...*who have been chosen* according to *the* predetermined knowledge of God *the* Father, by sanctification through *the* Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of *the* blood of Jesus Christ...” (vs 1-2). That says an awful lot.

He's getting their minds on God the Father, that we have God's Holy Spirit that we are sanctified by God, we've had our sins blotted out through the blood of Jesus Christ, and then applied to us.

“...Grace and peace be multiplied to you” (v 2). Whenever you are in a trial, get your mind on God the Father first. I know that in time, it's not going to happen instantly, because in trial we're going to see that God is proving us, testing us. Do we need to be tested to know what's in our heart or not? *Sure we do!* That's why the prayer is: ‘Deliver us from evil, and lead us not into temptation,’ but rather lead us out of temptation, because they'll come along.

Verse 3: “Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who, according to His abundant mercy, has begotten us again unto a living hope through *the* resurrection of Jesus Christ from *the* dead.” Think of what Jesus went through. Think of what this Scripture says.

We have a *living hope!* Therefore, it really doesn't matter what our circumstances are around us if we have a *living hope!* In the middle of your trial, think of that. If we really believe, we wouldn't be envious and have the doubt. There it is right there!

“...has begotten us again...” Having God's Spirit, from God the Father. And then think of the resurrection of Jesus Christ then beyond that.

Verse 4: “Unto an inheritance incorruptible...” Keep your eyes on the section of the paper that puts in the astronomical reports. They have discovered by photography a think blue light stream that runs all the way across the universe. They've never been able to see that before.

I don't know what it is, but I think perhaps it could be a visualization of some of the magnetic

force fields perhaps that hold the universe together. That's astounding! To think that God is going to share the universe with us! That is amazing! If you get your mind on that, instead of the immediacy of the problem, notice what he does. He gets the mind of the people

- first on God the Father
- then on Jesus Christ
- on His crucifixion
- on His resurrection
- on the fact that we have a living hope
- on the fact that we have an inheritance that nobody can touch that is incorruptible

“...and undefiled and unfading, reserved in heaven for us, who *are* being safeguarded by *the* power of God through faith, for salvation *that is* ready to be revealed in *the* last time. In this you yourselves greatly rejoice... [in all of this that we've just said] ...though for the present, if it is necessary, you are in distress for a little while by various trials; **in order that the proving of your faith...**” (vs 4-7). That's the one we go through more than anything else—*the trial of your faith*.

“...which is much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is being tested by fire... [everyone is guaranteed it, no strange thing] ...may be found unto praise and honor and glory at *the* revelation of Jesus Christ; Whom, not having seen, you love...” (vs 7-8). That takes an awful lot. You can only do that by faith.

Of course, there's a special blessing that goes with that. Remember what Jesus told Thomas? I'll never forget what John wrote about that. They were all gathered there, and Thomas is finally with them—he wasn't there the week before—and he said, ‘I'll believe it when I see it.’ Jesus appeared in the midst and said, ‘Thomas, come here.’ Thomas said, ‘Oh, my Lord, I believe.’ And Jesus said, ‘**Blessed are those who believe and have not seen!**’ So, there's a blessing. You believe and love God.

“...in Whom, *though* at the present time you do not see Him, you believe, *and* rejoice with unspeakable joy, and filled with glory; *and are* receiving the end of your faith—*even the* salvation of *your* souls; concerning which salvation the prophets who prophesied of the grace *that would come* to you have diligently searched out and intently inquired, searching into what *way* and what manner of time the Spirit of Christ *which was* in them was indicating, testifying beforehand of the sufferings of Christ, and these glories that would follow; to whom it was revealed that, not for themselves, but to us they were ministering these things, which now have been announced to you by those who have preached the Gospel to you by *the*

Holy Spirit, sent from heaven—into which things the angels desire to look” (vs 8-12).

He’s gone through all that and now he’s going to tell them the practical advice, v 13: “For this reason, be prepared in your minds...” In other words, get your thinking straightened out. But you can’t get your thinking straightened out until you get your perspectives all lined up, and that’s what he did.

“...be self-controlled, *and* be fully hoping in the grace that will be brought to you at *the* revelation of Jesus Christ” (v 13).

Do we not all get trials that we deserve? *From this point of view, what we have coming to us—what we have owed to us—is death.* The ‘wages of sin is death.’ That’s truly what we deserve. But what I meant when I said that there were some trials that we’ll go through that we don’t deserve, I meant from the point of view that it is a trial that was not caused because a person necessarily sinned to bring it upon themselves.

There’s a trial of faith, we’re all going to get that. But like those people in the Church at Smyrna, there wasn’t anything that they did where you would say was deserved—where God was compelled to bring a trial upon them.

Look at the Laodiceans. They’re rich and increased with goods. God is compelled to bring that upon them. Whereas with those in Smyrna, He’s not compelled to do it. He’s going to do it *for His own glory!*

Another example is Paul’s thorn in the side (1-Cor. 12). I don’t know whether he deserved it, but he virtually said that it was used of God as an instrument to ‘keep me humble so that I would appreciate God’s grace. I asked God to remove it three times’ and since God didn’t do it, ‘who am I to argue with God?’

Could Job have learned the lesson of self-righteousness in the situation that he had without going through the trial? *I really don’t know!* But since he went through it, we would have assume that there was no other way to do it.

- Do we have to go through trials?
- Can’t we learn without going through trials?
- How about someone who can see himself becoming an alcoholic and just quit vs someone who is in the same stage of alcoholism and may or may not see it and goes on to the end of what happens to alcoholics?
- Couldn’t that second person also learned

the easy way by quitting sooner? *Yes, he could have!*

- But did he? *No, he didn’t!*

That’s why there are trials, because there are a lot of things you don’t know. There are things that even though God knows everything, there are certain things—because we have choices—He does not know how it’s going to go until there’s a trial where He’s going to prove what our choice is going to be.

Let’s clarify a little bit: Is an alcoholic going through it as a trial, or is that a tribulation that God had to bring upon him because He was compelled to because of his sin? *It would be the latter one!* God was compelled to bring it upon him because of his sin. There are natural consequences for that.

The trial only comes from being in a situation looking out. Whereas, from outside the situation looking in it’s not a trial. It’s your own stupidity. But in your own stupidity looking out, it’s a trial, because it’s messy and a miserable thing.

It’s just a matter of perspective. But it is true, as a person sees he or she is becoming an alcoholic and decides to quit; it’s a choice. So therefore, all these things are individual cases—aren’t they? Every one of them is an individual case. What should we do as Christians? I know as a minister, many times in the past I have said, and I’ve heard others preach, that if you have a trial you’re sinning before God. Maybe you’re not, maybe you are. But I now see that the trials that each person has, you have to handle each one of those on an individual case.

Some person could go through an experience that they can survive; others it would crush them, they would never survive it. So, God doesn’t bring it upon you.

God always gives us hope and He always gives us a way out, 1-Corinthians 10:13: “No temptation has come upon you except what is common to mankind.... [it’s common to humanity] ...For God, Who *is* faithful, **will not permit you to be tempted beyond what you are able to bear; but with the temptation, He will make a way of escape, so that you may be able to bear it.**”

If you don’t take that way of escape you may be crushed by it. It’s all a matter of choice. Each of these things are individual things. We can’t make a blanket statement and condemn everybody in the same category, because everybody is different. Each one of those have to be an individual situation.

All Scriptures from *The Holy Bible in Its Original Order, A Faithful Version* by Fred R. Coulter

Scriptural References:

- 1) 1 Corinthians 3:1-3
- 2) John 5:17-18
- 3) Matthew 23:1-4
- 4) 1 Corinthians 3:3-23
- 5) Romans 8:7
- 6) Galatians 5:19-26, 24
- 7) Luke 14:26-27
- 8) James 4:4-5
- 9) 1 Corinthians 9:19-21
- 10) 1 Timothy 6:3-5
- 11) Titus 3:3
- 12) Proverbs 23:17
- 13) Proverbs 28:25
- 14) Proverbs 17:1
- 15) Proverbs 16:19, 8
- 16) Proverbs 15:18
- 17) 1 Corinthians 3:12-13
- 18) 1 Peter 4:12
- 19) Revelation 2:8-10
- 20) 1 Peter 1:1-13
- 21) 1 Corinthians 10:13

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- 1 Timothy 1
- 2 Corinthians 4
- Exodus 20
- Romans 10
- 1 Corinthians 11
- Psalm 73
- Revelation 17:1-6
- 2 Timothy
- 1 Corinthians 12

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Transcribed: 3-15-13