

A square image with a blue, starburst-like background. The background consists of numerous thin, white, radiating lines that create a sense of depth and movement, similar to a light trail or a starburst effect. The text is centered over this background.

Order
in the
Court of the King!

Volume VII

By

Mark McGee

Welcome to Volume VII of our special series, *Order in the Court of the King!* We started the series a few years ago based on something the Apostle Paul wrote at the end of 1 Corinthians 14 –

Let all things be done decently and in order.

Paul said that in response to information he had received about divisions within the church in Corinth. I think that is very wise advice. Whatever the division or challenge we face in our local churches, all things should be done decently and in order.

I also quoted from John 17 as an example a Christian's purpose in life –

I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.

I think the Lord's words describe what our objective in life should be as well – glorify God on earth and finish the work He has given us to do.

In this final volume of this series, I'd like to look at some of the challenges you may face as a Christian and how you may be able to use those challenges to meet the objective.

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Challenges Within The Church

I read about the challenges that Jesus and His apostles had in the early days of Christianity and their warnings that things would get worse. However, as a new believer fresh off the 'atheist boat' I was taken by the love and excitement in being with other Christians. Within months of becoming a Christian, though, reality set in and my eyes opened to some of what was ahead. While some problems and persecutions have come from 'outside' the Church, most of what I've witnessed has come from 'within' the Church.

I remember hearing stories from missionaries who returned from the mission field and said the toughest part of their time in other countries often came from being around other missionaries. That surprised me as a young Christian, but I better understand it now.

I talked with a close friend recently who spent many years as a pastor's wife. The stories she told of how other Christians would lie to her face and lie to others about her was difficult to believe – unless you've read the New Testament. Unfortunately, I've heard that same kind of story reported by pastors and their families for decades. Once you experience 'lying' attacks from people in a church you pastor, it's difficult to forget the pain it causes your family and many others in the church.

Thousands of pastors and their families leave the ministry every year in the U.S. One of the top reasons pastors have given for leaving is 'political divisions' in the church. That was #3 on the list. The top two reasons given were 'the immense stress of the job' and 'feeling lonely and isolated.' Those and other reasons have led many pastors to leave the 'ministry.' Another survey of pastors I read was similar, with many leaving because of 'conflicts' within the church.

Thousands of churches are closing their doors every year because of not having enough pastors to lead churches and/or not having enough people to attend and keep the ministries going. I've worked with a ministry for several years that focuses on reaching people for Christ in New England – in the very areas where the Pilgrims first arrived and established Gospel-preaching churches. New England served as an example of Christian evangelism and service for many decades, but that changed over time. Many of the church buildings have been torn down, renovated for business use, or are used by religious groups that don't believe the Gospel of Christ.

I became a Christian in 1971. It was 'boom' time for Christianity. The 'Jesus Movement' was growing and reaching hundreds of thousands of young people. Churches were full of people who were hungry to hear God's Word and learn more about Jesus. A year later, in 1972, Pew Research found that 92% of Americans said they were Christian. However, more recent research shows Pew believes that number will drop to below 50% by 2070. Pew also said the number of 'nones' (people with no religious affiliation) will most likely

outnumber those who say they are Christians in the United States.

Not Defeated

Though Christians face many challenges, we are not defeated. We can't be defeated because Jesus finished the work His Father gave Him to do on earth and returned to Heaven where He reigns and rules as King of kings and Lord of lords. Christ is in Heaven right now interceding with His Father on our behalf.

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are

accounted as sheep for the slaughter.” Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8:31-38

If you are in a situation where you feel defeated in your church or walk with Christ, read Romans 8. Read the last chapters of Revelation. You will soon realize that nothing can defeat Jesus Christ and His chosen people. That doesn't mean we won't face challenges or persecution. What it does mean is that we are 'more than conquerors through Him who loved us.' Because Jesus conquered, we are conquerors through Him! That is how we should live our lives – as conquerors.

Paul gave us another positive word of encouragement in the face of many challenges God's people will face –

The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. 1 Corinthians 15:56-58

The Battle

We are not a defeated people, but we are still in a spiritual battle. Paul wrote about the battle in Ephesians 6 –

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with

all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints. Ephesians 6:10-18

We must never forget the 'work' of the Holy Spirit in the world and in the Church. Jesus told His disciples that when He returned to Heaven He would send the 'Spirit of truth' to comfort them, convict the world, and speak about Him –

But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. John 15:26

Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot

bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you. John 16:7-15

In Paul's first letter to Timothy he told the young minister to 'Fight the good fight of faith.' In Paul's second letter to Timothy he testified about his own fight –

For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing. 2 Timothy 4:6-8

Christians are in a battle, but should that surprise us? Look at the battles Jesus fought on our behalf? Look at the battles the apostles fought on behalf of Christians who lived then and now. Facing challenges from 'within and without' is what God has called us to do. As Paul told the elders of the church in Ephesus –

For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God. Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears. Acts 20:27-31

The Whole Counsel of God

Paul preached ‘the whole counsel of God.’ That’s a key to understanding Paul’s ministry. Preaching the whole counsel of God means preaching and teaching everything God has give us to preach and teach. We are not hold anything back because we’re afraid of challenges. The word ‘counsel’ in the Greek (βουλή) means ‘deliberate wisdom, decree, resolved plan.’ Our calling as Christians is to preach, teach, and live out God’s eternal plan. We don’t hold back from doing that. We don’t ‘shun’ (ὑποστέλλω – ‘draw back, withdraw, shrink back, conceal’) ‘declaring’ (ἀναγγέλλω – ‘announcing, telling all the way’) God’s wisdom. Will the world like your message? No. Will many in your church like it? No. So what? What matters is what God wants us to do – ‘declare the whole counsel of God.’

Doing that will put you in a difficult position because so many people today do not want to hear what God has to say – including even God’s own people. Whether you are declaring the whole counsel of God to an unbeliever or a believer, look at how the Apostle Paul directed his preaching, teaching, counseling, church-planting ministry. Follow God’s plan as revealed to Paul and you will see God bring about a spiritual ‘increase’ (1 Corinthians 3:6). Be sure to give God all the glory and finish the work He gave you to do.

The Apostle Paul wrote these words about the importance of apostles in the Church –

*And God has appointed these in the church:
first apostles, second prophets, third teachers ... 1
Corinthians 12:28*

*And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some
prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and
teacher ... Ephesians 4:11*

Apostles are at the top of the list of human authority concerning the Church. I say ‘human authority’ because Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has ‘All authority’ in Heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18). Jesus ‘gives’ aspects of His authority to humans to accomplish His will in this world.

Jesus called the Twelve Apostles (Matthew 10:1-4) during the early days of His earthly ministry. Jesus was on His Throne in Heaven when He called Paul (Saul of Tarsus) to become an Apostle. As we learn from Acts 15 and Galatians 2, the Twelve were called to take the Gospel to the Jews (circumcision) and Paul was called to take the Gospel to the Gentiles (uncircumcision).

But on the contrary, when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me, as the gospel for the circumcised was to Peter (for He who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles), and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. Galatians 2:7-9

The Apostle Paul planted more churches than any of the other apostles, which is borne out in the Book of Acts and the various letters of apostles. Paul also had a tremendous influence on other people who planted many churches throughout the Roman Empire.

The Ministry of Paul

The reason I started with that bit of history is because the ministry of the Apostle Paul gives us tremendous insight into how to deal with critical issues, conflicts, and divisions in local churches. You might remember that the Jerusalem church faced a serious conflict concerning the feeding of Hebrew and Hellenist widows. The wisdom God gave to the Twelve Apostles led to the formation of what we know as ‘deacons.’ The Apostle Paul drew from that wisdom as well, mentioning ‘deacons’ in his letters to the Philippians and to Timothy. Acts chapters 6 and 15 are good examples of how the apostles addressed critical issues in the early Church that could have led to serious divisions among believers. We can learn much from their example.

Because Jesus chose Paul to take the Gospel of Grace to the Gentiles (Acts 9; Romans 11; 1 Timothy 2; 2 Timothy 1), I’d like to look at some of the critical issues, conflicts, and divisions he dealt with in local churches. Let’s see what we can learn from Paul that might help us in our local churches.

Divisions in the Churches

Most of the apostolic letters were written because of, at least in part, because of ‘divisions’ in churches. Corinth is a good example. We’ve looked at some of the divisions in the Corinthian church in previous parts of this series. After a somewhat typical welcome at the beginning of Paul’s letter, the apostle launched into the reason for the letter –

Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. 1 Corinthians 1:10

Paul didn't just recommend or suggest that 'there be no divisions' among the church members – he 'plead' with them. The Greek word is παρακαλέω, which was a very personal word to use in the context. Paul was writing that he was coming up next to them, right alongside of them as if he were physically with them, and admonishing them because of divisions in the church. This was so serious that Paul invoked the 'name of our Lord Jesus Christ' in pleading with them to end the divisions. Paul wanted them to 'all speak the same thing' and 'be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.'

The apostle went on to write –

For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you. 1 Corinthians 1:11

The word ‘contentions’ is ἔρις, meaning ‘strife, wrangling, readiness to quarrel.’ Things had become so bad among the members of the Corinthian church that many of them were ‘spoiling’ for a fight. That’s a current way of saying the same thing. Some of the members wanted to quarrel. They wanted strife. They liked a good fight. Paul said – STOP IT! Enough already!

Paul then went on to describe some of the divisions in the church and what Jesus Christ, Lord of the Church, wanted them to know. Remember that Paul was an apostle chosen by Jesus Christ and inspired by the Holy Spirit to speak and write the very thoughts and will of Almighty God. He wasn’t just a visiting speaker who came to town from time to time so share a few lessons. Paul was an APOSTLE of Jesus Christ and he let church members know what the Lord of the Church wanted from them.

Glory in the Church

Jesus set the standard for what God's people should do inside and outside a church. Jesus brought glory to His Father. That's where Paul went with his advice to the divided Corinthian church –

For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption— that, as it is written, “He who glories, let him glory in the Lord.” 1 Corinthians 1:26-31

Being a member of a church, even a leader of a church, is not about your 'glory.' It's about 'God's glory.' "He who glories, let him glory in the Lord." There's our key to dealing with divisions in churches. Who's getting the glory from this division? Certainly not the Lord – unless the division is about protecting the sheep from the wolves (heretics). However, even when a shepherd protects the people of God from false teachers, which is a good thing, the shepherd should also give glory to God and not to themselves. It is a privilege to protect God's people from false teaching, but it's not our place to glory in it. "He who glories, let him glory in the Lord." Period.

Attitude for Change

It's one thing to 'want' change or even 'demand' change in a church divided. It's another to actually 'effect' change so that God is glorified and church members finish the work God gave them to do. What's needed to make this happen is the right 'attitude' for change.

We get an insight into how Paul brought about change in the next sentences –

And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

Paul pleaded with the Corinthians to be of the same mind, even as he shared his mind. He came to them in a spirit of true humility wanting to know one thing, “Jesus Christ and Him crucified.” That was Paul’s mission. He knew himself. He knew he was weak in light of all that Jesus had called him to do. Acts 18 says that Paul taught the Word of God in Corinth for ‘a year and six months.’ During that time he said “my speech and my preaching *were* not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.” Paul didn’t teach and preach using persuasive words of human wisdom. He depended on the power of God’s Spirit so that the people’s ‘faith’ would not be in the wisdom of men but ‘in the power of God.’

Paul did the same thing in writing His letters to the Corinthians. He didn’t try to persuade them to stop fighting with each other by using human wisdom. Paul depended on God’s Spirit to change people’s minds and hearts. That’s what we need to do as well.

‘Carnal’ Christians

And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men? 1 Corinthians 3:1-3

Paul pointed directly at the problem in the Corinthians church, which is the same problem many of today’s churches face – carnality. The Greek word for ‘carnality’ is σάρκινος and means ‘fleshly, of the flesh.’ Paul wrote that he could not speak to the Corinthians ‘as to spiritual people but as to carnal.’ Was Paul saying that the members of the Corinthian church were not saved? Read the next part of verse 1 – ‘as to babes in Christ.’ Paul was addressing believers who were behaving like little children. They weren’t able to grow spiritually because they were not yet able to ‘receive’ the ‘solid food.’ They were caught up in ‘envy, strife, and divisions

among you.’ Paul’s question to them – ‘are you not carnal and behaving like *mere* men?’ Paul said that the way many believers in the church were behaving like unbelievers (mere men).

Carnality is a HUGE problem in churches. I’ve written before about the dangers of Christians following ‘celebrities’ within Christianity – whether it be pastors, evangelists, authors, or musicians. It’s not a new phenomena in churches. We read about it in 1 Corinthians 3:4 – “For when one says, “I am of Paul,” and another, “I *am* of Apollos,” are you not carnal?” The answer is YES. That behavior is carnal, fleshly – in the same way unbelievers behave.

Paul closed his reasoning about ‘celebrity’ divisions this way –

Therefore let no one 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. 1 Corinthians 3:21-23

If your church is divided in a similar way to the Corinthians, use 1 Corinthians to help people see that their envy and strife about celebrities is carnal, not spiritual. Do so in a spirit of humility depending on the power of the Holy Spirit.

Each of the Apostle Paul's letters are fascinating to read – for many reasons. Paul was the most prolific writer of the New Testament. He wrote more books (primarily letters) than any other apostle, and probably influenced Luke to write the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts. The only other writers of Scripture to surpass the number of written words are in the Old Testament (e.g. Moses, Ezra, Jeremiah).

Paul's desire was to change minds and hearts. You can see that clearly in how he spoke to various audiences in Acts, as well as his writings. Paul wanted people to know that God had come to earth with 'good news' for all who would 'hear.' Jesus Christ, crucified and raised from the dead, was Paul's message –

For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some

have fallen asleep. After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time. 1 Corinthians 15:3-8

In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory. Ephesians 1:13-14

Back to Corinth

I want to return to Corinth for a bit longer because that church was filled with divisions. It may be similar to your church, but if not then count yourself blessed. Also, be on the watch for divisions to begin. We have an 'enemy' who loves to divide God's people from each other.

We've looked at divisions about spiritual gifts, leadership roles, and celebrities in the Corinthian church. All of them were based to some measure on human 'pride.' What was it that King Solomon wrote about pride a thousand years before Paul wrote the Corinthians?

Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall. Better to be of a humble spirit with the lowly, Than to divide the spoil with the proud. Proverbs 16:18-19

It's difficult to believe that anyone in a church would think poorly of someone Jesus Christ had personally chosen to be an apostle, but Paul faced that challenge throughout his apostolic ministry. The same was true in Corinth, even though Paul actually planted the church and spent 18 months teaching and preaching there. You'll find hints or even outright claims about that in both 1 and 2 Corinthians. Some people (maybe many) were proud and jealous of Paul. The apostle had to remind them about who called him to ministry and who was his Judge – and it wasn't the members of the Corinthian church.

He who judges me is the Lord. Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God. 1 Corinthians 4:4-5

Paul also wrote these powerful words about why he wrote them and the problem of pride in the church –

I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn you. For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. Therefore I urge you, imitate me. For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church. Now some are puffed up, as though I were not coming to you. But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord wills, and I will know, not the word of those who are puffed up, but the power. For the kingdom of God is not in word but in power. What do you want? Shall I come to you with a rod, or in love and a spirit of gentleness? 1 Corinthians 4:14-21

Immorality in the Church

After writing the words you just read, Paul wrote this –

It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles—that a man has his father's wife! And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you. 1 Corinthians 5:1-2

Sexual immorality was a big problem in the ancient world – probably as big as what we face in our world today. Jesus and His apostles clearly presented the truth that God's elect should not participate in sexual immorality, but the Corinthians church took it to the next level. They were actually 'puffed up' (φουσιόω – arrogant, proud) that one of the church members was having sexual relations with his father's wife! Paul said they should 'mourn' (πενθέω – feel guilt, lament) rather than be proud of what this person had done. Paul even made the point that this type of sexual immorality was not

‘even named among the Gentiles.’ That’s pretty bad when sin in the church is worse than what’s in the world.

The fact that Paul referred to the sex as being between a man and ‘his father wife’ probably means the woman was his step-mother. However, that’s still technically incest. Leviticus 18:8 is clear about that – The nakedness of your father’s wife you shall not uncover; it *is* your father’s nakedness.” It’s interesting that even the pagan Gentiles wouldn’t do something as vile as having sex with their step-mother.

It was bad enough that a church member had sex with his step-mother, but what made it even worse was that other church members didn’t see any problem with it. Instead of mourning about the sin, they were ‘puffed up.’ Paul wrote that their ‘glorying *is* not good’ because not dealing with the problem would lead to even worse problems in the church –

Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. 1 Corinthians 5:6-7

Notice that Paul called for a ‘purge.’ What’s a purge within the church? It has nothing to do with unbelievers. He had written them in a previous letter about that –

I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people. Yet I certainly did not mean with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. 1 Corinthians 5:9-10

The purge Paul spoke about concerned the lives of believers –

But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner—not even to eat with such a person. For what have I to do with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside? But those who are outside God judges. Therefore “put away from yourselves the evil person. 1 Corinthians 5:11-13

We learn later in 2 Corinthians that the church responded to Paul's call for a 'purge.' They responded in such a strong way that Paul wrote this in response –

This punishment which was inflicted by the majority is sufficient for such a man, so that, on the contrary, you ought rather to forgive and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow. Therefore I urge you to reaffirm your love to him.

2 Corinthians 2:6-8

The purge had accomplished what Paul wanted to see happen in the church. The 'purge' was the first step in facing a challenge in the church. Repentance and 'sorrow' on the part of the sinning brother was the next step. The last step was for the people to forgive, comfort, and reaffirm their love to him. It's one thing to 'put away from yourselves the evil person.' It's another to offer forgiveness, comfort, and love once the brother or sister repents.

We need to see more of that in churches today. Some churches are like the Corinthians who were puffed up about the sinning brother. Some churches are so harsh in dealing with a sinning member that the fellow Christian is ‘swallowed up with too much sorrow.’ If your church is facing something like this, remind your fellow believers of the lesson we learn from the Corinthians.

Sue Who?

The next problem Paul addressed with the Corinthians concerned how they were suing each other in secular court systems of the city of Corinth –

Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints? Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life? If then you have judgments concerning things pertaining to this life, do you appoint those who are least esteemed by the church to judge? I say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you, not even one, who will be able to judge between his brethren? But brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers! 1 Corinthians 6:1-6

Notice how Paul addressed the problem. Christians should not take each other to secular courts. Rather, they should take issues and problems ‘before the saints.’ The ‘saint’s (all Christians) will one day ‘judge the world.’ Paul’s point was that given that truth, aren’t people in the church worthy ‘to judge the smallest matters.’ Paul said those words to the ‘shame’ of the church members.

When one member of a church takes another member to court, that often causes divisions in the church. That is a shame and is unnecessary. There should be some ‘wise’ person in each church who can help adjudicate the matter and keep the problem from going to court. That’s Paul’s advice, which I take as Christ’s advice. Paul called Christian taking Christian to secular court as ‘an utter failure’ within the church –

Now therefore, it is already an utter failure for you that you go to law against one another. Why do you not rather accept wrong? Why do you not rather let yourselves be cheated? No, you yourselves do wrong and cheat, and you do these things to your brethren! Do you not

know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. 1 Corinthians 6:7-9

I wonder what the Apostle Paul thought when members of 'Chloe's household' told him about the many 'contentions' in the Corinthian church? Paul started that church, so he knew many of the people and the challenges of being a Christian church in a city like Corinth. As he wrote the Corinthians later, "besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches."

Paul had to be deeply concerned about the divisions in the Corinthian church. There were so many. How did Paul address all the problems? Strong theology, a steady pace, and a prayerful reliance on the power of Holy Spirit. I recommend the same process to any church facing contentions and divisions.

1. Strong theology – stay true to God's Word
2. Steady pace – stay on track – don't get distracted from what's important
3. Prayerful reliance on the power of the Holy Spirit – don't depend on your power to persuade or on human wisdom, depend on God's Spirit – "And my speech and my

preaching *were* not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.”

The Truth In Love

Members of Chloe's household brought Paul a long list of challenges in the Corinthian church. I'm assuming they did what they could to settle things in their church before approaching the apostle, but it became apparent that they needed Paul's help with so many divisive issues. Both of the letters we have from Paul to the Corinthians took on each challenge and met them head on speaking 'the truth in love.' The apostle would later use that phrase in his letter to the Ephesians, also in the context of 'endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.'

Paul continued addressing contentions in the Corinthian church by demonstrating how to speak the truth 'in love.' We left off with the problem of Christians taking each other to secular courts in 1 Corinthians 6 in the last part of our study. Here are more contentions Paul dealt with in the rest of 1 Corinthians and in 2 Corinthians. If any of these are issues in your church, take a look at how Paul recommended resolving each one –

- excusing sexual immorality – 1 Corinthians 6
- confusion about marriage and singleness – 1 Corinthians 7
- eating food offered to idols, causing others to stumble – 1 Corinthians 8
- challenge to God's direction for relationship of husbands and wives – 1 Corinthians 11
- abuse of the Lord's Supper, "For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. – 1 Corinthians 11
- misuse of, jealousy, and pride about spiritual gifts – 1 Corinthians 12 – 14
- denial that the resurrection would be physical (bodily) – 1 Corinthians 15
- church needs to make good on promise of support – Paul seemed concerned that they had forgotten about their promise – he did not want them to be embarrassed among the churches – 2 Corinthians 8 & 9

- false apostles in the church and Paul's true apostolic authority in Christ – 2 Corinthians 10 & 11
- Paul's concern for church members' faith and 'faithfulness' – concern that they would not be 'disqualified,' so recommends they 'examine' themselves 'as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves' – 2 Corinthians 13

I highly recommend that every church leader and member study 1 and 2 Corinthians verse by verse together and discuss whether there's anything in the letters that address 'contentions' or 'divisions' in their church. I believe church elders/overseers would be shocked to hear what their people know is going on inside the church. A good 'cleansing' within the church would be most helpful in a world that is hurtling toward spiritual destruction.

As the Apostle Peter wrote –

For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? 1 Peter 4:17

Other Church Challenges

The church in Corinth was not the only 1st century church to have divisions and problems. Paul was not the only apostle to face these challenges. Some of the challenges were non-heretical, while others were heretical. Here are some examples from several apostles. Be sure to read the text within the context, and look for the advice from the apostles for solving problems in the churches.

The Church in Rome

Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things. For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables. Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him. Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand ... So then each of us shall give account of himself to

God. Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way. Romans 14:1-4, 12-13

Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple. Romans 16:17-18

The Churches in Galatia

I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. Galatians 1:6-8

Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For each one shall bear his own load. Galatians 6:1-5

The Church in Thessalonica

But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; and indeed you do so toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, that you increase more and more; that you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, that you may walk properly toward those who are

outside, and that you may lack nothing. 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12

But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves. Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all. See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all. 1 Thessalonians 5:12-15

We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other, so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure, which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer; since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His

mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Thessalonians 1: 3-8

Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? 2 Thessalonians 2:1-5

But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you; nor did we eat anyone's bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us. For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat. For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies. Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread. But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary in doing good. And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet do not count him as an

enemy, but admonish him as a brother. 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15

The Church in Colosse

Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words. For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ. As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving. Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power. Colossians 2:4-10

So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ. Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God. Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations— “Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,” which all concern things which perish with the using—according to the commandments and doctrines of men? These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh. Colossians 2:16-23

But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all. Colossians 3:8-11

The Church in Philippi

Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from goodwill: The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel. What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice. Philippians 1:15-18

Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Philippians 2:1-4

Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind. Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things. For our citizenship is in heaven, from

which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself. Philippians 3:15-21

I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life. Philippians 4:2-3

The Church Jude Addressed

These are grumblers, complainers, walking according to their own lusts; and they mouth great swelling words, flattering people to gain advantage. But you, beloved, remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ: how they told you that there would be mockers in the last time who would walk according to their own ungodly lusts. These are sensual persons, who cause divisions, not having the Spirit. Jude 1:16-19

The Church Peter Addressed

Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious ... Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good

works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation. 1 Peter 2:1-2, 11-12

But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber. 2 Peter 2:1-3

You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. 2 Peter 3:17-18

The Church John Addressed

Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked. 1 John 2:3-6

Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us. But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things. I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and that no lie is of the truth. Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the

Son. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also. 1 John 2:18-23

For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward. 2 John 1:7-8

The Pastoral Letters

I also invite you to read Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus. Paul addressed many problems in churches that Timothy and Titus were overseeing at the time. That included how to select the elder/overseers who would supervise the soundness of doctrine and practice in each church assembly. Paul knew that his ministry on earth was coming to a close. So, he gave both men insight into how to continue the ministry after his death – especially in 2 Timothy where Paul wrote that he was 'already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand.' Paul's final words are so important to read and re-read, for both Christian leaders and church members.

The 'Builder' of the Church is Jesus Christ (Matthew 16:18). The Apostle Paul explained the 'structure' of the Church using terms his readers would understand –

Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit. Ephesians 2:19-22

Jesus Christ 'Himself' is the 'chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.' Jesus built the 'household of God' on the 'foundation of the apostles and prophets.'

As we bring Volume VII to a close, in fact the entire series to a close, I want to focus on what Jesus Christ said to the churches. We've seen in previous part of the series what the apostles said. Now let's see what the 'chief cornerstone' says.

Keep in mind that the theme of this series has been about 'decency and order' in God's Kingdom, which includes His Church (e.g. Romans 14:17; 1 Corinthians 4:20; Galatians 5:21; Ephesians 5:5; Colossians 4:11; 2 Thessalonians 1:5). In the midst of many contentions and divisions, caused by elitist pride among some in the Corinthian church, Paul wrote – 'Let all things be done decently and in order.'

That is God's way. He created a universe and earth in a decently and orderly way. Following humanity's fall into sinfulness, God guided people toward living in a decently and orderly way. As God revealed His Law to Moses and Israel, we see how He wanted decency and order among His chosen people. The same is true of the Church. Let us now here from the Lord and Savior of the Church who will guide us toward decency and order as we worship and serve Him together in unity.

How Jesus Guides His Church

We learn in Hebrews 1 that God spoke ‘at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets.’ However, in these ‘last days’ God has ‘spoken to us by *His* Son.’ We know what Jesus said because of the men He chose to speak and write about what He said and did. Those men, apostles and some ministry partners, spoke and wrote as they were ‘inspired’ by the Holy Spirit.

At the end of the apostolic period, the risen and ascended Jesus appeared to the Apostle John. He told John to write letters to seven churches ‘which are in Asia’ (Revelation 1:4). John wrote those letters toward the end of the 1st century AD. By that time there were many more than seven churches in the Roman Empire, so why did Jesus address just those seven? It may be because those churches knew John personally and would not have disputed about the authenticity of the authorship. It may be that those seven churches described well the challenges that churches across the empire were facing, and would face for centuries to come.

Whatever the reason, we are blessed today to be able to read what Jesus said to the churches.

This is what Jesus said to an astonished Apostle John –

I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last,” and, “What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea. Revelation 1:11

The Apostle Paul planted one or more of those churches and influenced others who would evangelize in those cities. Paul taught publicly in Ephesus by ‘reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks’ (Acts 19:9-10). Notice that ‘all who dwelt in Asia’ heard the Word of the Lord Jesus, ‘both Jews and Gentiles.’

The reason I say this is because some Christians believe the seven churches of Revelation were of only Jewish origin and had no Gentiles in them. That interpretation is a great mistake and most unfortunate. According to Paul's letter to the Ephesians, Jews and Gentiles made up the 'one new man' that was Christ's Body (Ephesians 2:1-18). To think otherwise is to contradict the clear teaching of the Apostle Paul.

Messages to Seven Churches

Christ's messages to the seven churches are found in Revelation chapters 2 and 3. We can break down the basic message to each church in this way –

1. Ephesus – Loveless
2. Smyrna – Persecuted
3. Pergamos – Compromising
4. Thyatira – Corrupt
5. Sardis – Dead
6. Philadelphia – Faithful
7. Laodicea – Lukewarm

If Jesus wrote your church leaders a letter to be read openly at next Sunday morning's service, which of the seven letters would you hear read? Loveless? Persecuted? Compromising? Corrupt? Dead? Faithful? Lukewarm? I dare say we might be surprised to learn what Jesus Christ thinks of our churches today.

I've written a great many words about the 'seven churches' in other studies on GraceLife and Faith and Self Defense, so I invite you to search the archives of each blog to read more about the individual problems the churches faced. I also invite you to do your own careful study of each church, rightly dividing the Word of truth to discover the truth.

What I would like to emphasize in this last part of our series is 'what' Jesus wants from each of His churches, and 'how' He expects them to accomplish His will. Look carefully at His guidance to each of the seven churches. Notice each time Jesus uses the words 'repent' and 'hear what the Spirit says'

—

Ephesus – *“Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent. But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.”*

Smyrna – *“Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”*

Pergamos – *“Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth. ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”*

Thyatira – *“Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds.” “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”*

Sardis – *“Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent.” “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”*

Philadelphia – *“Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown. He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name.” “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”*

Laodicea – *“I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth ... As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.” “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”*

Jesus Christ, who sits on Heaven’s Throne far above every name that is named, told five of the seven churches (except for Smyrna and Philadelphia) to ‘repent.’ He told all of the churches to ‘hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’ That is our Lord’s guidance to bringing ‘decency and order’ to His Kingdom.

Every Church's Challenge

Jesus Christ dictated His letters to the 'seven churches' in Asia more than 19-hundreds years ago. His words and the words written by His apostles have stood the test of time. Even though the enemy has fought with all his power and resources, he has not been able to defeat God. No church or denomination, no matter how big, how powerful, how influential, can defeat God. God's Word is sure and unchanging. As the prophet Isaiah wrote, "The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever" (Isaiah 40:8).

Your challenge, should you choose to accept it, is to identify the type of church your lead or attend. Next, identify any problems, contentions, or divisions within the church. Then, do what Jesus Christ and His apostles tell you to do. "Hear what the Spirit says to the churches." Listen to the Holy Spirit of God, remembering that the Spirit will never say anything contrary to what He has already said to the prophets and apostles through divine 'inspiration.'

And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. 2 Peter 1:19-21

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:16-17

The choice is yours – even as the Church has had to choose through the centuries. Will you put Christ first? Will you obey His Voice above all other voices? Will you ‘hear what the Spirit says to the churches?’

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