

Epistle of First Corinthians I

Background #1

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If you have a map in the back of your Bible, turn to the map that shows the journeys of the Apostle Paul. The city of Corinth is a very interesting city. {referring to an enlarged map from an atlas}: The city of Corinth is a very interesting city. Here's Greece and it looks like an island, but it's not; it's connected by land. This land is called the Paloponnese Peninsula. You can see by looking at it that if you were going to go by sailboat—which they all did in those days—they were all sailboats or rowing boats—and come clear around under and back up it would take you many, many days for the journey.

During the height of Corinth's power—politically, economically and trade—they had ways of taking small boats overland—there are still the drag marks of them on the rocks—from one part of the sea to another part of the sea, and they could cut off about four days journey.

Through here then came all the trade going from Italy down to Greece, down to Alexandria and so forth, over to the Holy Land. It was a very highly traveled area.

What kind of cities do you always end up with in highly traveled areas; where people are coming and going and so forth? You end up with cities like San Francisco. San Francisco is a good example. If you want to think of Corinth, think of it pretty much like you would think of San Francisco—the whole scene of San Francisco. The word *to Corinthianize* meant to live a very debauched and degenerate life including all of the sexual overtones that that means.

Here was this city and I couldn't help but thinking, it's like anything else, you buy a new appliance, you bring it home, plug it in and turn it on and you work it, and then you say, 'I'd better read the manual.' So, I started going through this and wondered where Greece was, and I started about three pages after where Greece really was.

Brethren, I'm amazed at how many places there are on this earth; how many cities, towns and people! I was sitting there the other night and I was watching the news and I saw this globe and then I saw the Black Sea, the Caspian Sea and all the land that's there. When I was going through here I saw this map of the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea and there's over 300 miles across of a place that you never ever think of that's filled with cities, towns, roads and people. Then you go a little bit further and

here's the next map and a picture of the Caspian Sea and it runs clear across just before you come to China.

I thought: *What a vast earth this is and how many people are on it!* Then I just started going through the whole thing and just going through each one of these countries and by the time I got done with it, I thought to myself, *what a little, teeny blip on the face of the earth we are!* When you consider all that's in this; this is quite a thing, this Britannica Atlas.

Then I heard a statement made the other day that really astounded me. They're doing a little series on Antarctica, and they made the statement that no human being known has ever been born in Antarctica. I was absolutely amazed, and then start going through this, I thought: God's plan and His whole purpose and everything has got to be so absolutely magnificent. During the Feast I felt very inspired, especially on the Last Great Day. Even what we went through there and how good we felt on the Last Great Day cannot possibly even begin to scratch the surface of what God is going to do.

Now, let's get into 1-Corinthians through the book of Acts, so that we know what's happening. We will summarize chapter by chapter as we go along. I'm just going to mention some things:

The Church began after the ministry of Jesus Christ. It began on Pentecost, and remember the tremendous impact that Jesus had on His society. (note sermon series on John—*The World Has Gone After Him*). Then the tremendous preaching and events that took place on Pentecost began. Then there was the persecution that took place and they were all scattered abroad.

Acts 8:4: "Therefore, those who were scattered... [everyone except the apostles] ...passed through *everywhere*, preaching the Word of the Gospel." We know what Saul was going to do; we know that he was going to arrest people and take them. We know that he was knocked down on his way to Damascus to arrest the people who were following the way of Christ.

Acts 10—the unusual chapter of the introduction of the Gospel to the Gentiles by Peter.

Acts 11—we find something very basic to the understanding of what happened in the New Testament Church—which is going to help us understand what happened with the people in the

city of Corinth. I think in understanding what happened there, we're going to understand what is happening today. We're living in a society very much the same, filled with commerce, trade, travelers, people of all different race mixes, races, sex problems and so forth. The book of 1-Corinthians is not a very inspiring book in some ways; in some ways it is a very instructive book, and in other ways it's a very corrective book.

Acts 11:19: Now, those who had been scattered by the persecution that arose concerning Stephen... [what we read about in Acts 8] ...went through Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the Word to no one except Jews only." Look to your maps and find where Antioch is.

Antioch is in what is called Syria then, or what we would call today northern Lebanon, which Syria even claims today as part of their ancient territory. As you go north from Antioch and westward, you will see the town of Tarsus, where the Apostle Paul was born. This helps us understand the background in Greek that Paul had.

He was born in an area where he was a Roman citizen and a 'free man,' as he was called. He spoke and wrote Greek. Antioch turned out to be the second leading church of all the churches in the New Testament. That was Paul's headquarters for most of the time that he was an apostle.

Verse 20: "But certain men among them who were Cypriots and Cyrenians came to Antioch and spoke to the Greeks, preaching the Gospel of the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord" (vs 20-21). We're dealing with very unusual circumstances—aren't we?

Verse 22: "Now, the report concerning them was heard in the ears of the Church that was in Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch. When he arrived and saw the grace of God, he rejoiced; and he exhorted them all to cleave to the Lord with purpose of heart, for he was a good man, and was filled with the Holy Spirit and with faith. And a large multitude was added to the Lord" (vs 22-24). So, it became too much for Barnabas.

Verse 25: "Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to seek Saul... [It wasn't too far away, probably 3-4 day's journey at the most.] ...and after finding him, he brought him to Antioch...." (vs 25-26) It kind of makes you wonder about the Apostle Paul. Remember how he was called: he was knocked off the horse. God spoke to him and told him what was going to happen; declared that he would be blind for three days.

Ananias came and prayed over Paul, laid his hands on him, baptized him and he received the

Holy Spirit. Paul went to Damascus and instead of arresting people, he professed Christ. He had to be led out of the city down the wall in a basket. He went over to the Arabian desert and stayed there three years being taught by dreams and vision from Christ. He came back to Jerusalem and presented himself to the apostles and they said, 'Well, that's fine, we're glad to meet you, Paul,' and Paul didn't do anything from that time. He went on back to Tarsus and sat there in Tarsus and did nothing.

I don't know how many years was involved, but it was no small period of time. So, here comes Barnabas. How did Barnabas know where Saul was? *Apparently the apostles told him*, 'We're glad that all of this is done, and we believe what you've told us of it; however we don't know what we're going to do with you, so why don't you go home until we know what God is going to do.' I don't know why else. 'And when we're ready for you, we'll send for you and get you.' Barnabas knew where Paul was, so he went over and got him.

When Barnabas found Paul he brought him to Antioch, "...And it came to pass that for a whole year they assembled together with the Church and taught a great multitude...." (v 26). I want you to think about that one sentence; how much history has past. One year; 52 Sabbaths, all of the Holy Days, the Passover, the adding of people to the Church. A lot of things took place; a lot of things occurred in people's lives. As we sit here and think: What has happened to us in this last year? What was our year like? Here was a whole period of time covered by one sentence.

"...And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians" (v 26). It doesn't say how long they stayed there. They could have been there beyond that year. It could have been more. Then there is a prophecy of the drought that would come. They decided to send relief to the brethren in Judea, so they sent it by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.

We know that James—the brother of John—was killed; Peter was put in prison; he was released; Herod was eaten up with worms. If you want to read something very interesting, read the account of the death of Herod in *Josephus*. He was out there speaking and was stricken with what appeared to be epilepsy and he foamed at the mouth. When they got him home, he was full of worms and it took three days for him to die. That's rather gruesome!

When you read some of the things that are here, you don't want to go against God! But there's one thing that ministers should never do: *subtly use that kind of thing to enhance their own authority against the people*. Remember, the administration of the church (old Worldwide) was changed into the

‘government of God.’ NO! The Government of God is in heaven! The Government of God is coming to the earth. The Administration of the Church is on the earth now. Then Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem (Acts 12:25). Acts 13 is where Paul and Barnabas are ordained.

Acts 13:2: “And as they were ministering and fasting to the Lord, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Separate both Barnabas and Saul to Me for the work to which I have called them.’ And when they had fasted and prayed, they laid hands on them *and* sent *them* out. So then, after being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed away to Cyprus” (vs 2-4). Each place where they were going they were preaching. It doesn’t say what happened in Seleucia or Cyprus, until they came to this certain city.

Verse 5: “And when they came to Salamis, they preached the Word of God in the synagogues of the Jews...” Why would they preach to the “...synagogues of the Jews...”? *Because the New Testament shows that it’s ‘to the Jew first and then to the Gentile.’* Remember what the Pharisees said, ‘Behold, the world has gone after Him.’ Now here comes these Christians on down into the outlying synagogues. They are taking these synagogues and turning them into an uproarious split! We’re going to read some of the things that are going to happen because of what they’re doing and preaching.

You know that all the Jews heard of the things that went on in Jerusalem, because every Feast Jesus was there; He was spoken of. What if you were one of those that traveled up to Jerusalem during that Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came and the Church was formed and the people were baptized, but you weren’t. You had to get home and tend your business in Cyprus or Corinth or wherever it may be. You went to the synagogue every week and you heard about this that was going on. Everyone was talking: Did you hear this? I wonder what this is? And the miracles and the healings.

Here comes Paul and Barnabas walking into the synagogue. Not everyone can preach in the synagogue, unless he has the ‘badge of authority,’ being a Pharisee. Paul was very clever. He said, ‘I’m a Jew; I’m a Pharisee; I’m a Roman; I’m a free man.’ He used every one of these terms concerning himself.

Paul comes into the synagogue of the Jews, “...And they also had John *as* an assistant. And when they had gone through the island as far as Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew whose name *was* Bar-Jesus” (vs 5-6). Bar-Jesus means *son of Jesus*. Jesus was a very common name. Some people—false prophets—have

speculated that he went along and said that he was ‘the son of Jesus Who was the Christ.’ I don’t read that here.

Notice what he said when Saul was confronting him as he was turning the deputy away from the faith, v 9: “But Saul, who *was* also *called* Paul... [this is the first time he’s called Paul] ...being filled with *the* Holy Spirit, fixed his eyes on him, *and* said, ‘O full of all guile and all craftiness, *you* son of the devil *and* enemy of all righteousness... [he didn’t mince words] ...**will you not cease to pervert the straight ways of the Lord?** And now behold, *the* hand of the Lord *is* upon you, and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a season.’ And immediately a mist and darkness fell upon him, and he went about seeking someone to lead *him* by the hand. And after seeing what had happened, the proconsul believed, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord” (vs 9-12). Then they did some more traveling. John went back to Jerusalem, and they came all the way across and to another Antioch.

There is another Antioch, which is in Pisidia (v 14). Go back to your map. I know it’s a little strange. If you will look at what is called the country of Turkey today, come to the south shore, right in the middle, there’s a little indentation in the coastline, go straight up from there about one-third of the way, you will see the city of Antioch in Pisidia. That was quite a little trip that they took.

Verse 14: “Now, after passing through from Perga, they came to Antioch of Pisidia; and they went into the synagogue on the Sabbath Day *and* sat down.... [Here’s the way it happened in all of the synagogues]: ...And after the reading of the Law and the Prophets...” (vs 14-15).

The Jews have a tradition to this very day: *the triennial cycle of reading the Bible*. That is to read in the synagogue through a cycle of three years all the Law and all the Prophets. If you have anything of Jewish readings and find about the triennial cycle, they will say, ‘On this Sabbath you read this much of the Law and this much of the Prophets and this much of the Writings.’ That’s what they were doing here.

“...the rulers of the synagogue said to them...” Notice how Christianity was preached; it was kind of little bit of subterfuge, because here they come marching into the synagogue, ‘Hello, who are you?’ *I’m Paul of Tarsus and this is Barnabas my companion and here’s John-Mark.* ‘Oh, wonderful, we can tell you’re Jews and here’s my Pharisee badge.’ So, they sit down and the ruler of the synagogue didn’t know what was coming. They were traveling; they didn’t give a hint as to what was going to happen.

“...‘Men, brethren... [fellow Jews. When a Jew speaks to another Jew as a brother, it is Jew to Jew; it is not brethren as we think of in the Church.] ...if you have a word of exhortation for the people, speak.’ Then Paul stood up and, after beckoning with his hand, said, ‘Men, Israelites, and those who fear God, listen *to me*’ (vs 15-16). He really fell into it then. Oh boy, what trouble!

I’m going to cover most of the rest of this chapter, because this is the same type of sermon that he gave in every synagogue. I want you to understand that only one place—one synagogue in all of the New Testament—where the Apostle Paul preached, was said to be decent and orderly and more noble than the rest, and that was the Berean Jews. Here’s what happened every time he went into the synagogue. Think of this from the point of view of what the Apostle Paul thought and did, and from the point of view of what the Jews did. We’re going to see their reaction. They went to extreme measures!

Verse 16: “Then Paul stood up and, after beckoning with his hand, said, ‘Men, Israelites, and those who fear God, listen *to me*.... [that’s all the proselyte Greeks that were there] ...The God of this people Israel chose our fathers and exalted the people when they were sojourning in *the* land of Egypt...” (vs 16-17). Notice that every time that the Gospel is preached, where does it begin? *The fathers: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob*; and Israel in captivity in Egypt! There are people who call that the ‘Torah Story.’ That always relates the history and calling of Israel.

- Do we do that today in the Church of God? *Yes!*
- What begins our experience as a Christian? *Passover!*

“...and with a high arm brought them out of it. And *for* a period of about forty years, He put up with their manners in the desert” (vs 17-18). Does that one sentence summarize an awful lot? Talk about condensing a sermon down. That’s all of Exodus, Numbers, Leviticus and Deuteronomy. WHAM! He’s through it all right there!

Verse 19: “And after destroying seven nations in *the* land of Canaan, He gave their land to them by lot.... [that takes care of all the book of Joshua] ...And after these things, He gave *them* judges *for* about four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet” (vs 19-20). That takes care of all the book of Judges and 1st and 2nd Samuel.

Verse 21: “And then they asked for a king, and God gave them Saul, son of Cis, a man of *the* tribe of Benjamin, *for* forty years. And after removing him, He raised up David to be their king;

to whom He also gave testimony, saying, ‘I have found David, the *son* of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will perform all My will.’” (vs 21-22). He immediately went starting from the common ground right down to what everyone understood: *David the king!* Everyone understood the major prophecies to David. Do we, today, relate a lot of things in the Church concerning David in relationship to the Church? *Yes!*

Verse 23: “Of this man’s seed has God according to *His* promise raised up to Israel a Savior Jesus.” [they’re short-circuiting a whole lot of history; about a thousand years of history.

(go to the next track)

Verse 24: “After John had first preached, before His coming, *the* baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. And as John was fulfilling *his* course, he said, ‘Whom do you suppose *that* I am? I am not *He*; but behold, *there is* one Who comes after me, of Whom I am not worthy to loose the sandals of His feet.’” (vs 24-25). That summarizes a good portion of Matthew, Mark and Luke.

Verse 26: “Men, brethren, sons of *the* race of Abraham... [now he’s got them; this is very, very tremendous preaching] ...and those among you who fear God, to you the message of this salvation was sent; for those who were dwelling in Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew Him not, nor the voices of the prophets who are read every Sabbath, have themselves fulfilled *them* in condemning *Him*” (vs 26-27). That’s a very interesting barb—isn’t it? The Scriptures are read every Sabbath Day!

Verse 28: “And though no one found any cause *worthy* of death, they begged Pilate to execute Him. And when they had carried out all things that were written concerning Him, they took *Him* down from the tree *and* put *Him* in a tomb; but God raised Him from *the* dead. *And* He appeared for many days to those who had come up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are His witnesses to the people. And we are announcing the Gospel to you...” (vs 28-32).

Here starts the real rift in the Church. Can you imagine—just stop and think about it—here’s this nice little tranquil synagogue. They come in every Sabbath and they have this one read the Law; this one read the Prophets; this one give the prayer. The way they do in synagogues today, when it’s all done they all go in the back and have cheese and wine, or maybe some other snacks and they talk and chat.

Here’s this nice little synagogue and here comes in some travelers—strangers—way out in the middle of Pisidia in the town of Antioch, and here this fellow comes preaching. Notice what happens; it’s something! I’ve never been in a church where anything like this happened, except I would have to

say the tension I felt the day I resigned from Worldwide would be the closest thing I could ever come to what happened here.

“...—the promise made to the fathers—that God has fulfilled this to us, their children, having raised up Jesus; as it is also written in the second Psalm, ‘You are My Son; today have I begotten you.’ And *to confirm* that He raised Him from *the* dead, no more to return to corruption, He spoke in this manner: ‘I will give You the faithful mercies of David.’ Accordingly, he also says in another *place*, ‘You will not allow Your Holy One to see corruption.’ For David, after ministering to his own generation by the counsel of God, died, and was buried with his fathers, and saw corruption” (vs 32-36).

You might want to key in here Acts 2 where Peter said that ‘David is dead and buried and his sepulcher remains with us unto this day.’ Compare this sermon with what Peter preached and it was almost an identical sermon. The words a little different, but the basics are there.

Verse 37: “But the One Whom God raised up did not see corruption. Therefore, be it known to you, men *and* brethren... [now here comes the hammer]: ...that through this man *the* remission of sins is preached to you. And in Him everyone who believes is justified from all things, from which you could not be justified by the Law of Moses” (vs 37-39). He held the Law of Moses until the very last.

That, brethren, to the Jews in the synagogue was an absolutely crushing statement. There was no greater person than Moses in the Jews’ eyes until Jesus. Yet, how many follow Jesus? If you believed Moses and you didn’t believe Jesus, and someone comes in and says that you can be justified from your sins, which you couldn’t be justified by the Law of Moses. To many Jews this was a repudiation of the Law of Moses, which was not the case.

Verse 40: “Take heed, therefore, lest that which is spoken in the Prophets come upon you.” Now he gives a warning. Not only does he hit them over the head and tell them that the Law of Moses isn’t going to save them, now ‘you better pay attention or you’re going to get the curse of the Prophets on your neck.’

Verse 41: “Behold, you despisers, and wonder and perish; for I work a work in your days, a work that you will in no way believe, *even* if one declares it to you.’ And when the Jews had gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles entreated *him* that these words might be spoken to them on the next Sabbath. Now, after the synagogue had been dismissed, many of the Jews and the proselytes who worshiped *there* followed Paul and Barnabas, who,

speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God” (vs 41-43). Here’s where the battle begins, and this sets the stage that happened in almost every city where the Apostle Paul went. Just like the words of Jesus:

Verse 44: “And on the coming Sabbath...” You know the whole argument of this. What does this one point prove concerning the Sabbath/Sunday question and the preaching of the Gospel. Paul never taught them to keep Sunday, not even the Gentiles, because it was the *next Sabbath*.

“...almost the whole city was gathered together to hear the Word of God. But when they saw the multitude, the Jews were filled with envy; and they spoke against the things proclaimed by Paul, *and* were contradicting and blaspheming” (vs 44-45).

That sounds a little bit like the same things that the Jews do today—right? Anyone who opposes them gets WWII records brought up. I question the validity of those records some 40 years later, and they’re only copies. You know what you can do with copy machines. You can make copies of things that are not really in existence and make it look like it’s a bona fide copy. The whole point I want to make is that the political and religious power that the Jews brought against Paul. We’re going to see that they used the governments to bring their pressure upon the Christians more than one time.

Verse 46: “But Paul and Barnabas spoke boldly, saying, ‘It was necessary for the Word of God to be spoken to you first; but since you reject it and do not judge yourselves worthy of eternal life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles.’” Whoa! What a hot statement! Talk about the fist in the air. I don’t know what kind of argument was going on that Sabbath, but it wasn’t a quiet, pleasant, enjoyable, loving Sabbath. You would have to say that this was a ‘hassle’ church, rather than what we want: *a no hassle church*.

Verse 47: “For so the Lord has enjoined *upon* us: “I have set You for a light of *the* Gentiles that You should be for salvation unto *the* uttermost parts of the earth.”” And when the Gentiles heard *this*, they rejoiced; and they glorified the Word of the Lord... [here you have Jew against Gentile] ...and believed, as many as were appointed to eternal life. And the Word of the Lord was carried throughout the entire country” (vs 47-49). That one statement says an awful lot—*the whole region!* This thing was like an ongoing hornet’s nest. There were swarms, as you would liken it, from one queen to another queen establishing new hotbeds of activity.

Verse 50: “But the Jews stirred up the devout and honorable women, and the principal men of the city, and raised up persecution against Paul and

Barnabas, and expelled them from their borders.” They just came in and grabbed them, picked them up and shoved them unceremoniously out of town.

How would like to start going to a church that began on this kind of basis? I mean, not knowing anything, maybe you can have the stomach for it, but I tell you, today I wouldn’t have the stomach for it. Just going through and getting the background on this, I just couldn’t help but think: My, my, how true that it is what Jesus said, and it’s still true today. Here’s what Jesus said concerning what would happen when He was preached:

Matthew 10:34: “Do not think that I have come to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.” [That is sure what happened back there.] ...For I have come to set a man at variance against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man’s enemies *shall be those of his own household*” (vs 34-46).

Wherever the Apostle Paul went, this is what happened. I imagine by the time the Apostle Paul came to the point that he was going to die, I imagine that he was literally worn out and had gone through every emotion possible to serve God, to serve the Church, to raise the congregations, to try and keep them in order. But I want you to really get the feel for what was happening.

So, they kicked them out of town, Acts 13:51: “And after shaking the dust off their feet against them, they came to Iconium. Then the disciples were filled with joy and *with the Holy Spirit*” (vs 51-52). There was something extra and special that was happening then in receiving the Holy Spirit to give them the courage to stand.

Acts 14:1: “Now, it came to pass in Iconium *that* they went together into the synagogue of the Jews and spoke so *powerfully* that a great number of both Jews and Greeks believed. But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles... [now we have mob action] ...and poisoned their minds against the brethren. For this reason, they stayed a long time, speaking boldly in the Lord, Who bore witness to the message of His grace, granting that signs and wonders be done through their hands” (vs 1-3). How long did they stay in Iconium? *I don’t know!* But it says a long period of time. Could be six months; more than a year; less than a year. I don’t know!

Verse 4: “But the multitude of the city was divided; and some were with the Jews, and some *were* with the apostles. And when an assault was *about to be* made by both the Gentiles and *the* Jews with their rulers to insult and stone them” (vs 4-5). Talk about a real precarious position. Ready to be stoned and chased out of town. No wonder God

didn’t tell Paul what was going to happen. He just said that he was going to preach to the Gentiles and the children of Israel and that he ‘suffer many things for Me [Christ].’ And he did!

Verse 6: “They became aware of it; so they fled to Lyconia, into the cities of Lystra and Derbe and the surrounding region. And there they preached the Gospel.... [here’s quite a thing going on] ...Now, in Lystra, a certain man was sitting who had never walked; he was impotent in the feet, having been crippled from his mother’s womb. This *man* heard Paul speaking; who, after looking intently at him, and seeing that he had faith to be healed, said with a loud voice, ‘Stand upright on your feet.’ And he leaped up and walked” (vs 6-10). These people we’re not jaded with radio and television and all the things we have today.

Verse 11: “And when the multitude saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices in Lyconian, saying, ‘The gods have become like men *and* have come down to us.’” You can imagine how excited they were. What an excitement this would be. Can you imagine if you were a Greek and you believed in all these gods and all of a sudden you really believed that the gods had come down to visit you personally!

Verse 12: “And Barnabas they called Zeus; and Paul, Hermes, because he was the principal speaker.... [they already named them] ...Then the priest of Zeus, who *officiated* before their city... [as you’re going into the city] ...brought oxen and garlands to the gates, desiring to sacrifice with the multitudes. But when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard *this*, they ripped their *own* garments *in disbelief*, and rushed into the multitude, shouting out and saying, ‘Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men, with the same nature as you, and we have been preaching the Gospel to you, *so that* you will turn from these vanities...’” (vs 12-15). Quite different from what the Catholics do. They’d run in and say, ‘Let’s just change these things a little bit from pagan to Christian. Let’s have a feast.’ They didn’t do that.

Paul said to turn from these vanities “...‘to the living God, Who made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all the things in them; who in the past generations allowed all peoples to go in their *own* ways... [he was really preaching] ...though, indeed, He did not leave Himself without witness, in doing good to us from heaven *by* giving rain and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.’ And *even* by saying these things, they could hardly keep the multitudes from sacrificing to them. Then Jews from Antioch and Iconium came there; and after persuading the multitudes...” (vs 15-19).

I want you to understand how perfidious—

easily swayed by circumstantial things—that these people were; very emotional. Here the man was healed and they run out and say, ‘Oh, the gods are wonderful; the gods are with us; this is a glorious day.’ Paul could hardly do anything to get in there and stop them from doing. The Jews come in there and talk and notice what happened: “...they stoned Paul and dragged *him* outside the city, supposing *that* he was dead” (v 19). You talk about going from the height of acceptance to the total rejection and despair of being stoned.

You know how really down you feel if you’ve had to deal with someone and you’ve done all you can do to deal with them and they reject you, and they turn you down cold flat and are absolutely rude to you and literally push you out of their presence. Imagine how the Apostle Paul felt! Not only did that happen to him, he was stoned, drug out of town and left for dead!

Verse 20: “But while the disciples were standing around him, he arose; and he went into the city *with them*...” God had to be with him to do that, to raise him up. You may consider some of this not necessary for the background coming into Corinth, but I want you to understand where the Apostle Paul is coming from when he gets to Corinth. Then we’re going to understand why the book of 1st and 2nd Corinthians has been written the way that it’s written.

“...And the next day, he departed with Barnabas to Derbe. And after preaching the Gospel to that city, and making many disciples, they returned to Lystra and Iconium and Antioch, *where* they established the souls of the disciples, exhorting *them* to continue in the faith, and *declaring* that **we must through much tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God.**” (vs 20-22).

After reading all that and what happened, it makes it seem kind of not so fulfilling for us when we say that it’s by *much tribulation* that we enter into the Kingdom of God. I know in just preparing and reading through and studying this and thinking about the things that we have gone through—which has been a certain amount of tribulation—it’s nothing compared to what the Apostle Paul had to go through. And he could preach that with conviction!

I have never been stoned. My foot hurts when I knock it up the side of a table or something. I wonder what it was like to be stoned with stones and be left for dead. Black and blue and scabby all over! He must have been a strong guy, too. He wasn’t like us. We couldn’t take that. One stone and that would be it, we’d be out of it.

Verse 23: “And when they had chosen for

themselves elders in every church, *and* had prayed with fasting, they committed them to the Lord, on Whom they had believed. And they passed through Pisidia *and* came to Pamphylia. And when they had spoken the Word in Perga, they came down to Attalia; and from there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been committed to the grace of God for the work which they had fulfilled. And when they arrived, they gathered the Church together and declared all that God had done with them, and how He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. And they stayed there with the disciples *for a long time*” (vs 23-28). It doesn’t tell us exactly how long, but it’s a long time. I would like to know what the phrase ‘a long time’ means.

Acts 15—they had a dispute concerning circumcision and what parts of the law the Gentiles should keep. The Apostle James gave the sentence. This is the one that is supposed to be the great ministerial conference and confrontation. Paul and Barnabas took the letter from the apostles and went back to preach to the people that he had been with before. Acts 15:41: “And he passed through Syria and Cilicia, establishing the churches.”

Acts 16:1: “He then arrived at Derbe and Lystra; and behold, there was a certain disciple named Timothy, son of a certain Jewish woman who believed, but *his* father *was* a Greek. He was recommended to *Paul* by the brethren in Lystra and Iconium, *and* Paul desired to take him with him; but because of the Jews in those places, he took him and circumcised him, for they all knew that his father was a Greek” (vs 1-3).

Even though they had the documentation saying that it wasn’t necessary to be circumcised, Paul had him circumcised for the sake of the problem with him being half Jew and half Greek and preaching and so forth. All the churches were established. Acts 17 gets into when Paul came to Corinth, and we will see what kind of situation they had the Church.

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

Scriptural References:

- 1) Acts 8:4
- 2) Acts 11:19-26
- 3) Acts 13:2-6, 9-50
- 4) Matthew 10:34-46
- 5) Acts 13:51-52
- 6) Acts 14:1-28
- 7) Acts 15:41
- 8) Acts 16:1-3

Scriptures referenced, not quoted: Acts 10; 12:25; 2

Also referenced:

- Sermon Series: Gospel of John (specifically, *The World Has Gone After Him*)
- Book: *Josephus*

FRC:bo
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