

NEW TESTAMENT



GOSPEL DOCTRINE CLASS

- Lesson 33: "Ye Are the Temple of God" (1 Corinthians I-6)
- Avoid contention and be unified.
- Rely on the Spirit rather than the wisdom of the world.
- Be morally clean.

A study of this lesson will inspire us to seek the blessings that come from being unified in Christ, following the Spirit, and being morally clean.

Introduction



Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin:

"While traveling along a mountainous road one evening through a driving rainstorm punctuated with frequent claps of thunder and flashes of lightning, Sister Wirthlin and I could barely see the road, either in front of us or to the right and the left. I watched the white lines on that road more intently than ever before. Staying within the lines kept us from going onto the shoulder and into the deep canyon on the one side and helped us avoid a head-on collision on the other. To wander over either line could have been very dangerous. Then I thought, 'Would a right-thinking person deviate to the left or the right of a traffic lane if he knew the result would be fatal? If he valued his mortal life, certainly he would stay between these lines.'

"That experience traveling on this mountain road is so like life. If we stay within the lines that God has marked, he will protect us, and we can arrive safely at our destination" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1990, 80; or Ensign, Nov. 1990, 64).

At the time Paul wrote his first epistle to the Saints in Corinth, some of them had begun to stray outside the lines of the gospel. This lesson will discuss Paul's exhortations for the Saints to repent of three of the ways they had begun to stray: through *Contention and disunity*, *Relying on the wisdom of the world*, and *Immorality*. We should always remember to seek the blessings that come from being unified in Christ, following the Spirit, and being morally clean.

Avoid contention and be unified. (1 Corinthians 1:10-13; 3:1-11)

1 Cor. 1:10-13 Paul addressed the problem of contention and disunity in these verses. Some of the Saints claimed to be "of Paul," some "of Apollos," some "of Cephas [Peter]," and some "of Christ". Instead of being unified as followers of Jesus Christ, some of the Saints divided themselves into groups or factions within the Church. We sometimes make this same error.

Mosiah 18:21-22; 3 Nephi 11:29-30; D&C 38:27 Divisions and contention affect our fellowship as disciples of Christ because they cause us to forget that we are all children of God; they stir up anger; and they keep us away from Christ because, if we are not one, we are not his.

1 Cor. 1:10 Paul counseled the Saints to do some specific things

to be more unified:

- "Speak the same thing."
- Have "no divisions among you."
- "Be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

NEXT WEEK:

#34 "Keep the Ordinances, As I Delivered Them" (1 Corinthians 11-16)

1 Cor. 3:1-4 The Corinthian Saints received only the “milk” of the gospel because they were not ready for spiritually mature teachings. Contention prevents us from receiving the “meat” of the gospel because it causes us to act like immature children. We can prepare ourselves to be fed the “meat” of the gospel by seeking the Spirit and behaving in a Christ-like manner.

1 Cor. 3:5-11 Paul taught that there are many ministers (servants) of the gospel but that Jesus Christ is the only sure foundation.

Helaman 5:12 It is important that we have the Savior as the foundation for our faith because he is the only one who can protect us from the temptations and afflictions of Satan.

Rely on the Spirit rather than the wisdom of the world. (1 Corinthians 1:17-31; 2:1-16)

1 Cor. 1:18-21 Paul taught that God’s wisdom will “make foolish” the wisdom of the world. Isaiah 55:8-9; D&C 38:1-2 God’s wisdom differs from the world’s wisdom because He knows all things. In some ways, secular (nonreligious) learning can be a blessing to us as it provides training for the job market, but it can also be a stumbling block to us if we listen to all that some vain learned men teach and theorize as if it were true.

2 Nephi 9:28-29 We can properly balance secular and spiritual learning if we hearken to God first. **President Spencer W. Kimball** taught: *“There is opportunity to get both [secular and spiritual learning] simultaneously. ... If we spend our mortal days in accumulating secular knowledge to the exclusion of the spiritual then we are in a dead-end street, for this is the time for man to prepare to meet God; this is the time for faith to be built, for baptism to be effected, for the Holy Ghost to be received, for the ordinances to be performed. Contemporary with*

this program can come the secular knowledge, for even in the spirit world after death our spirits can go on learning”

(Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball, ed. Edward L. Kimball [1982], 390).

1 Cor. 1:27 Paul said that God had chosen “the foolish things of the world to confound the wise” and “the weak things of the world to confound the ... mighty”. God often chooses the “weak things of the world” to fulfill his purposes because they are the individuals who rely on the Spirit more than on worldly strength.

1 Cor. 2:1-3 Paul faced the weaknesses of inadequate speech, lack of wisdom, and fear as he taught the gospel.

1 Cor. 2:2, 4-5 Paul’s weaknesses were made into strengths as he relied on the power of God.

1 Cor. 2:10-13 According to Paul, we know the “things of God” through the Spirit of God. Because we are human, we sometimes rely more on our own wisdom and intellect than on revelation through the Spirit, but we miss powerful learn-

ing opportunities if we fail to rely on spiritual learning.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie taught: *“Pure religion is a thing of the Spirit and not of the intellect alone, and its truths must be carried into the hearts of hearers by the power of the Spirit, otherwise the human soul is not changed ... and the seeker after salvation does not become alive in Christ”* (Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, 3 vols. [1966-73], 2:318).

1 Cor. 2:14 Paul taught that it is impossible for the “natural man” to receive the things of God because the natural man thinks spiritual things are foolishness.

Mosiah 3:19 To overcome the natural man, we must become saints through the atonement, become as humble as a child, be submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, and obedient to the Father.

Be morally clean. (1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 5; 6:9-20)

1 Cor. 3:16-17; 1 Cor. 6:19-20 Paul compared our bodies to a temple of God. This is an appropriate comparison because the flesh is the abode of the spirit.

1 Cor. 6:9 In his warning against many serious sins of his day, Paul

included several sexual sins.

D&C 42:23; D&C 59:6 God’s law of sexual morality requires that we be free of lust and adultery.

Elder Richard G. Scott said: *“Any sexual intimacy outside of the bonds of marriage—I mean any*

intentional contact with the sacred, private parts of another’s body, with or without clothing—is a sin and is forbidden by God. It is also a transgression to intentionally stimulate these emotions within your own body”

(Ensign, Nov. 1994, 38).

The following quotations explain why sexual sins are so serious:

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin taught: *“One of the most pervasive deceptions in recent years is the notion that immorality is normal and acceptable and has no negative consequences. In truth, immorality is the underlying cause of much suffering and many other problems that are prevalent today, including rampant disease, abortion, broken families, families without fathers, and mothers who themselves are children”* (Ensign, Nov. 1994, 76).

Elder Boyd K. Packer taught: *“[Satan] knows that this power of creation is not just an incident to the plan, but the key to it. He knows that if he can entice you to use this power prematurely, to use it too soon, or to misuse it in any way, you may well lose your opportunities for eternal progression”* (Ensign, July 1972,).

Paul counseled the Saints “not to company [associate] with fornicators” (1 Cor. 5:9). This counsel applies to us because the friends and forms of entertainment we choose can affect our desire and ability to be morally clean. We avoid immoral influences by associating ourselves only with righteous friends and virtuous activities.

As we know, Satan tries to persuade us that there are exceptions to God’s laws of morality. **Elder Richard G. Scott** said: *“Satan tempts one to believe that there are allowable levels of physical contact between consenting individuals who seek the powerful stimulation of emotions they produce, and if kept within bounds, no harm will result. As a witness of Jesus Christ, I testify that is absolutely false. ... Decide what you will and will not do. When temptation comes, do not change your standards”* (Ensign, Nov. 1994, 38).

1 Cor. 10:13 assures us that we can withstand Satan’s temptations.

1 Cor. 6:11; Isaiah 1:18; D&C 58:42 The Atonement of Jesus Christ offers those who repent of sexual sin the opportunity to be forgiven, washed clean, sanctified, and have his sins remembered no more.

Conclusion

Hundreds of years ago Paul was concerned about the behavior of the Corinthian saints. Many of them were not living within gospel standards. As an apostle, and as their friend, he wrote a letter of counsel. Though his advice was directed at these ancient members of the Church, his counsel is still valid today.

As members of the Church, we need to strive towards unity. We need to beware of the counsel and wisdom of the world and seek for the guidance of the Spirit. Today we live in a world that often tells us that there is nothing wrong with immoral behavior. We have been commanded by the Lord in our time to stay pure and clean. We need to be ever diligent in watching our thoughts and behavior and never cross any boundaries that can lead to our downfall. Our eternal destiny depends on it.

