

Message Three

The Goal of 1 Corinthians

Scripture Reading: 1 Cor. 2:10-16; 3:1, 3, 16; 14:32, 37; 4:1

I. The goal of 1 Corinthians was to motivate the Corinthian believers who were soulish, fleshy, and fleshly to aspire to the growth in life that they might become spiritual men for God's building—2:15; 3:1, 3; 14:32, 37:

A. First Corinthians reveals that a believer may be one of three kinds of men:

1. A believer may be a spiritual man, living in his spirit under the anointing of the Holy Spirit—Rom. 8:4; Gal. 5:25; 1 Cor. 15:45b; 6:17:
 - a. A spiritual man is one who does not behave according to the flesh or act according to the soulish life but lives according to the spirit, that is, his spirit mingled with the Spirit of God; such a man is ruled and controlled by his spirit—2:15.
 - b. A spiritual man denies his soul and does not live by his soul but allows his spirit, that is, his regenerated spirit, which is occupied and energized by the Spirit of God, to dominate his entire being.
 - c. A spiritual man is dominated, governed, directed, moved, and led by his mingled spirit—5:3-5a; 6:17; 2 Cor. 2:13-14.
2. A believer may be a soulish man, living in his soul under the direction of the soul, the natural life—1 Cor. 2:14:
 - a. A soulish man is a natural man, one who allows his soul (including the mind, the emotion, and the will) to dominate his entire being and who lives by his soul, ignoring his spirit, not using his spirit, and even behaving as if he did not have a spirit—Jude 19.
 - b. Such a man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, and he is not able to know them; to such natural men the things of the Spirit of God are foolishness—1 Cor. 1:22-23.
3. A believer may be a fleshy and fleshly man, being of the flesh and living in the flesh under the influence of the nature of the flesh—3:1, 3:
 - a. *Fleshy* denotes being made of flesh; *fleshly* denotes being influenced by the nature of the flesh and partaking of the character of the flesh.
 - b. The jealousy and strife among the Corinthian believers show that they walked according to the flesh of the fallen man and not according to the human spirit regenerated by God—vv. 3-4; 1:11-12; Gal. 5:19-21.
4. The Lord desires that all His believers take His grace to be the first kind of man—a spiritual man—Gal. 6:18; Rev. 22:21.
5. As we have been called by God into the fellowship of Christ (1 Cor. 1:9), who is now the life-giving Spirit (15:45b), and as we are one spirit with Him (6:17), we can experience and enjoy Him only when we live in our spirit under the leading of the Holy Spirit.

B. Our spirit is typified by the Holy of Holies and the good land; we must live and serve in our spirit for God's building—John 4:24; 1 Cor. 14:32; Rom. 1:9:

1. We are the temple of God, and the three parts of our being correspond to the three parts of the temple: our body corresponds to the outer court, our

- soul to the Holy Place, and our spirit to the Holy of Holies, which is the very residence of Christ as the life-giving Spirit, who is the presence of the Triune God—1 Cor. 3:16; 2 Tim. 4:22; John 14:16-20.
2. The three parts of our being also correspond to the three places of Israel's journey: Egypt corresponds to the flesh (our fallen body), the wilderness to our soul, and the good land to our spirit where Christ as the reality of the good land dwells:
 - a. The all-inclusive Christ as the life-giving Spirit is the reality of the good land in our spirit, making our mingled spirit the land of Immanuel—Gal. 3:14; Matt. 1:23; 2 Tim. 4:22; Isa. 8:7-8, 10.
 - b. In 1 Corinthians Paul likened the Corinthians to the children of Israel, who experienced Christ as the Passover in Egypt (5:7) and who wandered in the wilderness, experiencing Christ as the heavenly manna and as the spiritual rock which flowed out the living water (10:3-4).
 - c. The record of entering into the good land is in 2 Corinthians, which is an autobiography of a person in the spirit; the good land in 2 Corinthians is Christ Himself as the life-giving Spirit given to us as the divine grace in our spirit for our enjoyment—13:14; 12:9; cf. Heb. 12:9.
 - d. Paul's burden is for us to enter into and enjoy the reality of the good land, the all-inclusive Christ as the life-giving Spirit of grace in our spirit, today's Holy of Holies, for God's building—2 Cor. 2:13; John 14:16-20; Heb. 9:3-4.

II. The way to experience all the aspects of Christ in 1 Corinthians for God's building is through the two spirits, the divine Spirit and the regenerated human spirit, mingled together as one spirit—2:10-16; John 3:6; 4:24; Rom. 8:16; 1 Cor. 15:45b; 6:17:

- A. Only the spirit of man can know the things of man; the things of man include man's position, situation, condition, need, source, and destiny—cf. Mark 2:8a.
- B. Only the Spirit of God can know the deep things of God—1 Cor. 2:10-11.
- C. When we exercise our spirit to know the things of man, we are ushered into the Spirit of God to know Christ as the deep things of God; we must move, act, and live in our spirit that we may enjoy Christ as everything to us—vv. 9-10:
 1. The Corinthian believers had neglected the spirit of man and the Spirit of God, having turned instead to live in their mind by philosophy.
 2. Hence, 1 Corinthians shows that the proper experience of these two spirits is essential for the practice of the church life.
- D. A spiritual man is a steward of the mysteries of God (Christ as the mystery of God and the church as the mystery of Christ), a dispenser of the divine life supply to God's children for God's building—4:1; Col. 2:2; Eph. 3:4:
 1. A spiritual man has the mind of Christ—1 Cor. 2:15-16.
 2. A spiritual man speaks the spiritual things, which are the deep things of God concerning Christ, with spiritual words, which are words taught by

the Spirit; furthermore, only a spiritual man can receive them; this divine speaking is prophesying for God's building—vv. 14-15; 14:4b, 31-32.