

1Corinthians 12:1-3 "Worship in Spirit and in Truth"

1CO 12:1-3 Now about spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant. 2 You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols. 3 Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.

Paul begins this section by addressing another problem which existed in the church at Corinth. It does seem amazing that a group of people who claim to be Christians can act in such a way that Paul would devote the better part of 1Corinthians to dealing with some of these problems, and yet he still calls them brethren.

As I've said earlier in this study, Paul never gives up on the Corinthian believers and neither does God. It is as Paul said at the beginning of this letter.

1CO 1:9 "God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful."

And part of His faithfulness is not only redeeming a people for Himself, but also making sure that in their pilgrimage in this world that they will be conformed into the image of the Son to the glory of God.

Jesus Christ does not save us so that we can pursue our own path. He saves us so that we might be with Him forever. And that forever starts the day God opened our eyes and we believed Jesus alone saves, which was demonstrated by our humbling ourselves, repenting of our sin as we embraced Christ by faith for our salvation.

This too, has been Paul's message to the church at Ephesus.

Ephesus: 2:8-9 <sup>8</sup> For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; <sup>9</sup> not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Then Paul continues about the new life to which they've been saved in verse 10 "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them."

Likewise here, Paul continues to these Corinthian believers about this new life to which they have been saved.

1CO 6:19-20 "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; 20 you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body."

And so, as we come to our text, Paul wants to remind these believers that every area of their lives, including the gifts which the Lord gives to each of His people, are to be used in a way that glorifies Christ and edifies the body.

1CO 12:1 "Now about spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant."

When Paul addresses spiritual gifts in this section he is not talking about talents and skills which we all might possess. This doesn't mean that these talents and skills are not gifts from God in one sense, but in our text Paul is going to point out how the Spirit of God gives specific gifts, after we come to Christ, so that the church of Jesus Christ can grow effectively, while being comforted and encouraged, as the Lord shows His very presence in the midst of His church, in the power of the Holy Spirit through His gifted people.

And so, Paul begins by addressing spiritual gifts. Interestingly enough, the word gifts is not found in verse one. The Greek word Paul uses is one word simply meaning spirituals; now concerning spirituals, is literally what Paul says.

But this is why we always look at the entire context. And the context clearly tells us that Paul is going to address gifts of the Holy Spirit and this is why our translators give us the phrase, spiritual gifts or spiritual things in verse one.

And he says, I do not want you to be ignorant. Again, Paul is not saying that this is the first time they ever heard of spiritual gifts. But what he is saying is that he doesn't want them to be ignorant or uninformed as to their proper use in the body of Christ.

I'm sure Paul had taught them the proper use of the gifts of the Spirit when he was with them, but during his absence many more came to Christ which means many more came into the church with their pagan baggage and their influence.

And so, in a sense, Paul is writing to remind them of what some of them were taught when he was with them, and what some, who were not previously there, now need to be taught as to the correct use of these gifts.

1CO 12:2-3 "You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols. 3 Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit."

Now, this seems like an odd thing to say at the beginning of an exhortation to properly exercise the gifts of the Holy Spirit, but it really isn't.

Paul takes them back in their minds eyes to the time when they were lost in their sin and how they practiced a spirituality which was carnal and demonic. And he says that when you were pagans, or unbelievers, you did those things which came naturally to you, and you were influenced, or led astray, by these practices, which included idolatry.

And so, he's trying to show the contrast in lifestyles and influences as he reminds them that that is what they used to be, but they no longer are what they were. They are now redeemed by the blood of the Lamb and must begin to submit to the new creation they are in Christ.

1CO 6:11 "And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God."

Just as this is true in the way we live for the Lord out in the world on a daily basis, as we demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit, it is also true of the way we use the gifts of the Spirit in the body of Christ.

And if you say that you belong to Christ then you must also submit to Christ and prove yourselves doers, and prove yourselves to have this new life in Christ. This is why he continues in verse 3 of our text.

1CO 12:3 "Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit."

Here Paul makes a distinction between two types of people who are shown to be on opposite sides of the spiritual spectrum. On the

one hand there are those people who do not have the Spirit of Christ. And since Paul is talking about spiritual gifts from the Holy Spirit he is saying that this particular group of unbelievers would show the fruit of their unbelief, which could claim Jesus to be cursed.

On the opposite side of the spectrum are those believers who have the Spirit of Christ who necessarily are able to declare from their hearts that Jesus is Lord.

This example is designed by Paul to show two and only two positions. One, where there is belief in Christ with the resultant Spirit of Christ taking up residence in the believer, and one where there is none. It does not mean to suggest that every unbeliever declares with his mouth that Jesus Christ is cursed, though by their unbelief they most certainly declare such a truth as He is not deemed worthy of their worship and adoration.

But here's Paul's point. It is only the believer who is indwelt with the Spirit of Christ who can declare with confidence that the Lord of the universe is the Lord of their lives as they place their faith and future hope in the only one who can give them life.

And so, when Paul moves forward in his explanation of how the Spirit of Christ gifts His people in the body of Christ it is understood that a true manifestation of those gifts can only be found in one who has the Spirit and is able to worship the Lord in spirit and in truth.

What appears to have happened in Corinth, not unlike how it has happened today in many quarters of the church, is that their worship was more motivated by their sensuality than by the truth of God's word.

What I mean by this is that their former pagan practices, which were certainly carnal and fleshly, were now coming to the forefront as they reverted back to a more emotional approach to their lives and their worship where ecstasy and enthusiasm trumped a more objective standard.

Now, there's nothing wrong with becoming emotional in our worship of God, but our emotions must be governed by the Spirit and His word.

But ecstasy and enthusiasm was not the only problem. A proper understanding of who Jesus Christ is, according to the word of

God, was also an issue, especially in the early church who was bombarded by false teachings of every kind, including Gnosticism.

Gnosticism was a teaching of the day which looked on the physical aspect of man as something inherently evil.

Charles Hodge in his systematic theology states that the Corinthians held that Jesus and Christ were distinct according to this Gnostic line of thought which was prevalent during the first century. "Jesus was an ordinary man, the son of Joseph and Mary. Christ was a spirit or power which descended on Jesus at his baptism, and became his guide and guardian and enabled him to work miracles." (Hodge)

And so, you can see how this thought could have influenced former pagans who held to the Gnostic belief system of that day. And now they become Christians and bring some of this baggage over to their understanding of who Jesus Christ really was. In their zeal to worship correctly they differentiate between the "man" Jesus and the "spiritual" Savior and could actually curse Jesus, "the man", in the process.

But Scriptures clearly teach that the Son of God took on flesh and now was fully God and fully man. And so, though Jesus Christ now has two distinct natures, that of man and God, He is truly only one person. The Gnostics tried to teach that he was two persons, and therefore divisible into a man who could be cursed, and God or spirit who could be praised.

Paul says, that the Spirit of God always declares that Jesus is God and man and therefore must be worshiped as the person He is; the God/man, Jesus Christ.

1CO 12:3 "Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed,..."

Now, we could certainly conclude that in the first century Paul was warning the church in Corinth that to speak of Christ in a way that deems Him insignificant to the degree that you cut Him off from your life, is certainly not something that emanates from the Spirit of Christ.

But, this warning is directed to those both inside and outside the church. Those outside of the church would certainly include the unbelieving everywhere who join the ranks of the Athenians, who are just up the road from Corinth, who deemed Paul's message of the cross and Christ's resurrection as foolishness.

**Acts 17:32** <sup>32</sup> Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some *began* to sneer,

But we would be mistaken to think that those inside of the church cannot also sneer or regard Christ as not true to His nature, those Jude would refer to as mockers.

**Jude 1:17-19** <sup>17</sup> But you, beloved, ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>18</sup> that they were saying to you, "In the last time there will be mockers, following after their own ungodly lusts." <sup>19</sup> These are the ones who cause divisions, worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit.

Though this could certainly be addressing those outside of the church it would certainly include those mockers, or false teachers, inside as divisions within the church would be instigated by them.

These false teachers could be promoting all sorts of teachings that would undermine the veracity of Christ's nature and the truth the Spirit of Christ promotes through His word, including the very resurrection of Christ and His promise to return for His people. This is what Peter points out as happening in the latter days.

**2 Peter 3:3-4** <sup>3</sup> Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with *their* mocking, following after their own lusts, <sup>4</sup> and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For *ever* since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation."

But there is another aspect of Paul's admonition regarding the declaration, "Jesus be accursed", that cannot be overlooked and that is a group in the body of Christ who are neither unbelievers, or blatant mockers. And that is the group who are deceived and being deceived and it is these very Corinthians who are potentially part of that group as Paul points out in his second letter to them.

**2 Corinthians 11:3** <sup>3</sup> But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity *of devotion* to Christ.

The fact that there are numerous warnings given to true believers in the Scriptures regarding doctrines of demons and the potential for the body of Christ to be deceived into accepting such teachings is no empty warning.

**Colossians 2:8** <sup>8</sup> See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.

These warnings are all a part of that reality of the apostasy that necessarily will come upon the church in the last days before the return of Christ.

**2 Thessalonians 2:1-4** <sup>NAU</sup> Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, <sup>2</sup> that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. <sup>3</sup> Let no one in any way deceive you, for *it will not come* unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, <sup>4</sup> who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.

If these warnings about false and deceptive teachings are meant for the church and these teachings will be promoted through those who have been deceived, including believers, together with overt false teachers, then what would this type of thing look like today?

If you want to undermine the foundation of our faith in Christ then one place to start is with the undermining of the Holy Spirit's inspired word from God.

The question is, is this happening in the church today?

And the answer is an emphatic, yes!

The very foundation of the written word of God begins with the very first book of the Bible, Genesis.

If you can lay waste to this first book then everything in between it and Revelation becomes suspect.

Well, how would you do that?

You demonstrate that what is revealed by God is not what He meant. That's how it all began.

**Genesis 3:1** <sup>NAU</sup> Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "**Indeed, has God said...?**

When you raise doubt as to what God has said, you collapse any argument for what God said. And I believe one of the most corrupt forms of doctrine that is being promoted by the “Scholars” in the body of Christ today is at the heart of apostasy that is running rampant in the church today.

And its focal point is Genesis 1:1.

**Genesis 1:1** <sup>NAU</sup> In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

God’s creation of the universe is declared in the pages of God’s revealed word as taking place in the span of six days, where there is evening and morning with God ceasing from His creation work on day seven.

In most quarters of the church today the question is raised regarding the truth of these six literal days of creation as, **“Indeed, has God said?”**

There are many false doctrines in the church today but I believe this lies at the heart of any argument for what God has said and the revelation He has given the world in the pages of His word.

Now, I understand that many within the church would see this particular issue as secondary or even tertiary in importance. And because of that position we should not become embroiled in divisions as to whether or not God created the world in six days, six thousand years or six billion years.

And this sentiment has been fostered in practically every evangelical church in the world including what could be considered one of the most conservative denominations, that of the Presbyterian church in America, the PCA, and in full disclosure, of which I was once a part.

They have spent years debating this issue without coming to a final consensus **by 2017**. They have studied all of the differing views on creation, including atheistic evolution to Day-age and the Framework Interpretation.

And in all the discussions at the highest levels of leadership within their denomination they arrived at this conclusion.

“A survey of recent PCA history and practice yields the following. First, it has been assumed in the conservative Reformed community for more than 150 years (on the strength of the witness of Shaw, Hodge, Mitchell and Warfield) that the *Confession*

articulates no particular position on the nature and duration of the creation days and that *one's position on the subject is a matter of indifference*. Second, and in that light, many of the founding fathers of the PCA took their ordination vows in good conscience while holding to non-literal views of the creation days or while *holding to that issue as a matter of indifference*. It would be less than charitable for any of us to view them as unprincipled. Third, recent primary evidence uncovered by David Hall and others has convinced many that what the Westminster Assembly meant by its phrase “in the space of six days” was six calendar days. Fourth, one hears from some the complaint that the PCA has ‘broadened’ and from others that it has ‘narrowed’ in its tolerance of positions on the days of creation. There is, perhaps, something to be said for both these perceptions since *there appears to be advocacy for change in the PCA in both broader and narrower directions.*”

It is not my intention to impugn the members of the PCA or any denominational group who have adopted a similar stance on creation, but only to demonstrate that when what God has clearly said in His written word can be questioned it makes one wonder, what has God said?

Now, let me quickly state why I believe that all within the body of Christ who have taken this position ultimately undermine the veracity and perspicuity of Scripture in other areas of doctrine.

A proper hermeneutic will always take into consideration the text, the context and the genre of the book of the bible being discussed, as not only the original meaning is to be pursued but the very words that are used must be brought to bear to get to the original meaning.

The book of Genesis is undeniably a book of history making it historical narrative. And since no one but God was there in the beginning it only makes sense that God has the final say regarding anything about Himself and His creation.

What many have proposed to do with the first two chapters of Genesis is to turn portions of it into a poetic form of speech implementing metaphor in place of ordinary prose.

When you do this you can take the passage and make it say just about anything you want it to say in light of your preconceived idea that there is another explanation based on your cosmology, in this case, a cosmology that is dictated by the scientific norms of our day.

When science takes a magisterial role in our interpretation of Scripture it places the word of God in a ministerial role, or second in the line of interpretation. And this is the flaw.

Genesis was not written as poetic in form and when you take the plain words of the text and exegete those words in light of the historic narrative it is impossible to come up with anything other than a literal six day creation at the hands of an omnipotent God.

G.I. Williamson, is a well-known theologian in Reformed circles, including the PCA, and once held to the view that the creation of the universe should be a "matter of indifference." But, after many years he has come to the conclusion that God meant just what He said, that all was created in six literal days.

"I'm convinced that the Genesis account of creation was given by divine inspiration; given by the one true God who knows all things, and that it was designed by him to be clearly understood by his people through all generations. This is why it is not given in technical terms, or what we call scientific terms, but is stated in words that can be understood by the unlearned as well as the learned. And it *has* been understood by people in all walks of life. This is possible because God's work of creation is described as an ordinary man would describe it had he been there to see it happen."

As believers in Christ our cosmology must be God's cosmology. A cosmology that is entirely miraculous as God spoke and the heavens leapt into existence. There is nothing naturalistic about the origin of the universe.

So, what does this have to do with Paul's warning to the Corinthians not to join that group that says, "Jesus be accursed"?

When Jesus cannot speak for Himself regarding His own creation you leave no other option than to put Him to the side in deference to the god of science. It is that simple. And if God did not create in the way He said He created, then everything else in the word of God can become a metaphor or poetic to suit one's own imagination or the world's view of creation or anything else related to God.

If creation was not a miraculous event, then turning water into wine was not either. There is certainly a natural explanation for such a thing. Maybe Jesus was a magician using magic tricks.

If God's question to Job, "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell *Me*, if you have understanding," was

meant only to be an exercise for Job to come up with the correct scientific answer, then science trumps God.

If God does not have the final say on anything He has revealed in His word then why are we not allowed to redefine what Christ's resurrection is?

Well, this is precisely the point and many a false teacher, both in Paul's day and ours have done just that.

There are a plethora of examples of people in the "church" who deny the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ and one such person was quoted in an article written by Heather Clark, in Austin Texas.

"Apparently, because I don't believe in a literal resurrection, I'm not really Christian," Jim Rigby of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Austin, Texas wrote on social media on Dec. 25. "This unfortunately also means I won't be going to Heaven with many of you."

He had explained in a post two days prior, "I don't literally believe the cadaver of Jesus got up again, but I do believe the resurrection actually happened when the disciples began to see 'Christ' in each other, and in everyone else as well."

Here's the point that the Holy Spirit would drive home for all of us as He inspired Peter in writing about our very salvation in the risen Christ.

**1 Peter 1:23-25** <sup>23</sup> for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, *that is*, through the living and enduring word of God. <sup>24</sup> For, "ALL FLESH IS LIKE GRASS, AND ALL ITS GLORY LIKE THE FLOWER OF GRASS. THE GRASS WITHERS, AND THE FLOWER FALLS OFF, <sup>25</sup> BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD ENDURES FOREVER." And this is the word which was preached to you.

What are we teaching and preaching in our churches today? Essentially anything we want and calling that an interpretive approach to what we think God might have been saying.

Paul would call that "Jesus be accursed" to the degree that we don't let Jesus speak who spoke quite clearly on His own creation.

**Mark 10:5-6** <sup>5</sup> But Jesus said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. <sup>6</sup> "But from the beginning of creation, *God* MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE.

If man was not created from the beginning, day six, then the rest of animate creation, animals, fish, birds preceded Adam not just in life, but also in death.

If man did not come along until thousands, millions or billions of years later then the death that necessarily ensued in the animal kingdom was part of the “good creation” that God declared before sin entered the world through man.

**1 Corinthians 15:22** <sup>22</sup> For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.

And contrary to the notion that animal death is not connected to human sin and the curse associated with Adam we need only look to Paul’s assessment of the fall of all creation and its ultimate deliverance from the curse found in the life of redeemed man in the resurrection.

**Romans 8:19-23** <sup>19</sup> For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. <sup>20</sup> *For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly*, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope <sup>21</sup> that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. <sup>22</sup> For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. <sup>23</sup> And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for *our* adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.

Let me wrap up with this quote by G.I Williamson in the same piece I quoted a few moments ago.

“The subject matter of Christian doctrine it must be remembered is fixed. It is found in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, to which nothing can be added.”

“The truth is there can be no real progress unless there is something that is fixed. Archimedes said, “Give me a place to stand, and I will move the world.” Well, Christian doctrine provides that place to stand. Unless there be such a place to stand, all progress is an illusion. The very idea of progress implies something fixed. There is no progress in a kaleidoscope.”

Where will we stand? Upon the Rock and His word or on the sinking sand of man’s audacity to stand in place of God and dictate to Him and us that they know best?

Again, I go back to the only question that really matters that God asked Job and by extension to all of us.

**Job 38:4** <sup>4</sup> "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell *Me*, if you have understanding,

And the only possible answer to that question is the one Job finally gives to God. It would be wise for the “theologians” and “experts” in Christian theology in the church-at-large to arrive at the same answer.

**Job 42:1-6** <sup>NAU</sup> Then Job answered the LORD and said, <sup>2</sup> "I know that You can do all things, And that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted. <sup>3</sup> 'Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?' "Therefore I have declared that which I did not understand, Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know." <sup>4</sup> 'Hear, now, and I will speak; I will ask You, and You instruct me.' <sup>5</sup> "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear; But now my eye sees You; <sup>6</sup> Therefore *I retract, And I repent in dust and ashes.*"

And this is where Paul wants the Corinthians and us to go as well as we come to our spiritual senses and declare with the apostle who acknowledges the true work of the Spirit in our lives.

**1 Corinthians 12:3** "Jesus is Lord,"