

CHURCH TURMOIL

Lesson 3 Ultimate Victory in Christ

How do we address the issue of divisions in the church, what should we ourselves be doing, is it inevitable that all factions and divisions end in a failed church, or can things be corrected, can Christ still gain the victory through a broken church? Let's take some time this week and consider this as well as our lesson from last week.

As a review, we saw that when trust in the leadership is lost, or when others or ourselves place other things as top priority in our lives over Christ, or when gossip and score keeping enter into the life of a church, divisions and struggles begin. And we saw when all of these factors enter the same church the real work of the church ceases and if not corrected the church will fail.

By looking at Paul's first letter to the Corinthian Church we saw that the first thing he did was call out their shortcomings and instruct them in the proper way Christ's church is to behave and conduct itself in all matters. We saw that to the Church at Galatia Paul flatly asked them "who got in the way between you and God"? Paul knew he could not bring about change, and a revival could not occur, until the people in those churches had their relationship with Christ restored. And he knew that could not happen until they realized how far they had strayed.

Once he pointed to their failures and the need for repentance he pointed out to them that even if they did everything perfectly within the church they would be nothing without love. He showed them that the three most important attributes in a person, and in the church, are hope, faith and love and that the greatest of these was love. They had to have love, genuine love, God's love, living within them before they could go on and be the church Christ wanted them to be.

In the last lesson, we then looked at what type of person Christ expects us to be and we'll look at that lesson this week again. You will see that he expects us to be righteous, with pure hearts and clean hands. He expects us to walk upright in His kingdom, without this we could not possibly possess love, nor could we care about others, nor could we worship Him.

In this lesson, I'd like us to consider how Paul closed his first letter to the Corinthians. What instruction did he pass to them once he emphasized the importance of love? How is it that the Church at Corinth would heal, grow, and be fruitful once again for Christ?

Let's examine those closing instructions this week, because within them he shows us how we can be a part of a healing, a uniting, a restoring, a fruit bearing church that glorifies God in all that we do. Paul built up the people at Corinth, he did not tear down, Paul encouraged and instructed and the encouragement and instruction he gave them, as he also did the church at Galatia, speaks to us today.

Christ in his letters to the seven churches in the book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ commands us to "return to your first love" and that is what we must do. Paul will tell us how.

Read 1 Corinthians Chapters 14 through 16. Answer the following questions:

1. Can you find a definition for "edify", if so write it here.
2. Why does Paul tell us we are to use our gifts within the church? (1 Cor 14:3-5)
3. What does Paul tell us we are to do within the church? (14:12)

4. What is our worship to be like each time we meet - what is the message and how are we to act? Why? (14:23-25 and verse 33)
 5. What is the purpose of coming together? (14:26)
 6. What does Romans 10:17 tell us about the message?
 7. What does Paul tell us the message is - what is it we should be lifting up in church and in worship? (15:1-11)
 8. What is Paul's instruction to the church in chapter 15, verses 33 and 34 and 58?
 9. In chapter 16 what is Paul's final instruction to us and those in the church - there are five things can you list them - what is the final one? (16:13)
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Christ has won the victory, his work of redemption and his church will not fail. We can be a part of that victorious church if we heed his instructions, confess our sins, repent, place Him first and seek to spread the gospel message to the lost. When we gather for worship we should be orderly and speak of the message Christ has given us, that there is hope for all who enter in.

A church will only succeed if it's united in a single purpose, a single vision – spreading the Good News to a lost world and doing it in love. If we strive to base all that we do in love and do it with love for the building up of the church and for the members of that body how can we fail? 1 John 4:4 tells us greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world.

Paul tells the church not to despair, but to be strong, be courageous and know that our work is not in vain. Christ's church does impact the community around it, our work for him and through him does make a difference and it does bear fruit, but only if it's done in love and only if we are building up His church and lifting Him up in all that we say, do and think.

Changing our behavior, repenting and confessing our own shortcomings is the first step in rebuilding a broken church. It is only with a pure heart and clean hands that we can begin the work of repairing and building the church Christ wants us to build. It's only after love enters and Christ is central in each person's life that a church can begin to heal and go on to be fruitful – we must return to our first love, Christ and the gospel message, if we are to repair and rebuild a divided and broken church. Without this we will fail, but with them we cannot do anything but succeed for Christ

May Christ begin the process of edifying you this week. May the rebuilding of your life be the start of a greater work in His church. May Christ reach down and begin a miraculous healing in your life and in the life of your Church today. May all that we strive to do be in building up the body of Christ and in spreading the good news that there is hope for all who enter in.

I hope our lessons these past weeks have proven helpful to you. My prayer is like that of Paul's that we would not despair, and that we would turn once again and focus on the empty cross. Let us run the race to win the victory, let us all be found good and faithful servants, if we do this and we have Christ as our focus and source of strength how could the church do anything but succeed?

May Christ richly bless you this week as you study with us. May God's Kingdom be lifted up, may you seek it first above all else this week.

In Christ,

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