

AN ANCIENT CITY WITH A MODERN APPLICATION-Part 4

May 1, 2016

1 Corinthians is a personal letter of exhortation and instruction. As with any personal letter, the thought and tone of the letter will change throughout, as it touches on various topics. There are several passages in 1 Corinthians that could be considered problem passages. Whether the problems arise from misunderstandings of the work, or simply misapplication of the truths taught, many such problems have been brought forth.

Problem Passages: In years past, congregations of the Lord's people have defended themselves in a court of law, against other brethren. Is it Scriptural for a Christian to do such things according to the letter Paul wrote to Corinth? The passage in question is 1 Corinthians 6:1-8. Paul issued a strong warning against brethren taking each other to "law" to settle their differences, and he explained that the saints would "judge the world" so they should certainly be able to judge in the "smallest matters." In verse four, he asked, sarcastically, if they would choose the judges of the world to judge in those small matters, even if they are not held in high esteem by members of the church? He continued to rebuke them for their actions, and encouraged them to find someone in the church who had the maturity to make decisions among the brethren. It seems that Paul was specifically talking about private matters, and likely matters of opinion between two Christians. If Paul were talking about matters of law, where one brother was clearly in the wrong and another was clearly in the right, regarding legal issues, it would be appropriate to take such matters to court in order to protect the work of the church and her members. Roy Deaver stated, "It is possible – and in fact, has happened – for an eldership to be placed in a position in which they have no alternative but to place the matter in the hands of the legal authorities. As watchmen, they would be derelict in their duties should they fail to do so..." if that were not the case, "the deed to the property is not worth the paper it is written on!" (Roy Deaver, *Difficult Texts Of The New Testament Explained*).

Others have contended that according to Paul's writing in 1 Corinthians, He did at times deny inspiration. Paul wrote, "Now to the married I command, *yet* not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from *her* husband" (1 Cor. 7:10). It has been stated that Paul intended that he was not personally speaking by inspiration. However, it is clear that the message which Paul presented to the Christians in Corinth was from the Lord, but it was just as much from Paul, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Earlier in his letter, Paul was very plain and clear on the source of the inspiration by which he spoke, and this particular passage was just as inspired as the previous (1 Cor. 2:6-13). Any message that was given by any inspired writer was a message from Jesus (Mt. 28:20), whether he was able to recall the teaching by way of his natural memory or not. However, Jesus made arrangements to prevent such a problem from occurring, when the apostles went forth with the message of life (Jn. 16:13). Without doubt, the letter written to the Corinthians was the result of divine inspiration from front to back!

Another difficulty that has been brought to the forefront is one spouse deserting another, and whether or not that gives the one who has been deserted permission to marry another. Paul stated, "But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such *cases*: but God hath called us to peace" (1 Cor. 7:15). Perhaps, at first glance and a lack of investigation, one may come to the conclusion that a deserted spouse may marry another. However, when the complete context of the passage is considered, that is a conclusion that is foreign to the doctrines of the Bible.

Paul discussed some very specific cases when he spoke on marriage. He said, "If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away" (1 Cor. 7:12). In addition, he said, "And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him" (1 Cor. 7:13). The issue raised is, what if one spouse is not "content" to live with the Christian spouse? How does that scenario affect the deserted Christians, as it relates to a later marriage? Deaver posed the question of what married people was Paul referring? He was, in fact, making reference to "ALL MARRIAGES." He summarized that all married people whether, believers married to believers, believers

married to unbelievers, or unbelievers married to unbelievers were bound by God's marriage laws. Deaver's statement regarding when a person seeks to change a universal law given by God, to a particular law given by God, "he is treading upon mighty dangerous ground," is just as applicable today as it was when Paul first addressed this problem to the Corinthians.

These are just a few of the passages that have been mishandled over the years (2 Tim. 2:15), but which are easily explained with proper study. If every misapplied or misunderstood passage were to be discussed, it is likely that the world could not hold the books that would be the result.