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SOUTH WEST BIBLE SCHOOL - July 1998

LET HIM THAT THINKETH HE STANDETH

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Study #6

Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and of devils

Reading: 1 Corinthians 10:15-33

Well, brethren and sisters, we've come now to the end of this magnificent argument of the apostle Paul, concerning those relationships in ecclesial life that are generated when we have these differences of opinion. And I just want to pick up the argument so that we can just end the 10th chapter and put it all in context. It's a magnificent argument!

It started off by categorizing the two groups as the weak and the strong, as you well know. The weak were those whose conscience would not allow them to go near that idol's temple or to eat anything offered unto idols, and by that attitude they were really giving some credence to the fact that the idol was in existence and they were intellectually wrong. On the other hand the strong saw the matter very clearly doctrinally, b&s, and they felt a freedom to do that, and by so doing, the apostle Paul said that by the wrong use of that freedom, they could lead their poor weak brother into error. If he saw them doing it, he would follow them and for him it is wrong and that, therefore, to him was sin. And so they had to be very careful what they did, in case they gave a wrong lead to others. That was the argument of chapter 8.

Now in chapter 9, he argued very strongly that he himself had enormous freedoms, not just freedoms of intellectual justifications of the things he thought he could do, far above that, b&s, he had a freedom of a divine right as an apostle, to partake of his expenses for example, and he didn't do it. He didn't do something that God had said he could do, and they weren't told that, but he was. He said, God said I can do this, and He told me even through the voice of His own Son that I could do it. But I'm not going to! because he said, I don't want to be a cause of stumbling to anybody. That's a magnificent attitude!

And then when he moved into chapter 10, b&s, the argument changed again, and he said, 'now look', and he addresses the strong and he says, 'now look, by the very exercise of your intellectual freedom, you may think you're simply leading your brother into error and you may not do it for that reason, but he said, I'm going to tell you, that

your intellectual freedom of movement is going to bring you, never mind about your weak brother, forget about him for the moment, you're in danger! And all of a sudden the wheels turned right around, hasn't it? and there really, the strong brother has become weak, because his insistence that he could go up into that idol's temple, into that very dangerous environment, b&s, where there was the great pull of temptation to indulge in matters that were sensual, and licentious and evil, that were all around him, Paul says, you better watch yourself! as well as your weak brother. And so he argued powerfully therefore, that there's only one thing to do in that circumstance, as they found themselves up there in circumstances where their flesh could not be constrained, he said, there's the exit; God has made a way of escape! God did not make a way to endure! Get out, get out and that was his final exhortation to the point that we've considered it.

But now, b&s, there's another argument. And this is a delicate one! which could easily be misunderstood by them, and Paul qualifies what he means. And he opens up this argument by saying, 'now look, I speak as to wise men; think about what I'm going to tell you'. And he's going to set forth, b&s, another argument whereby he's going to show them that there is a scriptural reason why they shouldn't go up there apart from their weak brother and apart from their own temptations; there is a scriptural argument against it! And it's this; now he say, 'you're wise, you're strong, you're brilliantly intellectual, listen to this!'

Now he says, 'the cup of blessing which we bless' (it's something we do together) 'is it not the participation in the blood of Christ?' Now you think about that! It's something we do together, and in doing it together we do to participate ('koinonia' is the word 'communion') we do it to participate together with the blood of Christ. So when Jesus distributed the wine in Luke 22, He said to his disciples, 'take this and share it or divide it among yourselves'; share My life! What a wonderful thing and we all sit together, he said, we all take of that wine and we share it together. Isn't that true? he said. Yes, it's true! Now think about the bread we break, is it not the communion or the partaking, the participation in the body of Christ? Isn't it true of the bread also?' He said, you think about it, you're wise; you people say you've got the understanding, well, concentrate upon the principles of that. And so the point he's making is this, b&s, he says, you don't become one to partake of the bread, you are one because you partake of the bread. They don't engage in the act because they're one, they are made one by engaging in the act! See the point? Ah, we know we've got to be one, b&s, to be in the truth and to be in fellowship, that's understood, but you see, it's not because we've decided to become one and therefore, we go and become one with Christ. It's because we're one with Christ that we're one with one another; it's the other way around. He says, you're wise, you think about that. So you see what he's doing, we do things together to participate in something that's made us one! Now it's a powerful argument because he's going to apply it in a minute, but he's not ready to apply it yet, because he wants to take it a step further.

Now he says, verse 18, 'think about Israel after the flesh, are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers with the altar?' Isn't that true? you're wise men, think about that!

Well, it was true, because you see, we read in Leviticus 6 and verses 24 to 26 that when the priest was to bring the sin offering, he was to burn the fat upon the altar. (Now we're not turning these references up because we can conserve a bit of time, and I know you believe me!) The fat was put upon the altar and in Leviticus chapter 3, that fat was called 'the food of the offering'; the food of the offering, called that also in Numbers chapter 18, so you see, this is God's food and in Malachi the altar is likened to the table of Yahweh. It's his table, so you know, b&s, for all the intricate details of the Law and its spiritual significance, it was terribly simple; it was simply serving God a meal first. So the Father got served first with the best, and the word for fat 'cheleb' is the Hebrew for 'fat', it does duty for the word 'best'. The word is used interchangeably for fat and for best; so they served the Head of the house, the Father of the house, first with the best, and they put it on His table as His portion of the meal. Now says Paul, you're wise men, think about what happened then; it says in Leviticus that the priests were then to eat His portion, it says in the Holy Place, but it really means in that context, in the outer court by the altar, it goes on to say that! It says, 'in the Holy Place, that is beside the altar' so he stood there, b&s, like this, His God eating, and he's standing right alongside of Him, and he's eating with Him! Paul says, you're wise, think about that, make that a realism in your mind.

It's like the memorial supper, we come and we sit with the Lord Jesus Christ, but He's first isn't He? He's the head of the body, He's up there and He's had His portion, you know, Psalm 16, He's got a wonderful portion, hasn't He? at the right hand of the Father, and He's being fed first with the best because He's worthy of that; and we're here, b&s, and He's condescended, we didn't come because we were one to be one with Him. He's condescended to let us come to His table and when we participate we become one with Him! that's where it goes, it doesn't come this way, it goes that way; the Father's fed, it doesn't go this way, it goes that way, and so he says, you think about that! you're wise men, you say you're strong! And so there was his argument.

Now there's a question in their mind, of course, over this; they can see where he's leading, and they're thinking as they read this, and Paul knows what they're thinking. They're saying, 'Hey, he's going to say to us that we can't go up into that idol's temple because there's something about that idol up there that's real, that if we go up there and stand alongside of the idol, well, it's really a real thing, and he said it wasn't!' Isn't that the logical question? Of course, it's the logical question because here's the answer, verse 19. What am I saying then? See, he know what they were thinking, 'Am I saying that the idol is anything?' am I saying that? Or am I saying, 'that things offered to idols is anything, am I?' The answer's NO! Well, Paul what are you saying? This is what I'm saying, and here comes the application.

'But I say this, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God; and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils'. He said, you may not see it that way but, b&s, they do! and when you go up there and you sit at their table and the idol's here and you're here, and the same food that's being fed to him as the head of this idolatrous worship, (or her I should say because it's a woman, an immoral woman, a prostitute) the same thing is being put on a prostitute's table, now you take

from their table and you sit here. Now you may say to me, Ah, she's not even an idol, but they don't think that! And they see you sitting over there and the conversation in that restaurant is, I thought the Christadelphians had a doctrine that was unique to themselves; I never thought they'd come into the church like this and not worry about what we believe, they must have an open fellowship! That's what they're thinking. And to them, b&s, it's as real to them that they're in fellowship with the idol as it is with you when you went to the memorial supper. And you cannot erase that from their mind and therefore, when you're going up to there, you may not feel in fellowship, but you are! Oh, is that a powerful argument!

And he says this, 'Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils; ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils'. You can't do it, and if that's the principle whereby you eat in the ecclesia, b&s, as I said before, the ritual up in that temple was identical, says the records that they've found, with the memorial supper. They had a sacrificial meal offered to their god and they sat around and they had their meal with bread and wine. And whilst the strong brother may have seen the clear difference between the two, they didn't! And you see, b&s, it's a very serious matter isn't it? So we can intellectually justify something, we can and we may be working in an office or in a factory where there are other brethren and sisters working, who don't have that view; and we may participate. The manager may call us into the office to have a little chat about whatever it is he wants to talk about (we might be head of a department or something and there may be Christadelphians in that department) and he calls us in to his office to have a chat about the running of the business, and sits down behind the desk and says, 'sit down, I'd like to have a chat about some matters here that we need to clear up'. He reaches into the cupboard and gets the best of the port or the sherry and he pours a couple of glasses. Let's have a little drink, and the brother thinks there's nothing wrong with that! I can give you a battery of scripture which says there's nothing wrong with wine; it's a symbol of joy and gladness and Jesus drank wine, and he has a battery of scripture to prove that! So he reaches out and he takes a few sips and it's quite nice and he may not drink on normal occasions, and the manager's sitting there thinking, 'those other Christadelphians out there don't do that; they refuse it on principle. Ah, there must be an open view on this or perhaps it really doesn't matter'. I can tell you a story, b&s, that's horrible, absolutely horrible! There were two brethren working in a firm and they hadn't had much contact with each other and one of them didn't know that the other was a Christadelphian. But the other did know that this chap was a Christadelphian but because they rarely ever came in contact with each other, it was never communicated that they were Christadelphians. Now the complication was dreadful that happened over that! when the brother who didn't know that that was a brother there, in his presence did things which were downright immoral; downright immoral in the company of other people in the office and found out later that that was a brother standing there that was involved in that incident, and he was red to the gills when he found that out. Now Paul says, 'you be careful about the exercise of what you're doing' (and he didn't have any freedom to that immorality) he didn't have intellectual freedom to do that! but there may be things that you think are okay, b&s, but the world sees it differently. And I want to talk about that later!

And so he said, You're wise men and you see this quite clearly, don't you? You understand the principles that 'we are one because we are standing alongside the table; we didn't get together and decide that we're at one, so that we could come to the table. No way, we came to the table to be made one'. Well, what do you think they're thinking up there? So you see, the argument is turning, b&s, it's a 180 degree turn, isn't it? Who's weak now and who's strong? Now Paul says this, 'they sacrifice to devils'; now in verse 22 he says, 'do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than He? Now what's he talking about? Well, you see, he's quoting Deuteronomy 32, isn't he? Now have a look at this! here's where he's coming from, and in Deuteronomy 32, you listen, it says this in verse 15, 'but Jeshurun (that means 'the upright One' and he's talking there, b&s, of Israel) 'Israel waxed fat and kicked; thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness; then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation'. So affluence lead Israel away from their God! 'They provoked Him to jealousy with strange gods, with abominations provoked they Him to anger', that's 1 Corinthians 10!

Listen to the next verse, 'They (Israel) sacrificed unto devils, not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new gods that come newly up, whom your fathers feared not', so Israel went to idolatry, really went to it, not just like this brother up there, who subconsciously was with it, b&s, or just by his presence. He wasn't with it with his mind, but Israel were right in it, and says the record, 'Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and has forgotten God that formed thee'. ROCK, this chapter uses the 'Rock' in verse 4, twice in verse 13, once in verse 15, once in verse 18, once in verse 30, twice in verse 31, once in verse 37; it's the Rock chapter and says Paul, 'and that Rock was Christ'. Now here in Deuteronomy the 'Rock' is God and in 1 Corinthians 10, the 'Rock' is the Lord Jesus Christ because He is like His Father. You know, in Daniel it says 'the Stone cut out of the mountains without hands', the word there for 'mountains' is not mountains, the word is 'tsuwr' it's the Stone carved out of the Rock. And to use a colloquial term (with meaning no irreverence at all, b&s, but we might get the point) Jesus was a chip off the Block, wasn't He? He was exactly like His Father in character, so here's the Rock here and there's the Rock in Corinthians. And when Israel went to idolatry you see, what were they doing? They were unmindful that the Rock had begotten them! Now a rock has no natural life in it at all, how could a rock have children? But it has no natural life but some rocks, b&s, are full of character and therefore, the fatherhood of God is stamped upon them by their character. And when they went to idolatry, they're nothing like God, and so they had forsaken the Rock; now Paul says 'and that Rock was Christ'. And you came to the memorial meeting and you stood here, and you were made one by the fact that He is the Rock, and you went up there into the idol's temple which is the exact opposite to Him! And the character of this meeting and the character of that meeting, externally and ostensibly looked the same, and they are poles apart. And you'd forgotten that your Rock was here; and that in Deuteronomy 32 is what he quotes in 1 Corinthians 10. Isn't that marvellous? and he brings that to their attention, b&s.

And he said, 'do you provoke Him to jealousy?' They were provoking God to jealousy; now b&s, we talk about jealousy and we say, 'people are jealous one of another, and we

say, what a terrible evil that is', and it is, but there is a sense in which jealousy is altogether wonderful! altogether wonderful. Paul said of the Corinthians, 'I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy', the Greek 'the jealousy of God'. God said to Moses, 'I am a jealous God', Zechariah says, 'I am jealous for Zion with a great jealousy'; it's a wonderful thing that God is jealous, do you know why? there's no way a person could be jealous of another person unless they love them! If your wife or your husband ran off with another person and you were not jealous, you clearly did not love them! You cannot deny that, and Paul says, 'are you going to provoke Him to jealousy? are you going to repeat the performance of the memorial meeting, meaningfully, which you as wise men knew the principle, are you now going to go up there and practice that, and you think it's not going to create jealousy? because God knows that whilst you may be thinking that it's simply a meal, He knows the Gentiles don't think that, and He knows that the Gentiles have embraced you as their lover, and you're going to provoke God to jealousy? You beware, he says, 'are you stronger than Him?'

Now what he means by that, b&s, is this, 'you're pressing your claims to go up there; he says, well, God's pressing his claims upon you! Who's stronger, who's going to win the fight? When you fight against God and say, 'I've got a right to go up there' and God says, 'yes, and I've got a right to demand your love, because I love you!' Now he says, who's right? Ah, what a marvellous argument that is, oh, b&s, that was a powerful argument and it is the love of Christ that ought to constrain all our actions! The love of Christ, b&s, should constrain all our actions; that's what the apostle is saying.

Now for verse 23 the question then becomes, 'alright, Paul, so the idol's temple is out. Now does that mean, (this is the obvious question, you think about it; it's wonderful to follow the contextual argument, I love that! I like to see, b&s, scripture presented contextually, and you see, here he's saying and the next question would be) 'okay, Paul, so, I got the point! We can't repeat the performance of the memorial meeting here, even in that way even if we don't equate it and they do, and therefore, we see the point so that's out. Does that mean therefore, that we can't partake of meat unto idols at all? Is total abstinence necessary? The answer is no, Paul's not going to go back on his word, he believed that the idol didn't affect the meat. So he says, no, no, no, I haven't changed my mind, and then he tells them in verse 23, 'Look, he says, 'all things are lawful for me. So I haven't changed my mind; I'm not saying I can't buy meat offered to idols. I'm not going back on my word, I'm just saying to you, not up there. Now he says, 'all things are lawful to me, but they're not all expedient!' You see, 'all things are lawful but they're not all expedient ; all things are lawful for me but they don't always edify. So he says, 'I'm not saying that total abstinence is necessary, all things are lawful for me, but he said, it's not expedient' it doesn't always help for me to exercise what's lawful for me, it doesn't always help, this is the point, b&s, and secondly, it's not always edifying, it doesn't always build-up.

Now I want to talk to your hearts, b&s, I really do, because I'm going to talk to your heart in a minute. All the things that I've heard at this school and all the people that have come to me, and there have been legions of them (we slotted them in by a quarter of an hour!) and your problems, (people haven't come to gossip, they've come to pour their

hearts out) Now, if everybody took that advice, when we walk through the portals of the ecclesial hall at a business meeting in particular, and other meetings; if we thought to ourselves about our strong opinions, we'd say to ourself, a.) will it help? and b.) will it build up? And if we governed what we said and stayed by those two principles, we would have a positive outcome to that meeting. Will it help? is it expedient? and will it edify? build-up, will it do that? And that's what Paul is saying to you, no, total abstinence is not always necessary but you've got to question yourself as to what is going to be the impact of what you do!

Now he says, verse 24, 'Let no man seek his own, but every man his brother's wealth (his brother's good, you see, that's what wealth means) So the cardinal principle of exercise of any rights or don't exercise rights, whether you decide to do it or whether you decide not to do it, the absolute cardinal principle is your brother and sister's well-being. That's what it is! that's the overriding factor and that's what the Lord Jesus Christ came into world to do that! So says Paul, 'whatever is sold in the shambles' and the word 'shambles' really means 'the meat market' you go down to the butcher, and his argument is, you go to the butcher and you see that meat laid out. Now you know that's offered to an idol, and Paul is saying, I know that total abstinence isn't necessary. You ask him for a pound of steak, he'll wrap it up and if he says, 'it's a nice day today, isn't it? there's going to be a thunderstorm tomorrow', and if he doesn't say anything about that meat being offered to idols, don't worry about it. But you notice it's the butcher shop, it's not the restaurant; it's not up there, it's at the butcher shop. That's different, because there's nothing to attract him in the butcher shop, (you know, I'm not attracted to a pork chop, there's nothing that's going to tempt me in there); so I go in there and buy the meat and the butcher doesn't say anything about it and I walk out and I enjoy my dinner. I know it's been offered to idols, couldn't care less!

But if the butcher was wrapping it up and says, 'you know, I'm a member of the guild up there in the temple and I feel very proud to be able to sell this meat to you because this is all being offered to our lovely Aphrodite!' No thank you, sir, very much, and quick, out the shop! Why? because you've got a conscience about it? NO! because he has! That's the issue, not your conscience, says Paul, you've got no conscience about it; but he has, therefore if you accepted that on that basis, that man could not be blamed for thinking that you don't care about your religion. Not only that, he couldn't be blamed for thinking that you condone idolatry, not only that, but he couldn't be blamed for thinking that you condone the idolatry of prostitution, and not only that but he could not be blamed for thinking that Christadelphians have relationships outside marriage willy nilly and they don't care about it! That's exactly what he would be justified in thinking by you accepting the meat on those terms; so you don't accept it, it's got nothing to do with your conscience, I don't say your conscience, his!

And the same may happen when you go to a meal, to a Gentile, an unbelieving house. So you might have some business associates, you might have people in the world who are nice people (there are still some nice people in the world, let's face it; our next door neighbour's a lovely person. Her husband died a few years ago and he was a lovely person, and on the other side is the same. We pass the time of the day together, we

don't mix, but we're respectful of each other; they've never asked us in for a meal and we wouldn't ask them, and I don't think it'll ever happen) but it may be, b&s, that you could be asked to go to someone's place for a meal. Well, Paul says, go! If you feel disposed to go, go and if they serve up the meal and nothing is said, eat it and enjoy it. It could be an opportunity to preach the truth perhaps, but when the table's set, and the host or the hostess says, 'it's lovely to have you over, we've been wanting to do this for a long time, but you do know, however, we are religious people and we have a broad mind in our religion, we're not narrow minded and we do think there are alternative lifestyles, and actually this meal is really dedicated to our ideals, and I'm sure you won't mind?' Up you get and say, I'm very sorry, I don't want to offend you, but there's no way I'm going to eat that meal! Why? you believe in our idol, no! but you do; and for me to eat that meal with you means that you'd be justified in telling everybody that as a Christadelphian I don't care. And I do care!

You see, b&s, how it works? and Paul says, you do this in that 10th chapter and verse 26, 'For the earth is the LORD'S and the fullness therefore', what did he quote that for? For the earth is the LORD'S and the fullness therefore, now look at what he's saying. So you get up from the table and you walk out because you won't eat that because that matter has been raised in your presence. Why? because you believe that the earth in the LORD'S and the fullness therefore, that's Psalm 24 and verse 1. Psalm 24, what is that about? Well, it says the 'earth is the LORD'S and the fulness and who shall stand in His holy hill? and His holy hill is the world; not just a little hill in Zion. Well, who's going to stand in His holy hill? 'He that hath clean hands and a pure heart' and therefore, in this wide world which eventually will be holy, b&s, it's God's now, it's just that they have besmirched it by putting these abominations around in various places, so we're going to avoid them because we believe this earth in God's sight is going to be holy one day and really belongs to Him now. So we're moving in God's world, what a wonderful way to put that! and so we should always move in the world, b&s, with a view that it's the holy world, it's God's world and we should not be mixed up with these matters. And so that's what he's saying. and he says, 'it's not your conscience it's his!'

And as he winds down his argument, b&s, it's beautiful! He says in verse 31, 'Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give none offense, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles', now you see that statement in verse 31 is the words that we have at the back of our hall at home. I don't know if you do this in America or Canada, but back home it's the custom when we build our ecclesial halls, each ecclesia makes a decision (it's an arbitrary matter, it just depends on what they think) and they put on the back of their hall some lettering. They do it ornately or they might even do it in wood and so forth and it's all very nicely done. Some ecclesias have, THE LORD SHALL BE KING OVER ALL THE EARTH; I know one ecclesia has THE MEEK SHALL INHERIT THE EARTH, but you know, when we decided as an ecclesia, b&s, we got up there, DO ALL TO THE GLORY OF GOD, and if you pardon me here drawing attention to myself, I don't like to do that, but I chose that! And I chose it for this reason here, right here, because to me that up there tells me as I walk through that door, and I see DO ALL TO THE GLORY OF GOD, and I say to myself, 'John, you're going to say something today or do something today, a). will it be helpful, and b). will it

build up and c). will it be for the betterment of these people, because that's what that is telling me on the back of the wall. It's from this context here, and for that reason I suggested that to the arranging brethren and they thought that it was a good idea, and up it went. And that's what it means to me! and that's what it means in this context.

And so the apostle says, 'Give no offence, to the Jew nor the Gentile'. Now you think about that! Jew and Gentile, hey, they're poles apart, how do you move between those extremes without giving offence? Well, I'll tell you how you do it, skillfully! very skillfully and delicately, because that's going to be very, very difficult to be all things to those two extremes, isn't it? And he says, 'nor to the ecclesia of God', now you've got people like this; and when people get really close together and wrapped up spiritually and relationship wise, you have got very great sensitivities. How do you give no offence to the ecclesia? Very skillfully! and very carefully! because you're not dealing with extremes, you're dealing with people whose hearts and minds are knit, and there's nobody got more passionate feelings about each other, than those who deep down really love each other. You know that? you always hurt the one you love, it's just a paradox of human nature; and giving no offence to the ecclesia, is a tremendous task because you've got to take into account, everybody's opinions and feelings and passions and emotions, their loves, their hates, and it's a tremendously difficult task and, b&s, there's no list that can be made anywhere of what's expedient and what's not. You can't make lists, the only thing we can say is that fundamentally the doctrines are set, fundamentally the moral practices are set, they're all set, nobody can have any argument about them, because they are fundamental but in this area that we're talking about being minor issues, there is a great need, b&s, for delicate handling of matters, and so Paul says, 'don't give offence to the people who are poles apart and don't give offence to those people whose hearts are knit together, and it takes great skill to do that.

'Even as I please all men in all things; not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved'. And then we've got chapter 11, and isn't that a great pity? Ah, look, the translators, you see, put chapter and verse in the bible, b&s, and we're glad they did, but there is no such thing in the Greek or Hebrew; I'm so glad it's there! and in the main, 99.999% it's been wonderful, but they do make their mistakes, and here's a classic. Because you see, verse 1 doesn't belong to chapter 11 at all, it is clearly the end of chapter 10, because you see, you've got the 2nd verse of chapter 11 says, 'Now I praise you, brethren' and that is the phrase that Paul uses to open new subjects, that's the phrase he uses to open new subjects! 'Now concerning spiritual gifts', now concerning things offered to idols', now I praise you brethren for remembering ordinances' and so forth, he's going to launch down into the memorial supper. Now let's read it therefore, without the chapter division because it's not there. Go back to verse 31, 'Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. Don't give offence to the extremes, try and be delicate and skillful how you help people who have opposite opinions, and don't upset the ecclesia who are knit together in the love of God and Jesus Christ our Lord, with all that that emotionally means. Be careful with their emotions. Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking profit for myself, but I love my brethren and sisters; the profit of many people

that they may be saved. Be ye imitators of me as I am of Christ'. Ah, gee, b&s, isn't that a magnificent finish?

And didn't Jesus do that? What did He do? He came among and was down there with publicans and sinners; He was there with the Galilean fishermen, He was there with the lawyers, wasn't He? the doctors of the law, He was there with the Roman centurions, He was there with the Greeks that came to see Him at the feast. Look at the extremes He had to deal with, they came at Him from all directions and when they came to Him like the Greeks He said to them, 'if any man come to Me, My Father will help him'. If any man he says, 'whosoever believeth on the Son will get eternal life', b&s. Look at the extremes He dealt with, and never at any stage did He give offence, except to the strong. And the only people who were really offended and who at last stirred all the rest up too, but the ones who were really offended at Him were those who said they were strong. And He couldn't save them because they didn't want to be saved; but He didn't come to condemn them either. 'This is the condemnation that men love darkness' and He came to show them light, He didn't come to condemn anybody, He came to save everybody, but some people just didn't want to be saved. But His spirit was to save the lot and so Paul finishes this marvellous section by saying, 'Be imitators of me as I am of Christ'.

And that's all I want to say to you about Corinthians, and I've left myself 8 minutes; and I've done that deliberately, I was planning 10, so I'm 2 minutes late! because b&s I want to leave a final message with you. I know this when I say this, I speak on behalf of bro. David, and bro. Peter and all the brethren who come, that we don't come over here just to lead studies. We're not in an organization of brethren and sisters where we travel around in order to have sort of a fraternal gathering and to tickle each other's ears even with the bible, for the sake of learning something or maybe, maybe projecting our own personal image. We're not interested in that! I know when I come and I know bro. Peter and I know bro. David well, we've only had a few meetings together but I know those people, and I know their attitude and we've talked about it, and I know this, that we haven't come here just for you to say I've come to help you, so have they, b&s, and we need help. Now believe me, look, I don't believe any of us understand or begin to understand what's going to happen in the future! I believe that the stage is being set for the greatest drama of all history, and if you think about it, b&s, the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is the greatest thing! and we know this, that He's not coming simply to save us; that's not the issue. We will be saved in what He's coming to do; He's coming to glorify His Father on the earth, isn't He? He's coming to build this world, a fit place for His Father to dwell; that's the paramount thing in His mind, and I can tell you what's in the Father's mind, and I'm not talking about chapter and verse now, b&s. I'm talking about what I know to be the nerve of the bible, and I know this, that the Father is preparing this world for His Son, that when His Son steps upon the stage of the world's history, they will adore Him!

And so there's wickedness abroad and heaven waits, b&s, the long-suffering of God is waiting and the wickedness is going to come to its pinnacle, as it did in the days of the Lord 'fill ye up a measure of your fathers' as it did in the days of Jeremiah when he told them 'that they were filling up the measure of their fathers' as it did in the days of Noah

when the wickedness of man had got to a point that God could no longer stand it; and every crisis in history didn't come because people were righteous. Every crisis in history came because people were abjectly wicked! and the world's going to go mad, b&s, it is! and it's bordering on it now, it's teetering around like a drunken man and the world is about to burst upon us. I don't think any of us understand what's coming; the financial world is tottering at its brink, look, b&s, we're on the edge of an enormous collapse, morally, socially, financially, religiously and every other way and the Middle East is going to become a cauldron and who knows when we're going to be taken away? Who knows at what stage we'll be taken out of the world? And what I want to tell you is that God is doing that so that when His Son comes and puts an end to it all, when people pick themselves up out of the dust, and they learn what it's all about, they'll say 'what a wonderful person He is'. What a marvellous man, Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty El, the Prince of Peace and they'll adore Him, b&s. And this is what God has done, He's preparing the stage for His Son! and we are incidental to all this, though He loves us! And we can be incorporated in that purpose.

Now my appeal to you is this, that as we move into that era we are going to need each other! We really are, and if we don't think we need each other and I'll tell you something else that you'll have to agree with, your children are going to need you! Your children will not withstand this onslaught; and I'm not the judge of all the earth, b&s, and it's just as well I'm not, but I'll tell you what I've observed (I'm a very observant person, and as I move around the world I can observe this) that your children everywhere, not just here, everywhere, are totally confused with this world! Are kids are in mortal danger, not here, in Adelaide as well! and I want you united. And you know the best way that you could unite? that if I was to return here, b&s, and we were to be made one party in the ecclesias in Texas, it would be my sincere desire, and hope, that you'd all belong to the weak! that you wouldn't go near anything that would degrade your ecclesia or your young people, and that there wouldn't be any question that crept into your ecclesia where there was even a sniff or a suspicion that to allow that would lead to gross corruption, that I'd like to see you all WEAK to the extent that you kept right away from it, every vestige of it; and that you don't let your kids see, that a glass of wine here or there is alright because the next thing you'll pick them up out of the gutter drunk! And b&s wherever I go, and in Adelaide it's true, we've got kids who drink! drink heavily. And you don't suggest to them that it's a petty issue to have things dangling from your body, or your bodies got to be pierced to get it there, because that's a suggestion of bodily vanity that is excessive, and is a trademark of the world. They are not petty issues, they are serious issues! and you don't suggest to your kids that picture shows are alright if they are rated 'G'; I don't go to the pictures but I know people who do, and what's 'G' today would have been 'R' when I was a kid. And what I want you to be aware of is this, b&s, all be aware of this, that your children are growing up in a world where they've got no basis of comparison with a better world. People my age grew up in a world that was different; we're not better than our teenagers and they're not worse than what we are, the difference is the world we lived in.

As a lad of 22 I came into the truth, in the Adelaide ecclesia which numbered 600 people. And there were ecclesias all over Australia and there were quite a number of

Christadelphians; and from east to west and north and south in Australia, everybody knew the divorced brother! See him over there, that's THE divorced brother; we only had one and now you wouldn't know who's who! I feel sorry for people in that situation, I'm not here to condemn them; I know there are circumstances, excruciating circumstances, all I'm saying to you, that even those people who were not the guilty party, and have succumbed even those people were victims, b&s, of a social world that's absolutely collapsing round about us. They are not petty issues! We're here to help people, but brethren and sisters, if we don't get our act together, I'm telling you, it's so obvious and your kids are growing up in a world, b&s, when I came into the truth at 22, I came from the worst of the world but I didn't know the meaning of certain terms which describe an alternate lifestyle. I didn't know what it meant, and I was a bikie; your kids know it back to front and they go to school every day and they are surrounded by these alternate lifestyles and to them, they believe it's wrong like you believe it's wrong but they don't believe it with the same intensity that you do, and therefore, there is a tremendous danger that the lines become blurred, b&s.

Let me tell you something, let this be the fundamental truth; the God in that bible when He spoke to Moses, is the same God that exists in 1998! He hasn't changed an atom! and if we want to know what His attitude is to 'the alternate lifestyle', go to Sodom and Gomorrah which is the lowest place in the world, nearly 1500 feet below sea level, He blew it out of the earth! Blew it sky high, that was His attitude and it's no different today.

And so, b&s, you need to be protective, over protective of your children; you need to know this, that it is nothing today, and I'm not talking about your youth group only, I'm talking about youth groups all over, and I've got incontrovertible evidence from kids themselves, that have come and cried on my shoulder, the boy-girl relationships before marriage is rife in some areas, did you know that? And so you don't have sleep overs, and you and the wife go out for the night and leave them alone, you don't do that! And you get your act and you clean it up, b&s, and if we don't, I'll tell you what, we're doomed! Now you might think that's pretty strong talking, but I wanted to say that, b&s, because people have been coming to me about issues which they want me to define for them, what is weak and what is strong, what's petty and what's not petty; well, I'm telling you, I'm really talking about petty issues here through 1 Corinthians 8, 9 and 10. The above are not petty issues! they are darn serious issues, they are issues of life and death, b&s, and we've got to get our act together and I tell you something, if we're going to help our young people, we've got to be united because there's no way in the wide world they're going to listen to us, if we're divided.

You know, bro. Thomas said this, (we know what bro. Thomas said about husband and wife) but this is what he said, and he never said more wiser words than this, he said, 'children can never be well raised unless parents are well married', and neither can the children of an ecclesia be well raised unless the brethren and sisters are well married together. It won't happen! First and foremost what you people have all got to do in Texas, in close proximity to each other, in order to keep this school going, you've got to make absolutely certain, that you're all united on the basis of what will corrupt and what will not corrupt, and you should come out of that discussion, all in the weak party,

because in the end, b&s, they were the strongest because that attitude of mind kept them miles away from that temptation and they weren't affected by it. And those who thought they could extend this and extend that, because they thought that it wasn't a real issue and because they wanted to help this person, there was a half compromise, and they finished up in that temple, b&s, with a prostitute! Now be told that that is true, that's what that book teaches! and as I said, I don't want to leave this school on a negative note, and I don't want you to think badly of me, b&s, if I didn't love you I never would have said that!

I don't say I love you just because I want to say that to flatter you, I've learnt over the years to love you all, and even those I've met for the first time, I can't help but love you; that's me, so I haven't said this because I want to upset you, I haven't said this to appear superior, I haven't said this brethren and sisters to set you at each others' throats, I'm appealing to you all for the love of God and the love of each other, believe me, if we don't do this, we're going to lose the brotherhood! How do you think I feel, how do you think anyone feels, do you know how I feel? I don't feel secure in Adelaide, I don't feel secure because I belong to a big ecclesia, and relatively strong, relatively; I don't believe there's such a thing as strong ecclesias today, but I don't feel secure there! I tremble and I shake because as I go around I see the truth, I see the foundations everywhere are shaky; I'm worried for my sake! I mean that, b&s, I call God as my witness, I mean that! because I'm a very gregarious person, I need encouragement, I could never live alone, I wouldn't survive in isolation, I would not. And when I come to these schools and I meet people who thrill me, I go home built up, and I worry all over the place because I can see it, it's going! and I know when it goes, I'm likely to go with it, so it's selfishness, spiritual selfishness that I'm making this appeal, and that's true, b&s, believe me!

So my final appeal therefore, let's all try and do something for Christ before He comes, and let's say that when He comes that we'll be on an earth where the earth is the LORD'S and the fullness thereof; and that in all circumstances in our life, in all the avenues in which we work and walk and talk, we'll walk as if this world was the Holy Place, clean hands and a pure heart! And let us all unite, b&s, and if we've got a doubt, if we think, 'well you know, this might tend to the extreme, (I know there are extremes, b&s, I'm not asking you to be extreme), but ask yourself the question, if I allowed this because I react against extremism, will it be an adverse affect upon my ecclesia? Think it through, 'I speak as to wise men; think it through', and if the answer is 'yes it could lead that way' then get out of it! Stop it, and b&s, finally, 'do all, do everything, to the glory of God'.