

THRU THE BIBLE SYNTHESIS
"Part XLV: 1 Corinthians - Ministering To Believers With TERRIBLE Pagan Backgrounds"

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

As people keep coming to believe in Christ for salvation, they arrive from a world system that keeps deteriorating spiritually:

(a) A newspaper insert out of Hartford recently had an advertisement promoting a Do-It-Yourself No-Fault Divorce Kit. It is valid in all 50 states and in Washington, D.C. It has a money-back guarantee! The address is out of West Hartford, Connecticut!

(b) In an effort to make gay sexuality acceptable, five researchers led by Dean Hamer at the National Cancer Institute in July of 1993 attempted to link homosexuality in men with a specific genetic region of their X chromosome. Also, psychologist Michael Bailey of Northwestern University and psychiatrist Richard Pillard of the Boston University School of Medicine attempted to show that homosexuality occurred more frequently among identical twins than fraternal twins.

Moody Monthly, May, 1994 article by Bob Davies)

Generation Next reporting that recent research shows the next generation being more likely to cheat, steal, lie and express rage than we do today! They will have a different idea of "truth" than we do. Ministry will become increasingly challenging! (Gospel Pub. Hse. 1996 Summer Catalogue)

In a world of such moral disintegration that is even **promoted by respected authorities, how are new converts going to be disciplined?!**

(We turn to the "Need" section of the message . . .)

Need: "Some converts to Christ come from the WORST imaginable backgrounds that the world has to offer! They struggle with even HOW to gain ORDER in living! How can they be HELPED?!"

I. Man's decline into paganism has become so steep in certain cases that humans needing to be disciplined lack ALL ORDER in life, and thereby cannot seem to BEGIN to live godly lives as Christians!

- A. Though God created the world and set up man as His deputy, sin deposed him, and Satan became ruler on earth, Gn. 1-5; 2 Cor. 4:4.
- B. God renewed human history by the Noahic Flood, Gen. 6:1-9:7.
- C. Yet, Noah's descendant, Nimrod, began an apostasy opposing God's rule on earth, Gen. 10:8-10; 11:1-9; Rev. 12:1-3.
- D. God thus chose Abraham to start a nation to check his sin, Gn. 12:1-3.
- E. Yet, the Old Testament records that nation, Israel's repeated failure to curb Nimrod's error and even to be corrupted by it, Gn. 12:4-Malachi.
- F. When God sent Jesus, Israel's long-awaited Messiah, apostate Israel rejected Him, so God postponed the Kingdom's installation and carried on its recruitment program through the Church, the Gospels and Acts.
- G. However, with Israel's Kingdom postponed, some Gentile converts from **ages** of pagan apostasy were so steeped in ungodliness that they lacked the basic **order** needed just to **BEGIN** to please God!
 1. When Paul disciplined converts in the city of Corinth, he reached the **worst** group of pagans the Roman world had to offer!
 - a. To "corinthianize" meant to be immoral, B.K.C., N.T., p. 505.
 - b. The proud self-centeredness of the Corinthians was illustrated in a Greek legend of Sisyphus, the insolent king of Corinth, *Ibid.*
 - c. Many drinking mugs were unearthed from tavern liquor lockers on the city's south side, Ryr. St. Bib., KJV, Intro., p. 1619.
 - d. So lecherous was the city that even fellow pagans warned in a proverb: "Not for every man is the voyage to Corinth," *Ibid.*
 2. These converts carried over much evil "baggage" from paganism:
 - a. Some converts had been lesbian and homosexual, 1 Cor. 6:9, 11.
 - b. Their backgrounds yielded a collapse in social skills that threatened marriages (ch. 7), family life (ch. 5), business relations (6:1-8) and church union and order (chs. 1-3 & 12-14).

II. God used the Apostle Paul to show us how to establish ORDER for those saved out of TERRIBLE pagan secularism (as follows):

- A. Paul viewed the Corinthian converts **positively** from what they had **positionally** given to them in Christ by God's grace, 1 Cor. 1:1-9:
 1. He rejoiced in their **positional sanctification** as believers, 1:1-3!

2. He was thankful for the **spiritual gifts** the Spirit had showered upon these formerly desperately lost pagans, 1 Cor. 1:4-7a.
3. He exulted in the **salvation security** they had that would take them to heaven in **spite** of their wicked backgrounds, 1 Cor. 1:7b-9!

B. With this **hope** of his converts' **positional wealth** in Christ, Paul addressed their **experiential** problems, creating **order** out of **chaos**!

1. Instead of being divisive out of pride and focusing on externals, they were to realize the **unmerited favor** of God in saving and equipping the saints, and be **united** in that **humility**, 1:10-4:21.
2. Instead of making light of gross immorality in their midst, they were to practice **church discipline** to **check** this sin's growth, 5:1-13.
3. Instead of suing brethren, they were to suffer **loss** to protect their **testimony** before godless magistrates, 1 Corinthians 6:1-9.
4. Instead of moral laxity, they were to see their bodies as God's **dwelling**, and glorify God by keeping morally **upright**, 6:9-20.
5. Instead of self-centeredness in marital relations and liberties, they were to consider the needs of **others** and act uprightly, 7:1-10:33.
6. Instead of self-centeredness in church worship, they were to consider how to edify **others**, forming a basis of **order**, 11:1-14:40.
7. Instead of denying the resurrection, they were to see its belief as the basis of the **GOSPEL** and adhere to it for orderly **theology**, ch. 15.
8. Instead of self-centeredness regarding wealth, they were to focus on using it to meet the needs of others with ordered **giving**, 16:1-4.

III. **1 Corinthians adds to the "thread of redemption" by showing that believers are eternally secure in their salvation no matter how bad they live, 1 Cor. 1:2; 3:15b! Yet, since we will give an ACCOUNT to God for REWARD, we ought to live righteously, 1 Cor. 3: 13-15!**

***Application:** For those from VERY BAD backgrounds, be assured that God's GRACE is great enough to make the difference, so (1) believe in Christ for salvation, Jn. 3:16. (2) Then (a) relish the UNCONDITIONAL riches we possess in Christ, i.e. salvation's eternal security, the indwelling Holy Spirit and gifts for serving God in power, but ALSO (b) know that we will give an ACCOUNT for how well we USE these resources for living. (c) Then, depend upon the Spirit's resources to live as Paul detailed in 1 Corinthians! (3) As stronger brethren like Paul was, we help converts from BAD backgrounds by (a) viewing them optimistically through their position in Christ, and (b) teach them by God's power "(2)" above!*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

Nicky Cruz's autobiography, Run, Baby, Run tells of his conversion to Christ in graphic detail under the preaching ministry of Dave Wilkerson, author of The Cross and the Switchblade. Nicky Cruz was then a gang leader in an inner city gang, the worst kind of the era.

As Nicky sat listening to Wilkerson in front of 30 members of his dangerous inner city gang, the Mau Maus, Nicky reports that when Wilkerson mentioned something about "repenting for your sin," he suddenly felt pressured by a power a million times stronger than any drug he'd ever known. "I was not responsible for my movements, actions or words. It was as though I had been caught in a wild torrent of a rampaging river. I was powerless to resist. I didn't understand what was taking place within me. I only knew the fear was gone."

When Dave Wilkerson called for people to stand up and come forward to receive Christ, Cruz said to his gang members, "Boys, I'm going up. Who's with me?" He turned to the gang, waved with his hand, and said, "Let's go." More than 25 of the Mau Maus responded. Behind them another 30 boys from other rival gangs responded and came to the front to receive Christ as personal Savior.

Nicky Cruz has since ministered in huge crowds, sharing his testimony. At one time he spoke to over 200,000 young people! (Josh McDowell, A Ready Defense, p. 456-457)

The power of the Holy Spirit is able to evangelize, save and equip people to live for Jesus Christ even if they come from the devastating background of inner city gangs of New York City. What we have to do is trust that power of God, and live by it and present it to the lost in our dying culture!