

Through the Bible

I CORINTHIANS - I

Zac Poonen



Illustrations by Vinay Kuruvilla

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CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP CHURCH

69, PARADISE ENCLAVE, BELAHALLI
KANNUR POST, BANGALORE - 562 149
INDIA

I Corinthians



THIS LETTER DEALS WITH THE FUNCTIONING OF A LOCAL CHURCH IN A CITY OR A VILLAGE.

NOTICE THESE TWO EXPRESSIONS, 'THE CHURCH OF GOD' AND 'THE CITY OF CORINTH.'

THE SPIRIT IN THE CITY HAD UNFORTUNATELY GOTTEN INSIDE THE CHURCH THERE, INSTEAD OF THE CHURCH INFLUENCING THAT CITY.



PAUL CRITICISED MANY THINGS AMONG THE CORINTHIAN CHRISTIANS BECAUSE THERE WERE TERRIBLE THINGS GOING ON IN THEIR CHURCH.



YET PAUL **BEGAN** BY SAYING "I THANK MY GOD ALWAYS CONCERNING YOU" IT IS ONLY ON "THE **BLACKBOARD** OF APPRECIATION", THAT WE CAN USE "THE **CHALK** OF CRITICISM" IN A HELPFUL WAY.

WHAT DO WE SEE IN THE PICTURE ABOVE? A **BLACK DOT** OR A **WHITE BACKGROUND**? THERE ARE **MANY GOOD** THINGS IN OTHERS. LET US **CONCENTRATE** ON SEEING THEM **FIRST**. WE MUST **TRAIN** OUR EYES TO LOOK AT PEOPLE THE WAY **GOD LOOKS** AT THEM.

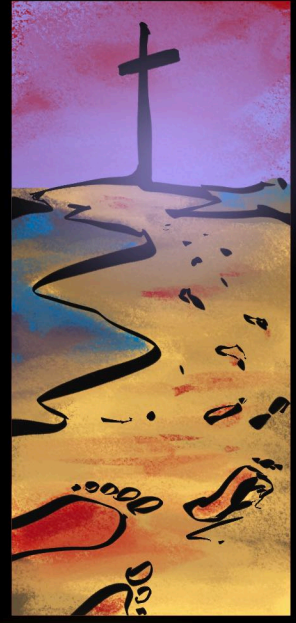


AFTER THAT, PAUL WENT ON TO TELL THEM ABOUT THEIR **FAULTS**. HE SAID, "EACH OF YOU IS SAYING, 'I AM OF PAUL, I AM OF APOLLOS, I AM OF CEPHAS AND I AM OF CHRIST.'" (1:12). THEY WERE **DIVIDED** INTO WHAT WE CALL "**DENOMINATIONS**". EACH HAD THEIR **FAVOURITE** PREACHER. THOSE SAYING THEY WERE OF **CHRIST** WERE PROBABLY THE **PROUDEST** PEOPLE IN THE CHURCH THINKING THEY ALONE WERE THE **BODY OF CHRIST** (LIKE **MANY GROUPS** TODAY).



PAUL GOES ON TO ASK, "HAS CHRIST BEEN DIVIDED? PAUL WAS NOT CRUCIFIED FOR YOU, WAS HE? OR WERE YOU BAPTIZED IN THE NAME OF PAUL?" (1:13). PAUL EVEN AVOIDED BAPTISING PEOPLE SO THAT NO-ONE WOULD BOAST THAT HE WAS BAPTISED BY PAUL (1:16).

IN 1:17 PAUL BEGINS ON A THEME THAT GOES RIGHT THROUGH 1 CORINTHIANS -- THE WORD OF THE CROSS. IT IS THE WAY THAT JESUS WALKED -- THE WAY OF RECOGNISING ONE'S WEAKNESS, BEING MISUNDERSTOOD AND REJECTED BY OTHERS, HUMBLING OURSELVES, NOT RETALIATING, AND NOT SEEKING ANY GLORY OR HONOUR FROM MAN.



THE WORD OF THE CROSS IS THE SOLUTION FOR A CARNAL CHURCH LIKE CORINTHIANS. "THE WORD OF THE CROSS IS FOOLISHNESS TO THOSE WHO ARE PERISHING, BUT TO US WHO ARE BEING SAVED IT IS THE POWER OF GOD." (1:18).



HERE IS THE WORD OF THE CROSS: "GOD HAS CHOSEN THE FOOLISH PEOPLE TO SHAME THE WISE" (1:26--28). WHEN JESUS CHOSE HIS APOSTLES, HE CHOSE UNLEARNED FISHERMEN LIKE PETER, JAMES AND JOHN TO PUT TO SHAME THE GREAT BIBLE-SCHOLARS LIKE GAMALIEL, ANNAS AND CAIAPHAS OF HIS DAY.



..not essential...
GOD MAY USE OUR INTELLIGENCE AND OUR MONEY TO SPREAD THE GOSPEL -- BUT HE DOES NOT NEED EITHER. HE DID A WONDERFUL JOB THROUGH POOR, UNLEARNED APOSTLES IN THE FIRST CENTURY. GOD DOES THINGS IN SUCH A WAY THAT NO HUMAN BEING WILL EVER BE ABLE TO BOAST BEFORE HIM (1:29).



THE NEW SONG THAT WE WILL SING WHEN WE STAND BEFORE THE LORD IS, "THOU ALONE ART WORTHY, O LAMB OF GOD" (REVELATION 5:12).



BIBLE-SCHOLARS ARMED WITH NUMEROUS DEGREES ARE TEACHING PEOPLE **THEORIES** THAT **DON'T WORK** IN DAILY LIFE. THEY ARE LEADING PEOPLE TO THE **TREE OF KNOWLEDGE** THAT BRINGS **DEATH**, INSTEAD OF TO THE **TREE OF LIFE**.



PAUL HIMSELF WAS FROM A VERY **WEALTHY** FAMILY IN TARSUS. PAUL HAD GONE AS A YOUNG MAN TO THE **BEST SEMINARY** IN JERUSALEM -- WHERE THE SCHOLARLY **GAMALIEL** WAS THE **PROFESSOR**. PAUL, NOT ONLY CAME FROM A WEALTHY FAMILY, HE ALSO HAD A **BRILLIANT MIND**. BUT HE DID **NOT DEPEND** ON ANY OF HIS **ABILITIES** TO SERVE THE LORD.



HE SAID TO THE CORINTHIAN CHRISTIANS, "WHEN I CAME TO YOU PROCLAIMING TO YOU THE TESTIMONY OF GOD, I DID **NOT** COME TO YOU WITH **SUPERIORITY OF SPEECH OR WISDOM**" (2:1). HIS PREACHING WAS **NOT** WITH WORDS OF **HUMAN CLEVERNESS** BUT IN THE POWER OF THE **HOLY SPIRIT**, SO THAT PEOPLE'S **FAITH** WOULD REST ON **GOD'S POWER** AND **NOT** ON **HUMAN CLEVERNESS** (2:4).



IN THE MORE THAN 50 YEARS THAT I HAVE PREACHED GOD'S WORD, I HAVE **ASKED MYSELF** THIS QUESTION, "CAN THE **LITTLE CHILDREN** WHO **LISTEN** TO ME **UNDERSTAND** WHAT I AM SAYING? OR IS IT ONLY THE **HIGHLY INTELLIGENT** ONES WHO UNDERSTAND?"



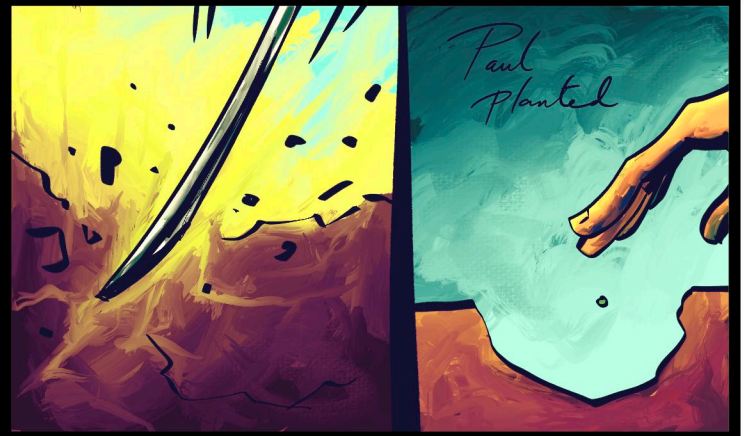
THE CORINTHIAN CHRISTIANS WERE **BABES**, AND SO PAUL HAD TO GIVE THEM **MILK** (3:1, 2). WHEN PREACHING TO PEOPLE, WE HAVE TO **IDENTIFY** THEIR **SPIRITUAL LEVEL** FIRST, SO THAT WE CAN GIVE THEM **WHATEVER IS APPROPRIATE** FOR THEM.



WITH MATURE CHRISTIANS, WE CAN TALK ABOUT "DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN THE **SOULISH** AND THE **SPIRITUAL**" AND ABOUT "POURING OUT THE **SOULISH** LIFE TO **DEATH**", ETC. BUT WITH **BABES** WE CAN SPEAK ONLY ABOUT SIMPLE THINGS LIKE **REPENTANCE**, **FORGIVENESS** OF SINS, **OVERCOMING CONDEMNATION** AND GUILT AND ANGER AND DIRTY THOUGHTS, ETC. WE HAVE TO GIVE **BABES** MILK BECAUSE THEY **CAN'T TOLERATE STRONG MEAT** THAT NEEDS TO BE **CHEWED!**



THIS **WISDOM** OF GOD CANNOT BE SEEN BY THE **HUMAN EYE**, HEARD BY THE **HUMAN EAR** OR EVEN UNDERSTOOD BY THE **HUMAN MIND**. IT HAS TO BE **REVEALED** TO US BY THE **HOLY SPIRIT** (2:9, 10). SO IT **DOESN'T** MAKE A DIFFERENCE WHETHER YOU HAVE A **BRILLIANT MIND** OR A **DULL ONE**.



IN CHAPTER 3, WE READ ABOUT **EVANGELISM** AND **BUILDING THE CHURCH**. "SOME OF YOU SAY, 'I AM OF PAUL AND I AM OF APOLLOS'" (3:4). PAUL SAYS, "WHAT IS THE **DIFFERENCE?** WE ARE **BOTH** SERVANTS. I **PLANTED** AND APOLLOS **WATERED**" (3:6). PAUL DID THE WORK OF **EVANGELISM** -- HE **DUG THE GROUND** AND **PLANTED THE SEED**.



APOLLOS CAME ALONG **LATER** AND **WATERED**. HE **DIDN'T** **DIG** THE GROUND OR **PLANT** ANY SEED. HE WOULD HAVE **DESTROYED** THE SEED IF HE **DUG UP** THE GROUND **AGAIN!** WHAT THE SEED NOW NEEDED WAS **WATERING** -- AND SO THAT WAS WHAT APOLLOS **WISELY** DID.



SOME **EVANGELISTS** GET **UPSET** IF **SOMEONE ELSE** COMES ALONG AND **WATERS** WHAT **THEY** HAVE **PLANTED**. THEY WILL SAY, "WHY DON'T YOU GO AND **PLANT SOMEWHERE ELSE?** WHY DO YOU COME INTO **MY FIELD?**" BUT IS IT **YOUR FIELD** OR THE **LORD'S FIELD?** IF YOU ARE DOING **GOD'S** WORK, THEN IT IS **GOD'S** FIELD AND HE CAN SEND **ANOTHER SERVANT** TO **WATER** WHAT **YOU** HAVE **PLANTED**.



IF HOWEVER WE ARE BUILDING OUR **OWN FIELD**, THEN IT WILL BE **BURNT UP** AS "**WOOD, HAY AND STRAW**" ONE DAY (3:12--15). SO LET US LEARN **NOT** TO **DUPLICATE** **ANOTHER PERSON'S** WORK, BUT TO WORK IN **COOPERATION**, **NOT** COUNTING ANY WORK AS "**OURS**"!!



IF YOU SAW **100** PEOPLE CARRYING A **LOG** OF WOOD, WITH **99** OF THEM HOLDING UP **ONE** END OF THE LOG AND **ONLY ONE** AT THE **OTHER** END -- AT WHICH END WOULD YOU GO TO **HELP?** **TODAY**, IN MANY LANDS, **99%** OF CHRISTIAN WORKERS ARE ENGAGED IN **EVANGELISM** AND **1%** IN MAKING **CONVERTS** INTO **DISCIPLES** AND **BUILDING** THEM INTO A **LOCAL CHURCH**.

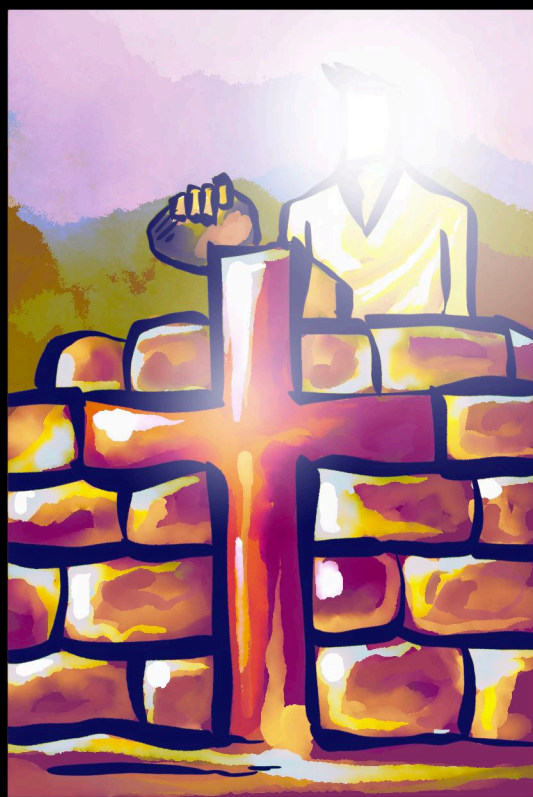


PAUL SAYS ABOUT HIMSELF AND APOLLOS, "WE ARE **NOBODIES**. WE ARE NOTHING" (3:7). THAT'S WHY THEY COULD WORK TOGETHER **HARMONIOUSLY**. TWO **NOBODIES** CAN WORK **TOGETHER** EASILY. IT IS WHEN **ONE** OF THEM THINKS THAT HE IS A **SOMEBODY**, THAT **PROBLEMS** ARISE.

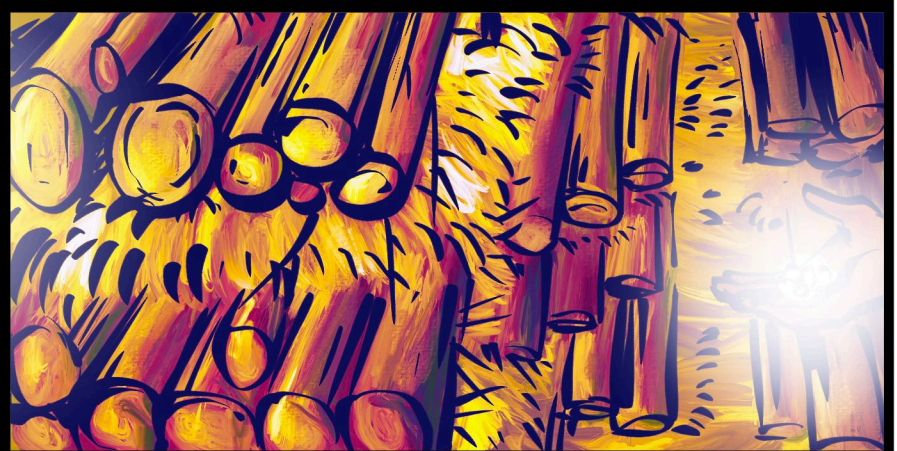


IF YOU EVER BUILD A **LOCAL CHURCH** ANYWHERE, LET ME GIVE YOU A **SUGGESTION** FROM SEEING THE **LORD PLANT CHURCHES** IN **INDIA** AND **ELSEWHERE** FOR **40 YEARS**: BE A **NOBODY YOURSELF** FIRST AND MAKE ALL YOUR **CONVERTS** INTO "**NOBODY**"S. THEN YOU WILL BUILD A **WONDERFUL CHURCH** -- WHERE THERE IS **COOPERATION** AND **NO COMPETITION**. A CHURCH WHERE EVERYONE, FROM **LEADER** DOWN TO THE **NEWEST CONVERT**, IS JUST A **ZERO**, WILL BE THE **BEST CHURCH**

THEY MAY ALL BE **ZEROS**, BUT WHEN YOU PUT **JESUS** IN **FRONT** OF THEM ALL -- HE BEING A "**I**" WILL MAKE EVEN A CHURCH WITH **9 PEOPLE** WORTH A **BILLION** -- **1,000,000,000!!**



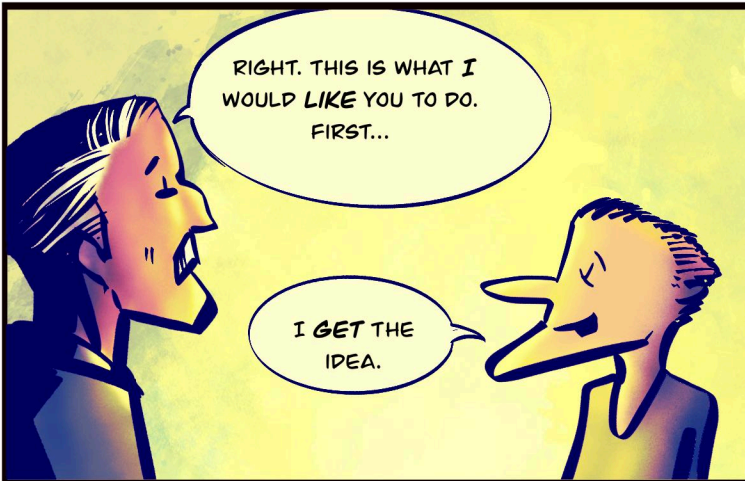
THEN PAUL GOES ON TO SAY ABOUT LAYING A **FOUNDATION** AND **BUILDING** ON IT. BOTH **FOUNDATION** AND **SUPERSTRUCTURE** ARE **EQUALLY IMPORTANT**. THE **FOUNDATION** OF THE CHURCH IS **CHRIST ALONE** -- HIS **PERFECT ATONING WORK** ON THE **CROSS**, WITH **NONE** OF **OUR WORKS** ADDED TO IT.



BUT THEN WE **MUST** KNOW HOW TO BUILD AN **ETERNAL STRUCTURE** ON THIS **FOUNDATION**. WE CAN BUILD WITH **GOLD, SILVER AND PRECIOUS STONES**, OR WITH **WOOD, HAY AND STRAW** (3:12). IN THE **FINAL DAY**, IT WILL BE **QUALITY** THAT MATTERS, **NOT QUANTITY** (3:13, 14). WITH THE **SAME AMOUNT** OF **MONEY**, YOU COULD BUY A **LOT MORE** OF **WOOD, HAY AND STRAW** **THAN** OF **GOLD, SILVER AND PRECIOUS STONES**.



BUT IF YOU KNEW THAT THE **FIRE** WOULD **TEST** YOUR **BUILDING** AS SOON AS IT IS **COMPLETED**, YOU WOULD **CHOOSE** TO BUILD WITH SOMETHING THAT CAN **ENDURE** THE **FIRE** LIKE **GOLD, SILVER AND PRECIOUS STONES** -- EVEN IF YOUR **BUILDING** WOULD BE ONLY **1%** IN **SIZE** COMPARED TO THE **FORMER**.



IN CHAPTER 4, WE READ ABOUT SERVING THE LORD. "THE MOST IMPORTANT THING ABOUT A SERVANT IS THAT HE DOES **JUST** WHAT HIS **MASTER** TELLS HIM TO" (4:2 - LB). THAT IS WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A **FAITHFUL** SERVANT. IT IS **NOT** A QUESTION OF HOW **MUCH** YOU DO, BUT WHETHER YOU DO ONLY WHAT THE LORD TELLS YOU TO DO -- AND IN THE **WAY** HE WANTS IT DONE.

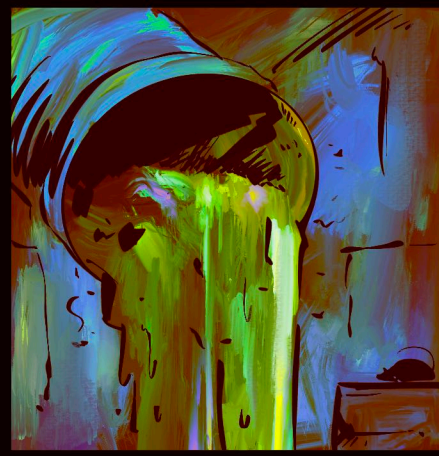
BUT **MOST** CHRISTIAN WORKERS DO **NOT** LISTEN TO WHAT GOD HAS SAID IN HIS **WORD** AND FOLLOW THOSE DIVINE **PRINCIPLES**. INSTEAD THEY DO GOD'S WORK IN THE WAY **THEY** FEEL IS BEST -- WITH THEIR **OWN BRIGHT** IDEAS, WHICH ARE USUALLY **WORLDLY**. THEY DON'T HAVE THE **PATIENCE** TO WAIT ON THE LORD TO FIND OUT **WHAT HIS WILL** FOR THEM IS.



IN THE **WORLD'S** EYES THE **APOSTLES** ARE RIGHT AT THE **BOTTOM** OF THE **SOCIAL LADDER**. THEY ARE "LIKE PRISONERS SOON TO BE **KILLED... STARED AT BY MEN... FOOLISH... LAUGHED AT... KICKED AROUND**", ETC. (4:9--11 - LIVING). IF WE SEEK THE **WORLD'S HONOUR**, WE WILL MOST CERTAINLY END UP AS **CARNAL CHRISTIANS**.



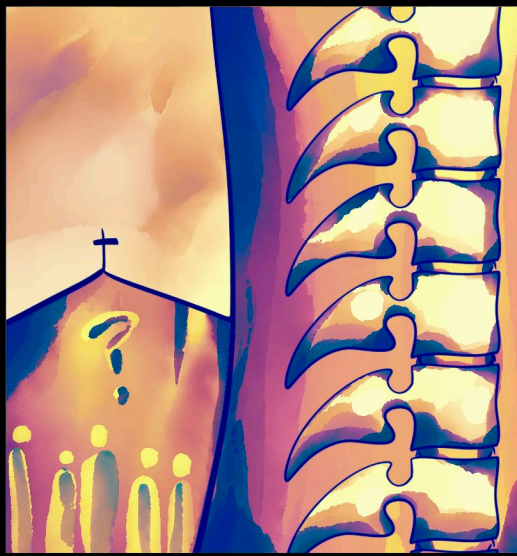
IN CHAPTER 4, PAUL SAYS THAT **TRUE SERVANTS OF CHRIST** (WHO WALK THE WAY OF THE **CROSS**) WILL **NOT** BE **HONOURED** BY THE **WORLD** (AND THAT INCLUDES **WORLDLY BELIEVERS**).



PAUL GOES ON TO SAY, "WE ARE **ROUGHLY TREATED... WE TOIL WORKING WITH OUR OWN HANDS**" (4:11, 12). PAUL SUPPORTED HIMSELF **FINANCIALLY**, BUT YET HE WAS **REVILED** AND **SLANDERED**. PEOPLE TOLD FALSE STORIES ABOUT HIM, BUT HE **BLESSED** THEM IN RETURN.

HE WAS **PERSECUTED** ALMOST **EVERYWHERE** HE WENT AND BECAME "THE **SCUM** OF THE **WORLD**, THE **DREGS** OF ALL **THING**" (4:13). THAT MEANS THAT THE **WORLD** CONSIDERED HIM TO BE NO BETTER THAN THE **FILTH** THAT FLOWS IN A **SEWAGE PIPE**.

WAS PAUL **JEALOUS** OF THE **CORINTHIANS** WHO WERE **DISTINGUISHED** AND **COMFORTABLE**? NO. HE FELT **SORRY** FOR THEM, BECAUSE HE WAS IN A MORE **BLESSED** POSITION THAN THEM. HE SPOKE AS A **FATHER** TO THEM -- AND **NOT** TO **SHAME** THEM (4:14) **TEACHERS** MAY **SHAME** THEIR STUDENTS, HOWEVER, A **GOOD FATHER**, HOWEVER, WILL **NEVER SHAME** HIS CHILD



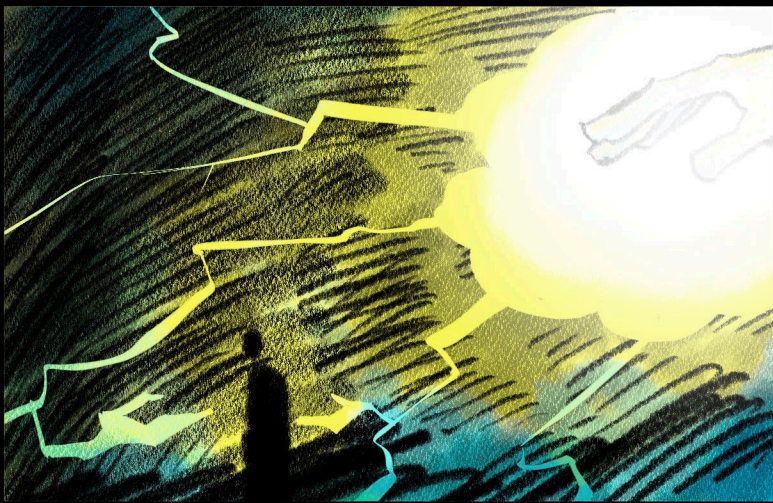
SOMEONE WAS LIVING IN **ADULTERY** WITH HIS **STEPMOTHER**, AND NOT EVEN **REPENTANT** ABOUT IT. AND THE **ELDERS** IN THE CHURCH WERE SO "**SPINELESS**" THAT THEY **DIDN'T** DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT.



MANY **ELDERS** LOVE THEIR **REPUTATION** FOR **GENTLENESS** MORE THAN THEY LOVE THE **PURITY** OF THE **CHURCH**. THEIR GOAL IS **POPULARITY**, AND IN THIS RESPECT, THEY ARE MORE LIKE **POLITICIANS**. AN **ELDER** OR A **PASTOR** WHO IS LIKE THAT WILL ONLY **DESTROY** A CHURCH.



A HOME WHERE CHILDREN ARE NOT DISCIPLINED WILL BE A **CHAOTIC** HOME, AND A CHURCH WHERE PEOPLE ARE NOT DISCIPLINED WILL BE A **CHAOTIC** CHURCH. IN A HOME WHERE THE CHILDREN ARE NOT DISCIPLINED, THE CHILDREN WILL **TAKE OVER** THE HOME AND THE **FATHER** WILL HAVE TO SIT **HELPLESSLY** IN A CORNER. IN A CHURCH WHERE THERE IS NO DISCIPLINE, THE **ELDERS** WILL BE **HELPLESS** AND OTHERS WILL TAKE OVER.



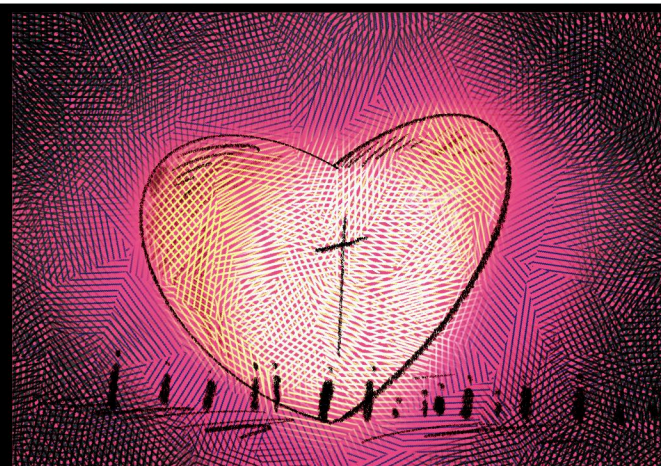
GOD DOESN'T TEMPT ANYONE. BUT HE DOES **ALLOW SATAN** TO TEMPT US. SO PAUL HANDED THIS **UNREPENTANT** BROTHER OVER TO SATAN TO BE MADE **SICK** SO THAT HE WOULD COME TO HIS **SENSES** AND **REPENT**. HE WOULD BE PUT **OUT** OF THE CHURCH AND **NO BELIEVER** WOULD MEET HIM. AND THERE IN **SPIRITUAL DARKNESS**, EVEN THOUGH HE HAD PLENTY OF **MONEY**, HE WOULD **REALISE** WHAT HE HAD **LOST** AND **HOPEFULLY** WOULD **REPENT**.



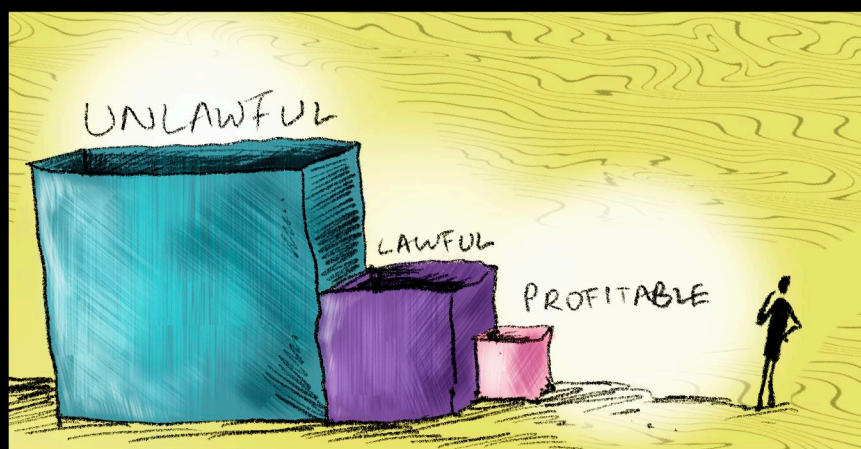
IN CHAPTER 6, PAUL DEALS WITH **BELIEVERS** WHO TAKE **OTHER BELIEVERS** TO **COURT**. WHY WOULD A BELIEVER WANT TO TAKE ANOTHER BELIEVER TO COURT? BECAUSE HE FEELS THAT THE CHURCH **ELDERS** CANNOT HELP HIM SOLVE HIS PROBLEM -- AND **ALSO** THAT **ALMIGHTY GOD** CANNOT HELP HIM EITHER!! SO HE GOES TO **PUNY** MEN IN A **WORLDLY** COURT TO HELP HIM.



PAUL GOES ON TO SAY, "IF YOUR FELLOW-BELIEVER CHEATS YOU, WHY DON'T YOU ALLOW YOURSELF TO BE CHEATED" (6:7). BUT INSTEAD, THEY WERE TRYING TO CORRECT ONE WRONG BY DOING ANOTHER WRONG -- TAKING THEIR FELLOW-BELIEVERS TO COURT.



THAT IS A SERIOUS SIN, BECAUSE IT DISGRACES THE NAME OF JESUS. JESUS SAID, "ALL MEN WILL KNOW YOU ARE MY DISCIPLES WHEN YOU LOVE ONE ANOTHER"



PAUL THEN SPEAKS ABOUT THREE DIFFERENT LEVELS AT WHICH PEOPLE CAN LIVE. "ALL THINGS ARE **LAWFUL**, BUT NOT ALL THINGS ARE **PROFITABLE**" (6:12). OUT OF 100 THINGS, 70 THINGS MAY BE **UNLAWFUL**. SO WE SHOULD NOT DO ANY OF THEM. BUT WE CAN DO ANY OF THE REMAINING 30 THINGS THAT ARE **LAWFUL**. BUT OUT OF THOSE 30 THINGS, ONLY 10 MAY BE TRULY **PROFITABLE** SPIRITUALLY.



YOU COULD SPEND MANY HOURS READING THE **NEWSPAPER** -- WHICH THOUGH **LAWFUL** MAY NOT BE THE MOST **PROFITABLE** WAY TO SPEND THE DAY. IF YOU WANT TO BE A USEFUL SERVANT OF GOD, YOU WILL NEED TO BE DISCIPLINED AND **CUT OUT** SOME OF THOSE **UNNECESSARY** ITEMS FROM YOUR DAILY ROUTINE AND SPEND **MORE** TIME IN THE THINGS OF GOD.



A **WHOLEHEARTED** CHRISTIAN WILL USE HIS **TIME** AND HIS **MONEY** ONLY IN **PROFITABLE** WAYS. WE MUST LEARN TO MAKE THE **RIGHT** CHOICES. THE **SECRET** OF A **GODLY** LIFE LIES IN THE **CHOICES** WE MAKE.



THEN PAUL GOES ON TO SPEAK ABOUT THE WAY WE USE OUR **BODY**. "I WILL NOT BE **MASTERED** BY ANY OF MY **BODILY** **DESIRES**" (6:12, 13). **FOOD** IS ESSENTIAL FOR OUR BODIES; BUT IF YOU WANT TO BE A **SERVANT** OF GOD, YOU MUST NOT ALLOW YOURSELF TO BE **MASTERED** BY **FOOD**.



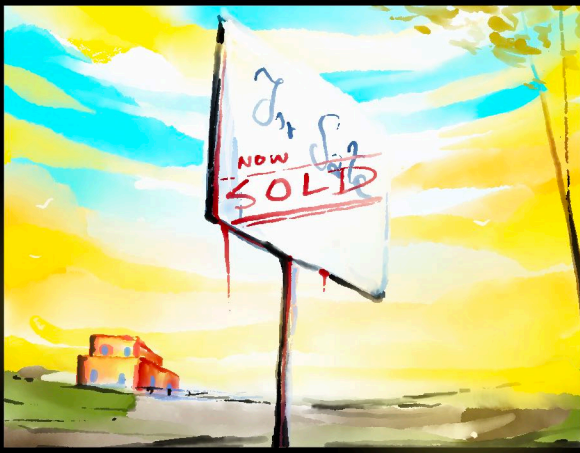
IT IS NOT ONLY OUR **SPIRIT**, BUT OUR **PHYSICAL** BODY ALSO IS A "**MEMBER OF CHRIST**" (6:15). SO WE MUST **NEVER** USE IT FOR ANY **IMMORAL** PURPOSE. IT MUST BE FOR THE **LORD'S** **EXCLUSIVE** USE -- OUR **EYES**, OUR **TONGUE** AND EVERY PART OF OUR **BODY**.



FOR SUCH PEOPLE THIS IS THE PROMISE - "THE **BODY IS FOR THE LORD, AND THE LORD IS FOR THE BODY**" (6:13). EVEN **YOUNG** PEOPLE MAY FAINT, BUT THOSE WHO GIVE THEIR **BODIES** TO THE **LORD** WILL FLY LIKE **EAGLES** IN THE SKY.



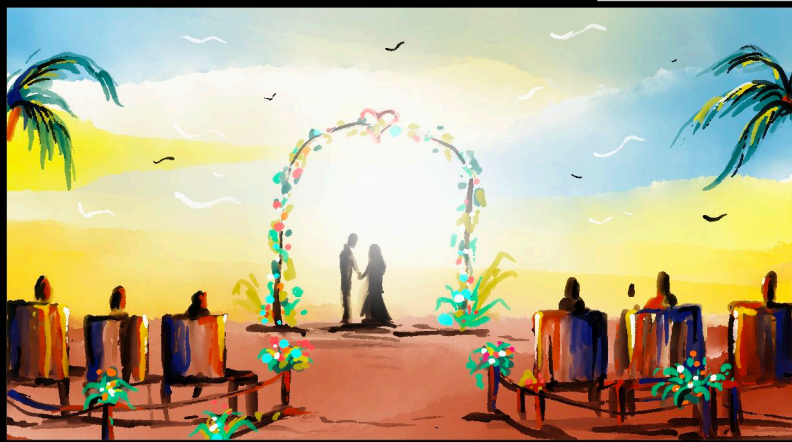
OUR **BODY** IS ALSO THE **TEMPLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT** (6:19) -- AND SO WE MUST **NOT DEFILE** IT IN ANY WAY. THE **REAL** TEMPLE OF **GOD** IS **NOT** ANY **CHURCH BUILDING**, BUT YOUR **BODY**. "YOU HAVE BEEN **BOUGHT** WITH A **PRICE**. THEREFORE **GLORIFY** **GOD** IN YOUR **BODY**" (VERSE 20).



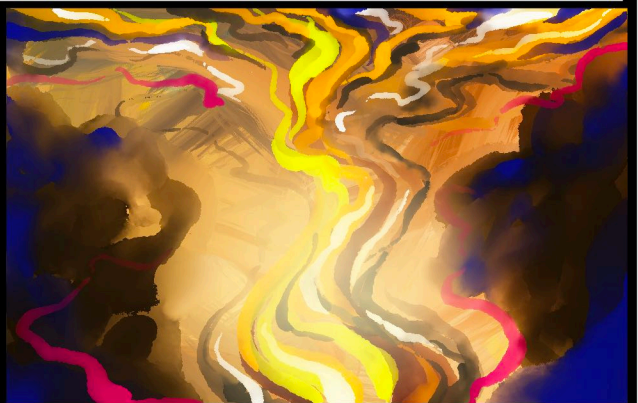
WE MUST **VACATE** THIS **HOUSE** AND LET THE **RIGHTFUL OWNER** NOW **OCCUPY** IT **FULLY**. IT IS A **SIN** TO **CONTINUE** TO LIVE IN A **HOUSE** THAT **SOMEBODY ELSE** HAS **PURCHASED**. LET US **HAND OVER** OUR **BODY** **TOTALLY** TO THE **LORD**.



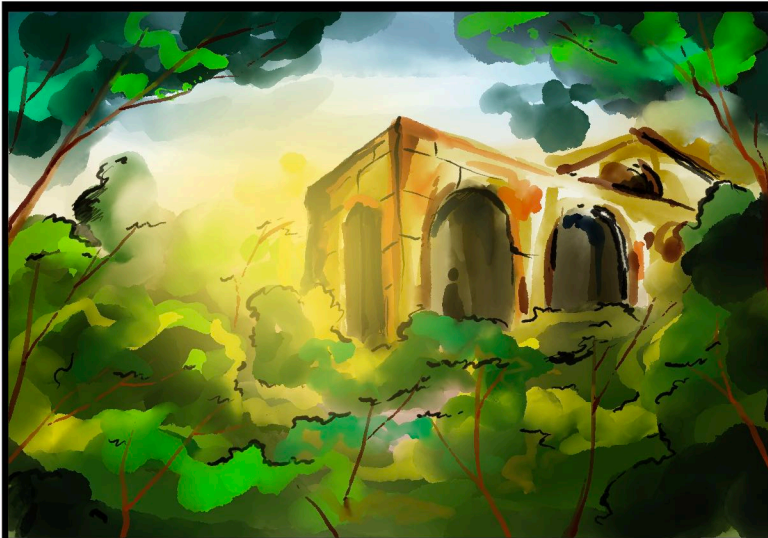
THERE IS ONLY ONE WAY TO **OVERCOME** THE **TEMPTATION** TO **IMMORALITY** -- AND THAT IS THE WAY MENTIONED IN 6:18, "**RUN AWAY** FROM IT." THE **BIBLE** IS **REALISTIC** AND KNOWS HOW **STRONG** **SEXUAL** **TEMPTATION** IS! WHEN **JOSEPH** WAS **TEMPTED** BY **POTIPHAR'S** **WIFE**, HE **RAN AWAY**.



IN THIS **CONTEXT**, **PAUL** GOES ON TO **SPEAK** ABOUT **GETTING MARRIED** AS ONE WAY OF **RUNNING AWAY** FROM **IMMORALITY** (7:2). **SOME** MAY **SAY** THAT THAT IS A VERY **UNSPIRITUAL** REASON FOR **GETTING MARRIED**. BUT IT IS THE **HOLY SPIRIT** WHO **SAYS** HERE THAT **MARRIAGE** CAN **PROTECT** YOU FROM **IMMORALITY**.



"IF YOU **DON'T** HAVE **SELF-CONTROL** IT IS **BETTER** TO **MARRY** THAN TO **BURN**." (7:9). IT IS **NORMAL** FOR MOST **MEN** TO **BURN** WITH **SEXUAL** **DESIRE** WHEN THEY **COME** TO THEIR **LATE TEENS**. SO IT IS **FAR** **BETTER** TO **GET MARRIED** AND **AVOID** THAT **BURNING** THAN **EXPOSE** ONESELF TO **AVOIDABLE** **TEMPTATION**.



THE BIBLE IS VERY **PRACTICAL**. IT DOES **NOT** TEACH US A **HERMIT-STYLE** OF LIFE WHERE WE HAVE TO LIVE IN A **FOREST** OR A **MONASTERY**. WE ARE TO LIVE IN THE **MIDDLE** OF THE **WORLD**, AND BE **MARRIED** LIKE THE REST OF THE HUMAN RACE.



IT IS WRITTEN OF **ENOCH** THAT "HE WALKED WITH **GOD** AND HAD **SONS** AND **DAUGHTERS**" (GENESIS 5:22). WE TOO CAN LIVE A **NORMAL MARRIED** LIFE AND HAVE **SONS** AND **DAUGHTERS**, AND AT THE **SAME TIME** WALK WITH **GOD** LIKE **ENOCH** DID.



MARRIED FOLK MUST **RECOGNISE** THAT THEY **LOSE** THEIR **AUTHORITY** OVER THEIR OWN **BODIES** THE **MOMENT** THEY ARE **MARRIED**. **PREACHERS** ARE **EMBARRASSED** TO TALK ABOUT THIS, WHEN **SCRIPTURE** SPEAKS ABOUT IT SO **PLAINLY**.



THE **SEXUAL** RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN A **HUSBAND** AND HIS **WIFE** IS CALLED A **DUTY** HERE. IT IS CERTAINLY **NOTHING** TO BE **ASHAMED** OF. IT IS AS MUCH A **DUTY** AS **COOKING** THE **MEALS**, TAKING CARE OF THE **CHILDREN**, AND **WORKING** TO PROVIDE FOR THE **NEEDS** OF THE **HOME**.



WHILE **HUSBANDS** MAYBE **DELIGHTED** TO HEAR THIS THEY **MUST** REMEMBER THIS - WHEN THEY SEE A **PRETTY** GIRL, THEY **MUST** REMEMBER THAT THEIR **EYES** BELONG TO THEIR **WIFE**!

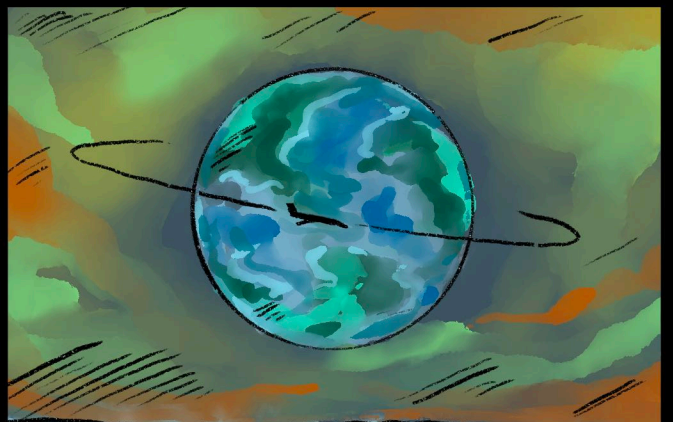
THERE IS SO MUCH **HIDDEN** IMMORALITY AMONG **CHRISTIANS** -- AND EVEN AMONG **PREACHERS** AND **PASTORS**. THE REPORTS THAT ONE HEARS ARE ONLY THE **TIP** OF THE **ICEBERG**. THERE IS MUCH MORE THAT IS **HIDDEN**. BUT **WHERE** DOES THIS **IMMORALITY** BEGIN? IT BEGINS IN THE **HEART** AND WITH **WANDERING** EYES, AND WHEN ONE DOES NOT **RUN** AWAY FROM **DANGEROUS** FRIENDSHIPS.



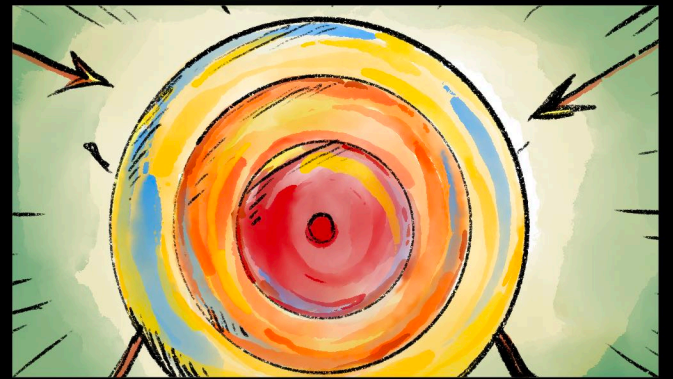


PAUL SAYS, "I WISH THAT ALL MEN WERE LIKE ME, BUT EACH MAN HAS HIS OWN GIFT FROM GOD" (7:7). PAUL ACCEPTED GOD'S WILL FOR HIM TO BE SINGLE. BUT HE RECOGNISED THAT VERY FEW MEN HAVE SUCH A CALLING.

HE COULD NOT POSSIBLY HAVE RUN A HOME WITH ALL HIS TRAVELS. BUT TIMES HAVE CHANGED. TODAY, ONE CAN TRAVEL TO THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WORLD IN LESS THAN 24 HOURS AND RETURN HOME EQUALLY QUICKLY, WHEREAS IN PAUL'S DAY, HE WOULD NEED A WHOLE DAY TO TRAVEL EVEN 50 KILOMETRES. SUCH AN APOSTLE WOULD FIND IT VERY DIFFICULT TO RAISE A FAMILY, IF HE HAD A WIDE MINISTRY.



THE OTHER REASON WHY PAUL ENCOURAGED BACHELORHOOD WAS BECAUSE OF PERSECUTION. IN TIMES OF PERSECUTION, IT IS MORE RISKY TO BE A MARRIED MAN.



THE MAIN REASON WHY PAUL ENCOURAGED PEOPLE TO CONSIDER THE SINGLE LIFE WAS SO THAT THEY COULD HAVE "AN UNDISTRACTED DEVOTION TO THE LORD" (7:35)



AND SO HE SAID, "IF YOU LIVE IN THIS WORLD, DON'T GET TAKEN UP WITH EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENS IN THE WORLD" (7:31). THE LORD MUST BE FIRST IN YOUR LIFE. WE MUST GET OVER TIMES OF SORROW AND EXCITEMENT AND GET ON WITH OUR SERVICE FOR THE LORD.



WE SEE THAT HE DIFFERENTIATED BETWEEN THE COMMANDS OF THE LORD AND HIS PERSONAL OPINIONS. IT'S VERY IMPORTANT THAT, AS GOD'S SERVANTS, WE MAKE THIS CLEAR WHEN WE PREACH. THERE IS NOTHING WRONG IN EXPRESSING OUR OPINIONS -- BUT WE MUST MAKE IT CLEAR TO EVERYONE THAT THOSE ARE OUR PERSONAL OPINIONS AND NOT GOD'S COMMANDS.