

THE AUTHORITY OF THE WORD OF GOD

1 Corinthians 1:1

by Dr. Wayne Barber

I'm going to call this message "The Authority of the Word of God." We're digging a foundation to understand the book of 1 Corinthians. There are going to be places it'll be very exciting and challenging. There will be other places, however, where it will be necessary for you to know that in other places God will speak to you in His word. I've had a lot of good messages messed up by a lot of bad hearers.

You know, the word of God is a precious gift to all of us. I hope you see that. I hope we don't just sit it on a shelf at home and think it's a great thing to look at when you come to church on Sunday. The word of God is that which keeps us sane in an insane world. It's what turns us right side up in an upside down world. Turn over to Psalm 19:7-8. I want you to see what the Psalmist said about the word of God. It's so critical to our life. It's meant to give us direction. It's meant to teach us. It's meant to reprove and correct and instruct us, as 2 Timothy 3 says. Psalm 19:7 says, "The law of the Lord is perfect [That's a great word, isn't it? It absolutely accomplishes exactly that which God intends for it], restoring the soul." Have you ever felt like you needed to be restored in your soul, the mind, the will, the emotion? "The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple." The simple has the idea there of those who just are ignorant and do not understand. Verse 8 reads, "The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart."

I tell you, when you get in the word of God and realize that it's designed to help you not hurt you, then you begin to realize that you can rejoice in this. "The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes." If you took these two verses, put them together and looked at the contrast of it, it would say, "Without God's word you would be defeated, ignorant, depressed, and blind." You've got to have God's word. It's not like the opinions of man. "God's thoughts are higher than our thoughts," he said in Isaiah 55. His ways are higher, so His word is a precious gift to the Christian community, to all the world really. It points to Christ. It's the light that we look at. That's why the Psalmist said in Psalm 119:105, he said, "Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path."

I love it when we sing that little chorus, "Thy Word." It came right out of Psalm 119:105. Sometimes I catch myself singing just as I go through the day because the word of God is such a precious gift that God has given to us. No wonder the Psalmist said in Psalm 119:10, "With all my heart I have sought thee; Do not let me wander from thy commandments." I'll tell you what, when you stray that's sin. When you cross the boundary, when you wander from what God's word has to say, that's when the misery sets in.

In Judges 17 and 18 we have Micah, the fellow who took the word out of his worship and got his own priesthood. Boy, a great guy. He said, "God's really going to have favor on me now. I've gone out and got my own church, got my own religion, and I've even got my own preacher.

God's really going to have favor on me." In Judges he was doing what he thought was right, not wrong. It says, "Everyone did what was right in their own eyes." That's what happens when you take the word of God out of your life. You end up deceived. You do what you think is right and you're so far off base you miss the point. You're off course and you don't even know it. You're deceived thinking it's right.

Then we saw the tribe of Dan. The tribe of Dan was the tribe that absolutely, totally embraced idolatry, disobeyed God, and moved to a land that God hadn't even assigned to them. They disappeared off of the list of tribes. We saw how they were deceived. They thought God was even pleased with their disobedient lifestyle.

All of us are desperate for the word of God. It's His design in our life. If you've got trouble in your family, your finances, or whatever, God's word sets it straight. Man's got a lot of opinions. Man's got a lot of wisdom, but not like God's wisdom. We have to have it. It's a gift that God has given to us.

Now, how did He give it to us? He gave it to us in the Old Testament through prophets. God used the prophets to give us the Old Testament and we have that now in print. They didn't have all of that. They had it in portion. They prophesied that way. We have it all put together for us now in the day that we live in. In the New Testament God gave it to us through the apostles. So through the prophets and through the apostles we have a precious gift that God has given to us today in the word of God.

It is with this in mind that we approach 1 Corinthians 1:1. This is God's word. It was not only for them but it also profitable to us in the day that we live in, in context as we study it. 1 Corinthians 1:1 says, "Paul, called as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother." Now I like the way they did that. They would sign the letter before they'd write it. I wish people would do that today. Don't you? You'd read a whole lot less mail if you knew who it was coming from. Sometimes you start off and have to read a whole lot to find out. Sometimes I just go to the end anyway and find out who wrote the letter.

The word of God is God's authority to man. He gave it to us through men like the Apostle Paul and he signs the letter, Paul an apostle by the will of God. So we understand then that this is God's word to us. The Apostle Paul was like a father to the Church of Corinth. Look over at 1 Corinthians 4:14. He's like a father to them. They're like his children. He is their spiritual father. He had the gospel assigned to him to take to the Gentile world and they were part of this.

Verse 14 says, "I do not write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children." Then in verse 15 we read, "For if you were to have countless tutors in Christ, yet you would not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel." It was through Paul that he preached the gospel. They got saved. He was the first pastor of that church. Apollos, as we saw in our review the last time, was the second pastor of that church.

Well, word had come to him. He was concerned. It's kind of like any father would be over his children. He was concerned about some of the things that were going on. Look in 1:11. I want you to see how the message was getting to him by different sources. Verse 11 says, "For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's people, that there are quarrels among you." "I've heard about you. You are quarreling," he said. Well, somebody had to tell him.

Look over at 5:1: "It is actually reported (I have heard from someone) that there is immorality among you." 1 Corinthians 11:18 reads, "For, in the first place, when you come together as a

church, I hear that divisions exist among you.” So you see, the reports are coming to him from every place that there’s trouble in Corinth. The Apostle Paul is burdened as a father would be for his children.

This is where I want to make the break in the distinction. The book of 1 Corinthians is not just a letter from a friend or a fatherly figure of encouragement to believers who you know are in trouble. No, sir, it’s not that. It’s more than that. It is God’s holy word that is written through the Apostle Paul to the Church of Corinth. I don’t believe in the dictation theory so much, but I believe God used Paul’s own personality to write what God had burdened his heart to write and this becomes Scripture. There’s a difference in a fatherly letter to somebody and the word of God written through an apostle to somebody. It takes upon itself a different authority altogether.

When I get a letter from the IRS, I open it immediately. But when I get a letter from some other people I can put it off for two or three days. But there’s something about authority that you immediately respond to. You want to read and find out what it is that they’re saying. So when the Corinthians saw Paul’s name they would immediately recognize him but they also knew that he was an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We’ve already studied that the city of Corinth was a bad place. Folks, it was almost as bad as it is today. Did you catch that? A lot of people look back and say, “Boy, it was awful.” I think they would probably blush at some of the things going on in America today. But back in that day it was a terribly immoral, lewd city. If you ever thought of something bad, you thought of Corinth. It was at a crossroads. If you were going from northern Greece down to Athens, you had to come right through Corinth. There was a little isthmus there and it was right in the middle of it. There was a trade center and all of these different things, and it sort of attracted all of the different cosmopolitan peoples of the world. For that reason it was a highly immoral place.

There was a Greek word that was used wherever you were. If you were in Thessalonica or Athens, wherever, and somebody would start acting grossly immorally, they would say, in the Greek expression, “You’re acting like a Corinthian.” In other words, it was a common expression. When you thought of something bad, you thought of Corinth. But isn’t it wonderful that God put a church in the midst of all that kind of stuff. That’s what Paul said. He said, “Where sin increases grace abounds even the more.” God’s grace was right in the middle of it.

However, the corruption of that city had evidently put its claws in the church of Corinth, and they were suffering because of it. Their flesh had risen up. Paul’s going to have to write now under the authority of God, as an apostle to them, to correct them, to turn them right side up, to straighten them out, and to give them direction. God speaks through Paul to the Corinthians, and I want to document that in the first phrase of verse 1. Remember, we’re digging a foundation.

When my Dad and Mom built their house they used a team of horses to get a foundation dug years and years ago in Roanoke, Virginia. Of course, these days you don’t do it that way. It doesn’t matter how you do it. You’ve got to do it if you’re going to build a house. So remember as we’re wading through some of these things and you say, “Good grief, that was kind of dry.” Just kind of relax, sit back, and say, “God, can you actually speak through me in something that’s as foundational as this message is?” God may have a word for you. It may be that you treat

God's word like you'd treat a letter from a friend rather than God speaking to your life. You need to hear this. It's different than just a friend writing it. This is God, holy God, writing His word through His apostle to this church.

Paul is a believer in Jesus Christ

The first phrase is what we're going to look at. "Paul, called as an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will of God." There are four things that I want you to see in this phrase that documents the authority of the word of God. First of all, Paul says that he is a believer in Jesus Christ. He's separating himself from the other people named Paul in that day. They knew immediately who this was. "Paul, called as an apostle." That little word "as" is not in the Greek text. It really reads "called the apostle." In the Greek it is *kletos apostolos*. There were no punctuation marks in that day, so you don't know exactly how it was constructed. Let me show you two different ways.

First of all, the word *kletos* is the word translated "called." It comes from the word *kaleo*, to call. When you put it in the plural it's the word *kletoi*. When you put it in the plural it refers to the church of Jesus Christ, the called ones. That's always important to remember. To those who He foreknew He predestinated. To those He predestinated He called. To those whom He called, He justified. To those whom He justified, He glorified. Man did not find God. God finds man. That's so important. Yes, there's a balance to that. Man has a will and also has a measure of faith to believe, but God initiates the process. That's the first thing you get out of the word "called." It didn't start with man. It started with God and it is speaking of the church.

Look in Romans 1:3-6. I want to show you that the word *kletoi* refers to the called ones, the church of Jesus Christ. In verse 3 Paul is speaking about the gospel. He says, ".concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles, for His name's sake." Look at verse 6: "among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ," *kletoi*, that's what he's talking about there. It's the church. It's His church, His body.

Look over in 1 Corinthians 1:22-24, just to make sure you understand that word. "Called," in the plural, refers to those that have put their faith in Jesus Christ. "For indeed Jews ask for signs, and Greeks search for wisdom." They both have their downfall. "But we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." So, "the called" is the church of Jesus Christ.

When you think about yourself being a believer and a called one that puts it into perspective, doesn't it? It didn't start with you. It started with God. If you put a comma after the word "called" it makes the word an adjectival noun. In other words, Paul is saying, "Paul, called, apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God." The first thing he would be saying if you did that would be, "I'm Paul the believer. I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. I put my faith into the Lord Jesus Christ."

Now, wouldn't you want to hear from somebody who, first of all, was a believer? He put his faith into the Lord Jesus Christ. Of course, the Church of Corinth knew this but Paul has documented who he is. "I'm Paul. I'm a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ."

If you knew anything about Paul and his past this would shock you to start with. Paul, a believer in Jesus Christ? A called one? I thought he was a Jewish man who persecuted the Christians. 2 Timothy 1:12 says, "For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day." Paul knew in Whom he had believed. Paul begins, I believe, by saying, "I'm Paul the believer. I put my faith into the Lord Jesus Christ."

Paul has a message that concerns Christ

The second thing that we see in this phrase is that Paul says that he has a message that concerns the Christ that he believes in. If there's no comma after the word "called" then what you have here is a called apostle of Christ Jesus. He would be saying that he's first called to believe and then at the same time, basically, he was called to be an apostle to deliver the message of Jesus Christ.

I want you to understand the word apostle, *apostolos*. It means one sent forth with a message. Generically speaking, every one of us are called as an apostle of Christ Jesus. We all have a message in the One who we put our faith into, and we are to be out as ambassadors for Him telling that message to as many as we know how. We are to live it first and then if we need words, we'll document it. But we're to be witnesses of Him whom we have put our faith into. You see, it has the idea of an ambassador for someone.

I wonder if you have discovered that in your walk with the Lord, that you're an ambassador for Christ. One of my hobbies is going out to eat. My wife and I used to go out to this particular restaurant which is not there anymore. We got to be friends with this waitress. Over a period of time we developed a relationship with her. She never knew who I was or what I did. We don't tell people that. We'd rather let them know who we are, that we love Jesus, and have a message about him.

Well, one day she walked over to our table and she said, "I've got to ask you. Are you a preacher?" I thought, "Oh no! I gave it away." I said, "Yes ma'am." She burst out into tears and said, "I knew it. I knew it." Boy, she began to share with me the most difficult story that I'd heard in a long time. She had cancer. She had some kids and had been divorced. She was just in an awful dilemma. I was able to bring it back to our church. This was years ago. We were able to help her with the cost of her surgery and help her out and hopefully got her back on her feet. But it's interesting when you go out to eat or wherever you go, if you put your faith in Jesus Christ, you're taking the news of Jesus Christ to others. He called you. You didn't call Him. Now that you're a part of His kingdom, you're also an apostle. In a generic sense, you're an ambassador by the way you live, by what you say, by all of that. It all builds together.

We're called ones. We're believers and we have a message. We bear the message of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let me show you what that word “apostle” means. Look over in John 13:6. It means one who is sent out, one who is sent with a message. The word is sometimes found even in the verb form. John 13:16 says, “Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master; neither is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him.” There’s your word right there in a verb form. So you get the idea, one sent from the master, one who has a message.

In Philippians 2:25 it’s used of a person representing someone else like this person was representing the congregation at Philippi. It says, “But I thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger and minister to my need.” So the generic usage of the word “apostle” is one who has a message concerning the one in whom he’s placed his faith.

Paul says, “I am Paul, the believer, and I’m one who has a message concerning my Lord Jesus Christ.” In Galatians 2:7 we see the people he was sent to, of which the Corinthians were a part. It says in Galatians 2:7, “But on the contrary, seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised [the Gentile world], just as Peter had been to the circumcised.” Paul had been given a message. He’d placed his faith into Jesus Christ. He was a called one and he was one who had a message concerning the One in whom he put his faith.

Paul has authority from Jesus Christ

The third thing begins to make the plot thicken. Paul is also saying in this phrase that he has authority that comes from Jesus Christ Himself. This is where we make the distinction. It’s not just a letter from a friend who loves those people. It’s a letter from a person who has been appointed into a position and called an apostle. It’s a specific usage of the word “apostle” that none of us will ever, ever, ever enjoy for ourselves. If you ever hear me say that I have become an apostle in the specific sense that I determine doctrine like Paul did, then pack your bags and leave. Wayne has lost his mind. The group of apostles that he was a part of in the specific sense was a very narrow, small group of people. You must understand that. They are the ones through whom we have the New Testament. They gave us the New Testament books, the apostles.

Look in 1 Corinthians 9:1. They had to be witnesses of the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ. Verse 1 says that he’s an apostle born out of due season which meant that he came later on after Jesus had resurrected. Jesus met him on the Damascus Road and stopped him in his tracks. In verse 1 he says, “Am I not free? Am I not an apostle?” Then he qualifies it. “Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?” These men were commissioned by Christ Himself and they had to be witnesses of the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ. They’re equivalent in many ways to the prophets of the Old Testament who prepared the way for the Messiah.

In Ephesians 2:20 the apostle Paul is writing to the church at Ephesus. Those first three chapters are power-packed about what we have in Christ, who we are in Christ, and where it all came from. In Ephesians 2:20 it says, “having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone.” So we see they’re relegated to a certain time. They’re a specific group. They’re a narrow group. They’re a small group. Not many people fit into that. Jesus commissioned them.

In Ephesians 3:5 it says, “which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as

it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit.” So the apostles were the people God used. He revealed to them and they in turn wrote it down so that we have the revelation from them. So he was writing as a mere man. That’s the thing I want you to keep hearing. This is God’s word and God’s using a man to give us the doctrine we have even today.

He was in the category of what’s mentioned in Hebrews 2. This is important. Look over in Hebrews 2. Hebrews really nails this. You cannot miss it. You may not think this is helpful to you but you wait. There are people calling themselves apostles everywhere. You better be careful. Hebrews 2:3 reads, “how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed [notice the pronouns here] to us [third generation] by those [second generation] who heard.” First by the Lord; confirmed to us by those who heard. Now who do you think “those who heard” represent? That’s the apostles.

Look in verse 4. “God also bearing witness [look at the pronoun here] with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.” Now this is significant to understand. You know, signs and wonders are going around everywhere today. People are saying, “Hey, it’s a pattern. It’s a prerequisite to revival in the twentieth century.” Have you ever studied signs and wonders? It is only used ten times as a phrase in the New Testament. The first time it’s used in Matthew 24 it says that the antichrist will try to deceive the elect by signs and wonders.

Then it’s used with Jesus. It explains it. It says in John 20:31 many other signs did He do, “but these have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ.” They were only to point to the fact who He was. They’re used with Stephen right before he was stoned to death. The next time you find them they’re according to the apostles. The pattern, the focus, and all was with the apostles, not with us today. By those who heard it was confirmed to us with signs and wonders and miracles, etc. You say, “Can God not do that today?” Sure He can but it’s not our focus. That’s not our focus anymore. It’s not a pattern for us to look for.

When you hear that, people make you think that’s God doing something. As a matter of fact, take the word sign and wonder apart and one of the first times you find it, it says, “An evil generation seeketh after a sign.” It doesn’t have a real good pedigree here, folks, when you start looking into it. But it did with the apostles. It affirmed who they were. It affirmed that they had seen the resurrected Christ and had been commissioned by Christ. These signs and wonders were done to give creditability as to who they were.

Look in Acts 2:43. “And everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles.” Flip over to 5:12 of Acts. “And at the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were taking place among the people.” So you understand, then, that they’re in a narrow group. They’re in a small group. There has never been anybody like them. These were the ones through whom we get the word of God.

Look at Acts 1:1 and 2 and you find that Christ chose them Himself and instructed them Himself. “The first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when He was taken up, after He had by the Holy Spirit given orders to the apostles whom He had chosen.” God chose them, God Himself. Jesus chose these men Himself. But listen, their

authority was delegated. You've got to see this, man. It's not in them.

A guy told me one day, "I saw a man stop 150 cars in the middle of the interstate highway by just putting his hand up." I said, "Man, if I ever tried that, they'd run flat over me. How did he do that?" He said, "He had a big badge right here and when he stood out there he stood with the authority of that badge and everybody stopped." It wasn't his authority. It was the authority the badge gave to him.

That's what you've got to realize. These men had authority, but it wasn't in themselves. It was in the One who gave them the badge as apostles. He chose them and He called them and now He's delegated to them the authority to give the epistles of the word of God to the church of that day. It's important that you realize why this is. He said, "All authority is given to me."

Do you realize in Matthew 28:16 they needed it themselves? He was leaving them. He didn't say, "All authority is given to Me, now I'm going to give it all to you." He didn't say that. He kept it with Himself and there's a reason for that. We've got to realize that authority is not in man. It's in Christ Who lives in man, you see. That's the key. Authority must always be centered in Christ. When man assumes it that's when doctrine is perverted. Matthew 28:16 reads, "But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated." Notice who He's with, the eleven disciples. "And when they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some were doubtful. And Jesus came up and spoke to them [the eleven], saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.'" That's when he says, "Go therefore and confirm the gospel, teach the gospel, preach the gospel, baptize, make disciples." But He told them, He said, "All authority rests in Me." It must always be centered in Him alone.

Now why must it always be centered in Christ? I'll tell you why. Because He's the creator of all things. He is the only One who knows the plan. He's the only One Who knows the design. So, therefore, for the Apostle Paul to write out of his own personal opinions, his own personal feelings, would have done the Church of Corinth no good whatsoever. But for him to wear the badge of the authority of an apostle that Christ had delegated to him and speak in his own way to the people the things that God had put on his heart to speak, that's different. God knew the Church of Corinth and God knew what they needed and God knew what it would take to turn them right side up. The authority rests in Christ. It can never rest in man.

John 1:3 says, "All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being." Isn't it wonderful to get into the word and know that God's word is designed specifically for you and me? You can trust it because He's the one who created everything. You want wisdom? You come to the word of God. Paul had a badge, but that badge of authority was delegated by Christ. The authority rested in Him. As long as he was submissive to the One Who gave him the badge, then he could be usable as an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul was completely surrendered to Christ

That's my next point that I want to show to you. First of all, I'm a believer, a called one. Secondly, I have a message concerning the One in Whom I have believed. Thirdly, I'm coming to you in authority that has been delegated by Him. It's not my authority. It's His. But then,

fourthly, I am completely surrendered to what I'm writing to you. It not only relates to you but it relates to me. I'm just the messenger. I'm just the voice. I have to live up under it also. I also live and surrender to the will of God.

He says, "Paul, called as an apostle of Jesus Christ." Some translations put it "Christ Jesus" because most of the original puts Christ Jesus. That makes a difference. Jesus was an earthly historically figure; Christ is the anointed One and the resurrected One. So he's focused there. Some people say that He was only a man. No, no. We know He resurrected. He's the Christ, so Paul puts it first. When you see that in the New Testament it reverses the order. The emphasis is on the resurrected Christ, the anointed One, the Messiah. He says, "by the will of God."

In *Kittel's Dictionary of Theological Words*, you have to wade through all the German to get to it, it says that phrase has absolutely the idea that Paul is saying, "I am totally submissive to the authority God has in my life and the only way I can exercise any authority is to be submissive to the Authority that delegated to me to begin with." Do you know what? That principle holds true in our life even though we're not apostles. Christ lives in us. We're seated with Him but we're not Him. Remember the two absolutes? One is there is a God. The other is you're not Him. When I have authority at all, if it's delegated by Him, then it only comes depending on the measure of my surrender to Him that God can exercise His authority through me or through you or through any of us. Paul says, "I'm an apostle. I'm called an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God." How many times does he say that in his epistles? He says it in verse 1 of almost all of his epistles. He made sure they understand who he is. If they know another Paul somewhere, it is not him. This is a radically changed man. A man who understands if he has any authority over them it's only because God delegated it to him. The authority continues to rest in Christ and only by his measure of surrender to Him is it even exercised in his life.

I think that's why Paul said in Romans 1:1, "I'm a bondservant." That's why he said in Romans 1:9, "I don't serve God out of my soul. I serve Him out of my spirit. I've cut myself free of all the soulless agenda I used to have." Romans 1:14 says, "I'm a debtor. I owe a debt. I live like a surrendered man who owes a debt to One Who one day called me. I didn't find Him."

Do you think he didn't understand the authority of God in his life? The disciples were wooed by Christ by the seashore, most of them. What happened to Paul? He was smacked down right in the middle of the road by the authority of the almighty God. This man lived having been blinded for three days before he could even start his journey. He lived understanding the authority of God in his life. So he's not some egotist as people would say. You can read that in commentaries by the way. He's not an egotist. He's a man broken, surrendered, to a Holy God. He's called, chosen, appointed, and the authority he has is not his. It's the One Who gave it to him and delegated it to him. It only can be exercised according to the measure of his surrender.

I'll tell you what. As we get into 1 Corinthians remember this. All Scripture is profitable. This is Scripture. It's not just a letter from a mere man to the friends he had in Corinth. It's God speaking through an apostle. This book will transform your life. It can renew your mind and transform your life.

When I was in Reno one time there was a fellow there who was a weatherman. He was always telling me what it was going to do the next day. I love these guys. They talk about these clouds. He was always talking about the weather. But he came to me after one of the messages and said, "For the first time I see it." I said, "What?" He said, "This is the whole key to Scripture. This is the whole key. I finally know how to deny myself." I thought, "Are you kidding me? I try to be as clear as I know how to be." He said, "I finally just figured it out." I have to bow before Him in loving surrender. That's the way I deny myself. But if I'm not saying 'Yes' to His word, then I haven't yet said 'Yes' to Him." He said, "For some reason all that came together for me this week and now I realize I've got to have this book and I've got to live surrendered to it in order to know that I'm living surrendered to Him and denying myself day by day."

If you take this book out of your life, folks, you've just taken away the authority of God in your life. You've taken away what God has put as a design in your life. I've got a friend who prays every day for one hour. That friend spends less than one hour a month in the word of God. What does that tell you about his sincere but ignorant effort to pray every day? It's the word that gives us the vocabulary to even know how to pray. You see, the two have got to go together in tandem. Those who are in the word and never pray have the same problem. The two have got to be married together and God gives us a vocabulary even in our prayers. It's an important book, isn't it? 1 Corinthians should be a journey that'll help us all.