

WCCC 2015

Serving God's Purpose in the Corinthians letter

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Brothers and sisters, we all know the theme for the conference is "Serving God's Purpose."

The assignment to me is "Serving God's Purpose in the Corinthian letters." Let's first read some of God's words. Please first turn to I Corinthians, chapter 1. We're going to read from verse 1 to verse 7.

1 Paul, called as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, 2 To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours: 3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 4 I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus, 5 that in everything you were enriched in Him, in all speech and all knowledge, 6 even as the testimony concerning Christ was confirmed in you, 7 so that you are not lacking in any gift, awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ

Verses 22 and 24:

22 For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom; 23 but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, 24 but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

Chapter 2, verses 1 and 2:

1 And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. 2 For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.

Chapter 13, from verse 4 to verse 8.

4 Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, 5 does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, 6 does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 8 Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away.

Verse 13:

13 But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love.

Chapter 15, verse 13.

13 But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised.

Verse 16:

16 For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised

And verse 50 all the way to verse 58.

50 Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. 51 Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. 53 For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory. 55 "O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?" 56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; 57 but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. 58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.

We are very clear that our God is a God of Purpose. He has made this glorious purpose even before the foundation of the world. But not only did our God have this purpose, He also has His works. He has His acts. We know that in His acts, there are two very important things. First, it is revelation, the other is economy. God will fulfill His own purpose.

Revelation and Acts

Therefore we can see this very clearly in the New Testament. Paul talks about revelation in the church at Ephesus. He tells us what the church is. He makes it very clear the meaning of the church. He also talks about it in the letter of Ephesians, how the church is to be built up according to the principle of the Body. We know that that is a very important thing. Because without this revelation, we don't know what the true Church is. We thank the Lord for giving this revelation to His people. Because of having this revelation, therefore in the church history, even so many times when the people of God deviated from the purpose, when the church has been distorted and put into a different form, but because of the revelation of the book of Ephesians, many God's people have been corrected, and can return to the true Church. We know that this is a very important matter. We need to have a revelation. We need to understand the meaning of the Church. We thank the Lord that through the

church at Ephesus, Paul tells us the revelation and the meaning of building up the Church. Besides this revelation, in the letters to the Corinthians, he talks about the economy of the church.

Brothers and sisters, we know that the revelation and the economy, or government in the church are in parallel. It is bad that we do not have a revelation; if we only have the revelation but no government that is unbalanced. Therefore, these two things shall be carried out in parallel. We know that in God's work, in the Chinese translations many words have been used to describe this: one term is 'economy'. It can also be translated as 'arrangements.' Some can also say that it is 'administration.' That can also be translated as 'government.' We know that God's work is to allow His church to fulfill His glorious purpose. In my own understanding, the word 'economy' is a bigger word. The scope is bigger, it is universal. But as the local sense? It might be proper to use the word 'government.'

Therefore in I Corinthians, it talks about the government in the church. These two things shall be carried out in parallel. Ephesians talks about the glory of the church, but it needs to be put in practice. We need to bring this glory back to the local assembly. Therefore, to govern the church on earth is very important.

Our God has revelation, He also has a way of practice. We thank our God. He reveals to us that His eternal purpose is Christ. He also reveals to us that the way of govern in the church is "Christ crucified." Therefore, God's purpose is Christ, the way to fulfill God's purpose is "Christ crucified." Crucified Christ is the way of God's government. Therefore brothers and sisters, concerning the matter of government in the church, we can see this very clearly in the book of I Corinthians, Paul used God's way to govern the Church of God.

I Corinthians talks about the church government. It is God's way to govern in God's church. And in II Corinthians, it talks about the person who is governing in the church of God. This group of people can be used by God to govern in His church. Therefore I have two sessions, and I would like to fellowship with brothers and sisters concerning these two points. First of all, we would like to talk about how to govern in God's church according to His way. The second point is how we can become a people who can be used by God to govern in His Church.

We thank God. In the early church, the apostles taught us how to use God's way to govern in His church. At the same time, they set a good example to explain what kind of people can be used by God to govern His church. I think we are very clear on this: the apostle Paul is the best example in the first century. Therefore Paul can say this: 'imitate me just like I imitate Christ.'

Paul actually was the one who really knew how to use the crucified Christ to govern God's church. So in I Corinthians, Paul tells us that "Christ crucified" is the power of God and also the wisdom of God. He also tells us that through "Christ crucified" we can see what true love is. (I Corinthians chapter 13). He tells us the glory of resurrection through "Christ crucified."

Because this is the most effective way God is using and is the only way to govern His church, therefore, we have to understand this. We are going to briefly explain on these points.

Christ is the wisdom of God

First of all, he tells us that “Christ crucified” is indeed the wisdom and the power. Paul explains in I Corinthians that this wisdom is not the wisdom from the world, it is not the wisdom of the perished. This wisdom is God’s mystery. Only through this wisdom we can understand God and His mystery.

We know that from the early church history, a group of people followed the Lord from man’s perspective. They didn’t have much wisdom. They were not very educated. Peter and John were just fishermen. They were ordinary people. But because the Lord has given them wisdom, so they are able to understand God’s mystery. Of course, for Paul, he was naturally more intelligent. But if he was to use his own wisdom, he could only understand what Judaism was. But through the wisdom given by God could he understand all mystery of God. That is why he became the steward of God’s mystery. God’s mystery will be much more enriched and abundant. And only through this Wisdom we can see God’s abundance.

Dear brothers and sisters, after we have been saved, this Wisdom is in us. This Wisdom will not only allow us to understand God’s glorious purpose and His mysteries, this Wisdom will also enable us to exercise in the government of the church and to have discernment concerning various conditions. We know that in church services, it is very important to have spiritual discernment. We have to know what is of Christ and what is not. It is very hard to distinguish all the differences with human wisdom, but the Lord’s wisdom can. This Wisdom will allow us to explain all things. For those who have experience serving in the church know, when we face many difficulties, it is not very easy to discern the difficulties, and sometimes even more difficult to interpret them. But thank God, God has given us this mysterious wisdom. The wisdom is through Christ who was crucified so that we can deal with all kinds of difficulties.

We know that in the Old Testament times, many Saints already knew how to exercise this wisdom of God. Probably we are very familiar with Daniel. He was in such a difficult and chaotic situation. Daniel had this wisdom from God. Therefore he was able to deal with things on behalf of God to the point he could reach His glory and let the world realize God the Most High reigned among the nations. His sovereignty was done through a group of people who were able to exercise the wisdom of God. Thank the Lord we now have been saved and God has given us this wisdom. But pitifully, a lot of times we don’t know how to exercise this wisdom. Instead, we use human wisdom to govern the house of God, doing thing unwisely. This not only brings a lot of difficulty to ourselves, it also brings a lot of difficulties to the Church. Because we are so used to our own human wisdom, we don’t know how to use God’s wisdom. Therefore in the government in the church we need wisdom. Where does this wisdom come from? It is from Christ who was crucified.

Christ is the power of God

He is not only our wisdom, He is also God's power. Concerning the word 'power,' in the Greek original language, it says that it is the word "dynamite," and there are two aspects to it. One is explosive power, the other is a moving power. We know that we need power in terms of governing in the church of God. This power is very precious. Among human, there is a lot of explosive power. All this explosive power could also explode you to death, but only the explosive power from the Lord can make you alive. He can remove the difficulties from us and not hurt us. It is a wonderful power. Not only will He have this explosive power in us, it is also a power that will push us forward. Therefore in the government in the church, we need to have wisdom and we also need to have power. Where does this wisdom and power come from? Paul said that "Christ crucified" is the wisdom of God and the power of God.

Christ manifested the true love

Not only will He bring us power and wisdom, in chapter 13 of I Corinthians, through this "Christ crucified", true love will also be manifested. Concerning church service today, love is the most confusing verb. We talk about love the most, but when we put it into practice it become most confusing. Why is that? Because of the natural affection we have. A lot of the time we use our natural love to replace God's love. But God's love is a love of Truth and is not just natural affection. As you read I Corinthians chapter 13, you find this love is not romantic at all. This is a love in Truth. This is totally different from our natural affection. Only out of this kind of love can we build the body of Christ. Therefore this love is the principle that governs the entire body of Christ, and we all lack this kind of love in various churches.

Brothers and sisters, we really thank God. From I Corinthians chapter 13, we can see that love and truth are consistent. Paul tells us that concerning church government we need love. But if we use the wrong kind of love, we will cause more difficulties in the church. We know that natural love is partial. The natural love will cause divisions. Therefore in many assemblies, there are many small groups. That is the result of natural love. So, brothers and sisters, only "Christ crucified" can usher us into this true love. Only through this love the church can be truly built up.

Christ revealed the glory of resurrection

In I Corinthians chapter 15, Paul talks about resurrection. We know that this resurrection was ushered in by the Lord. Therefore we can see that "Christ crucified" actually revealed the glory of resurrection. Paul tells us that this is a mystery. Christians don't just die and be in sleep. Christian will be changed. Because of resurrection, we have a glory change. Someone stated that this change is metamorphosis. So brothers and sisters, we are already in this gradual change of resurrection

nowadays. Because the changing process is not yet complete, therefore we do not look that good. Sometimes we don't look like caterpillars, and we don't look like butterflies either. But one day you shall be changed like the Lord.

This is the hope of our resurrection. In the church service, we need to bring this glorious hope to the people of God. Sometimes we see brothers and sisters' condition is not that good but we need to look to the future glory. Even for ourselves, our condition may not be that good, but because of the hope of the future glory, we won't feel frustrated in our service, and we then will be able to accept all brothers and sisters. It is such an important thing. So, brothers and sisters, no matter what kind of conditions we were in when we were saved, no matter what kind of difficulty we may have in our personalities, or we can see how much difficulty the others brothers and sisters may have in their personalities, you should have this view of resurrection - one day he or she will be changed. So brothers and sisters, let's not lose heart as we serve.

The resurrection is also an overcoming power. Because of resurrection, Paul can make this proclamation: 'Death, where is your sting? Death, where is your power?' Because of resurrection, he can proclaim victory over death. We thank the Lord. We know that in our service, especially for the churches on the earth, you can see things of death everywhere - if not one person is dead, then you are dead. But don't forget that we have this resurrection power. We thank the Lord.

Paul tells us in I Corinthians that this is the precious truth ushered in through "Christ crucified." These truths are the most important qualifications in terms of governing in the Church of God. We know that only the cross is connecting to the Will of God. The cross will remove the wrong influence from our natural life. This is the most effective weapon in the hands of God. The Holy Spirit is using it today. And we also need to learn to use it.

The recovery work

Brothers and sisters, we know that our Lord is doing the work of recovery in this earth. The biggest path for recovery is "Christ crucified." That is why God will never forsake His people. We really thank our Lord with all our hearts because when our Father chose us, He already foreknew what kind of person we will be. Because of His crucifixion, we, a group of people who have been defiled by sins and are also full of difficulties and troubles, are sought out. And that is the most effective weapon in His hands. He can change all these conditions. Therefore He will never give up because He knows that eventually He will lead us into His glory. Brothers and sisters, this is a very important insight in our service.

What is the work of recovery? The work of recovery, on one hand, is a restoration; on the other hand, it is to build up. When we see many conditions and situations in the church rise, don't try to remove these difficulties by yourself. A lot of times, these difficulties are so critical that probably we

won't even dare to say it out in our prayers. But in our hearts we really want to say, "Lord, please remove these difficulties."

When I was young, I went to serve the Lord and encountered some difficulties - an elderly brother who always mistrusted me. He would make fun of me and made me feel very difficult in my heart. So a lot of times when I came to the Lord and pray, I really want the Lord to remove him from my life. But I did not dare to say that in my prayers. One day, I ran into this brother in the church building. He said, "Brother, have you not prayed that the Lord will move me away so that it is easier for you to go forward?" I said, "Wow! That is exactly what I was thinking!" But I dare not to say yes. Brothers and sisters, a lot of times we hope for no difficulty, but the Lord knows what He is doing and know how to deal with us. We thank the Lord because He is doing the work of restoration. He will never give up on us. If He cannot restore you today, He will try again tomorrow. If He cannot do it this year, He will do it in later years. But if we are truly doing the work of the Lord, you need to do the work of restoration - not only to restore, but also to build it up.

Brothers and sisters, how does the Lord do the work of recovery? That is through the Cross. Without the Cross, there is no way of resurrection. Without the Cross, the Holy Spirit cannot do the work of building up. So we really thank the Lord, we can see in I Corinthians, Paul set such a good example. We can see how he used God's way to govern in God's church. Those who are familiar with I Corinthians know the Corinthian church is the church that had fallen into humanity. There were many difficulties in that church. Among the churches Paul served, the Corinthian church was the most difficult one. It is not to say that other churches did not have any difficulty, but the Corinthian church was in the most difficult situations. From I Corinthians, we can roughly see the condition of the church at that time. We can briefly mention this. This church was highly mingled. We know that many churches on Earth are kind of mingled, but this one was highly mingled. We can see that in that church they were very high in knowledge but they were very low in morals. We can see that church was highly influenced by their circumstances.

They have brought in this defiled air into the Church. For this Church, they had the knowledge, but they could not carry it out. They had gifts. God has given them various kinds of gifts. But there was no order in the Church. They were in one assembly, and yet there were many divisions. They had internal divisions.

Brothers and sisters, we can see the difficulties in the Corinthian church. It is such a dreadful difficulty. But a Church like this, we can see God's grace is still very abundant because they have received much blessings from God. We can see they were serviced by the best workers at that time. Paul stayed there for over a year and a half. Apollos also served there. Peter probably served there also, that some people in the Church even said, "We are of Peter." And also Aquila and Priscilla. And also Timothy and Titus. We can see the Church has received service of the best workers at that time. We really admire that. (We don't need that many nowadays, if we have one Paul is enough).

I remember when I first came to serve, preaching was a very big difficult task to me. Every time I thought about preaching I could not sleep, I could not eat. I felt pressured and stressed all day long. One day, I went to see an elderly sister. She told me (of course intentionally). She said, “Brother Sun, I will tell you this. In China, I have heard the famous preachers preach. I have heard Brother Nee. I have heard John Song.” She continued to say this and that. On one hand, I really had this admiration, but on the other hand, when she was saying that, it caused more pressure on me. After I returned to my home, I felt that she has heard so many famous preachers, now what kind of message could I preach? I felt even more pressure in my preaching then. I felt like all these messages have been preached by others, so what else is left for me to preach? So here, in Corinth, they have so many good workers working there, they were really blessed they should be very thankful. Not only that, in I Corinthians 1:6, they actually knew what the testimony of God was. Paul said “the testimony concerning Christ was confirmed in you.” Probably just like us, we have heard many messages concerning the testimony about Christ and also God’s eternal purpose. And Paul also said “you are rich and complete in knowledge and in gifts. Yet, what you have expressed is just like babes, full of flesh.” So brothers and sisters, if the Lord sent you to that church, are you willing to go? Probably we would like to flee away. You know, for preachers in recent years, the best thing they can do is to flee away. They just try to hide away. But we really thank the Lord. The Lord used Paul to serve in such a church.

We know that Paul is an apostle with a mission. God gave him a vision to reveal His eternal purpose to him. God has entrusted this purpose to Paul. In the first century, Paul embraced God’s purpose as his own purpose. To Paul, it was a really heavy entrustment. So when he came to the church at Corinth, not only did he need to solve all kinds of problems in the Church. He needed to correct all the conditions that were not right, that was not enough. God wanted him to bring His people into His purpose. It was a difficult task.

So now, today in our service, if only we can correct some of our wrong conditions, we will be very happy, but God’s heart was not satisfied. Right in the beginning, Paul said that the people of God were called by God. There is a purpose to this calling. So for all of us who have been saved by grace should remember this. We have been saved according to God’s glorious purpose. It is not just as simple as you go to heaven because God has this glorious purpose on us. Also there is a purpose to church service. Therefore, Paul said he was called as apostle.

The Way to serve the Church

We can see at the church of Corinth, on one hand, he had to solve all kinds of difficult problems; on the other hand, he needed to usher in the purpose of God. We can see it is such a difficult task. So how did Paul serve in that church? What method did he use? Thank the Lord. What Paul used was “Christ crucified.” Paul said “among you, I know nothing except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified” and this is the most effective way. Only through this all the problems in Corinth could be resolved.

So brothers and sisters, Paul exercised “Christ crucified” in the Church at Corinth. Today, we feel very sad for not too many people of God know the way of the Cross. We have heard the message for so many years, we feel like this is really an old rugged cross, you always bring it up and you bring

this up again? Brothers and sisters, I am not talking about how much we know and how much we can talk about it. The question is do we know how to use “Christ crucified” to govern in God’s Church? When we look at the condition of various assemblies and also our service, do we really know the Cross? Do we really know the Cross? Do we really use the Cross? Brothers and sisters, we are probably very clear in our hearts that we are very much ashamed we don’t. But Paul knew how to use “Christ crucified”.

So as we read I Corinthians, we see that there are many difficulties in the Church. Those difficulties were actually the local issues, and Paul provided answers to their questions one by one. Sometimes as we read this letter we feel like those difficulties would only happen in Paul’s time, it cannot be applied to our situation. But we need to know one thing: God only gives us principles, God would never give us some concrete methods. Why is that? Brothers and sisters, we know that spiritual matters are living. God would never use a dead method to govern in His Church. God will only give us principles. Today we need to obey the Spirit of God under His leading to exercise these principles. Then, all the problems can be solved. We thank the Lord. So Paul used the principles at that time. Those principles can be applied to all generations. Time may change. Our circumstances may change. Our mindset may change. Our lifestyle may change. And yet this principle will never change. That can be applied in all other generations. Therefore, we don’t need to find a set of methods from the Bible. Therefore Paul only record these principles. We thank God. Today, this principle has not changed.

We are very clear on this. In the First Century, Apostle Paul explained the meaning of the Cross and he also practiced the Cross. He explained the detail and the meaning of the Cross to us. He knew the doctrine of the Cross very well, all 13 letters he wrote, and none of them are lack of mentioning about the Cross. Because that is the central theme of Paul’s ministry.

I have been crucified with Christ

For these few days, when our brothers talk about Paul’s letters also they also talk about the Cross. Please don’t be bored, for you’re going to hear the Cross more in the future days. May the Lord give us mercy so that we can be like Paul, to understand the meaning of the Cross and to use the Cross. We know that Paul was called to serve the Lord. After 15 years, he wrote the first letter. That is Galatians. At that time, he already knew the way of “crucified with Christ”. We thank the Lord our brother already had explained it well last night.

Paul, in Galatians said that he has been crucified with Christ. We all are familiar with that phrase. To many Christians, we are very appreciative “Christ crucified” for us, bleeding for us. We thank Him for paying such a great price. But Paul said that when he saw “Christ crucified,” he saw himself was crucified too. He said “I have also been crucified with Him.” It’s such a version. Brothers and sisters, we thank the Lord. At that time, Paul already came to understand the meaning of the Cross. When Paul wrote I and II Corinthians, he further used the meaning of the Cross. Not only did he apply that principle to the church, and also to him personally. We will share on it.

The Cross mentioned in the book of Roman

One thing that is more interesting: half a year later after he wrote I Corinthians, he wrote the book of Romans. At that time, the meaning of the cross became a complete picture in the heart. By the way, do we know where the book of Romans was written? The book was written in Corinth. So interesting. Because he witnessed the fallen condition of the Corinthians, and the Holy Spirit further revealed the meaning of the Cross to him. Sometimes the Lord will lead us into certain condition so that we could have further experience of some truth. In this way, we can say that without the Corinthian church, Paul could not write Romans.

When Paul came to Corinth, he did not just shed his tears, indeed the Corinthian church was the one cause why Paul shed the most tear. For the Corinthians he was shedding tears. But through all the corruptions and all these difficulties, he saw the true meaning of the Cross. So when we come to Romans, we can see the complete meaning of the Cross. I don't think we have time to explain Romans today. I'll just briefly mention it. From Romans chapter 1, Paul tells us the Cross has dealt with the problem of sin, dealt with the issues of death, and also the matter concerning the law, and also the flesh. As we come to chapter 8, Paul tells us that the Cross has become the most effective weapon for the Holy Spirit. Today, how does the Holy Spirit do His work in us? That has to be done through the Cross of Christ. So as we come to chapter 12, he said that as Christians, we need to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice. What is a living sacrifice? That means the meaning of the cross is to be lived in our daily life. In every matter of our life we should exercise the Cross. In this way, the Body of Christ can be built up. So brothers and sisters, it is a very precious thing for a person who can understand the meaning of the Cross. Our Lord was crucified on the Cross. Paul saw the crucified Christ. He understood the meaning of the Cross. He knew the Cross is a great mystery. And the Cross is the complete salvation. Only "Christ crucified" is the answer to all the problems and questions, personally and corporately. Concerning the matter of government in the Church, if we do not understand the meaning of "Christ crucified", it will be very difficult to govern in the Church well.

The difficulties in Corinthian church

There are so many difficulties in the Corinthian church. And the root cause for the problems is very simple. It is the wisdom and the spirit of this world. If we allow the spirit and the wisdom of the world to be used to govern the Church, there will be confusion just like the Corinthian church had. Let me quickly go through the issues that the Corinthian church had.

I have already mentioned in order to solve all these spiritual problems, one principle we have to hold on to, if we can hold onto this principle, all the issues and problems recorded in the book can be resolved. So the most important thing is to hold onto the principle. We can see that Paul knew how to use this truth. Therefore he can resolve all the issues that came to him. First of all, there were divisions. Because they idolized some workers, therefore there were divisions. Some said "I am of Paul," "I am of Peter," "I am of Apollos," and "I am of Christ." That caused internal divisions. Thank the Lord. Living under the principle of the Cross, Paul didn't have himself. Paul said, I am no body but servant of the Lord. He said that "Apollos is nothing." But of course it is very problematic if he only said this, so he continued to say that "Paul is nothing." Often times we hear somebody say in the church, "that

person is nothing.” That is wrong. We should say to ourselves, “I am nothing.”

Brothers and sisters, until today, there are similar difficulties in the church. Paul said that you are just like the world. This is the spirit of the world, and it shall be removed under the Cross. There are also some personal issues, some moral issues, there is fornication, and they were boasting about it, they also have lawsuits. So brothers and sisters, how did Paul deal with these issues? He used Christ as his wisdom. From chapter 6, he talked about some matters in our daily living like marriage like liberty. Here, these few phrases are very precious. Let’s turn to I Corinthians chapter 6 verse 12. “All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything.” Chapter 10, similar words. Verses 23-24. “All things are lawful, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful, but not all things edify. Let no one seek his own good, but that of his neighbor.” These are precious words by Paul through the wisdom of Christ. It is against the philosophical thoughts at that time.

We know that there is a Greek philosopher, there is one Epicurus. They said that “all things are lawful” are their words, their thoughts. He said that you shall not restrain yourself, you do not have to discipline yourself. You need to express yourself as much as you can and you need to place emphasis on your experience and place emphasis on your own expression. Therefore for a person, all things are lawful, I can do whatever I want. We know that for such a liberal thought, that has been carried all the way down here. This is very popular thinking even in America. I have freedom, I have the liberty, and I can do whatever I want. I can cloth myself in the way I like and I don’t care about others. Brothers and sisters, this kind of thinking influenced many people at that time, also was a great influence on Christians at that time. Paul, through the wisdom of Christ, said that all things are lawful. Yes, indeed for Christians, we have liberty. But not all things are profitable, and not all things edify. He said that for Christians, we need to seek the good of others. This is wisdom from “Christ crucified.”

He answered the questions concerning marriage. He answered the questions concerning how to exercise liberty. He also mentioned a very trivial matter concerning eating meat. Eating meat was a big problem in the Corinthian church. Some people said that Christians cannot eat the meat from the temple. Some said that “all things are from God, why can we not eat it?” Some people even ate the meat in the temple. Paul said that you need to be mindful of others. Paul said that “I will not eat meat.” It’s not that “I don’t like meat” but I don’t do it because of others. I don’t want to cause them to stumble. I don’t want to stumble others especially those who are weak in conscience.

Yes, Christians have great liberty, we can do all things. But then not all things are profitable. Not all things edify. So brothers and sisters, we can see that Paul used “Christ crucified” and the wisdom to deal with all the matters, all the issues in the assembly. The Holy Spirit has given all kinds of gifts to the Corinthians, but there is so much confusion in the church at Corinth. They had head covering problem, breaking bread problem and problem of exercising spiritual gifts in the church. And Paul used “Christ crucified” to solve all these problems. People even had doubts concerning resurrection. With great revelation, Paul explained the matter concerning resurrection. And he said that the last enemy of God’s work is death. At the end, the Lord is going to offer up the kingdom to the

Father. So brothers and sisters, we can see that Paul knew the meaning of the Cross. He knew what “Christ and Him crucified” was. He not only knew the doctrine, he actually used that meaning in the Church.

As we are governing in the Church today, what kind of methods are we using? Are we using God’s method? Or are we using human’s methods? In such a difficult church condition, Paul was able to use God’s method according to God’s will to serve God and His Church in such a condition.

Brothers and sisters, when we say we are serving God’s purpose, not only do we need the light of revelation, we also need to know the way of government. The churches on earth today, especially as we come to the end times, the difficulties become bigger and bigger. But please don’t forget that “Christ crucified” is the answer to all the questions. May the Lord use this word to once again encourage us. No matter what kind of difficulties you are facing in your church, let us not lose heart. May we gain encouragement and also exhortation from Paul. We are holding fast to using God’s way. We would never use man’s ways. May the Lord use us to usher His Will in our local assembly. May the Lord be glorified today on earth.

Let’s bow our head and have another word of prayer:

Lord, we thank You with all our hearts because You’ve saved us according to Your glorious purpose and also built us up. We know that Your work is glorious. Pray that You will allow us to see the way of Your work, so that we will know how to govern the local churches today, so that Your glory can also be manifested on earth, so that Your Will can be carried out among us. We thank you for these years, You have revealed this light of Your glorious purpose to us, that has attracted our hearts, so that we may rise up and follow You. We pray that You will continue to keep all of the churches till the end times, as we are surrounded by the enemy and in our weak conditions of our flesh, You will build your own house up. Lord, we look up to Your mercy. How You used Paul, may You use us today. We want to give You our worship. We pray in Jesus’ precious name, Amen.