
Skill in Understanding: I Corinthians

As people ignore the Bible and religion today, they tell you either "it is so confusing as there are so many religions and denominations and competing churches", or they tell you, "it is hard to understand the Bible since there are so many interpretations and interpreters." They are right! And it will only get harder as we get further into the Falling Away that must come before Jesus, for the number of Bible teachers with itching ears will grow like a fortress around church members to both give them what they want and in order to protect them from sound doctrine; and simultaneously with that will come among churches and denominations an intolerance toward sound doctrine **{if you doubt this, please read II Timothy 4:3,4}**. If you think it is bad now, wait until we are further into the Falling Away, about the time that some Muslim leader in the Middle East becomes obvious as the son of perdition of II Thessalonians, also the third of the kings from the north of Daniel. If you think the last words of II Timothy 4:4 sound bad when most of the kingdom and most of the local churches turn completely away from truth and turn into fables, it is more awesome to consider first the teaching of Jesus that "sin will abound as the love of many waxes cold and second that Daniel forecasted long ago that during that period of the Falling besides Satan being loosed to ride on that vast wave of lawlessness and sin, that as the Holy Spirit is withdrawn **{Paul in II Thessalonians}** the "power of the Holy people will be completely shattered" (Daniel 12:7) Anyway for the few who will listen, and surely we must still tell the whole counsel of God like Jeremiah though no one listened, the way of skill in understanding is the prime subject of

the book of I Corinthians. That skill in understanding the Bible is called spiritual wisdom as contrasted to the wisdom of the world, what we would call the wisdom of the academics--the PhD's, ThDs, colleges, and seminaries; and while I am a strong believer in real scholarship like Emerson advocated in his essay "The American Scholar", true scholarship is hardly promoted or achieved with the passing out of pieces of paper; and much less is such a highest piece of paper the sign of spiritual wisdom on the Bible as you can readily see by checking the list of such who have signed up for the Jesus Seminar.

8-1: A good place to start on skill in understanding from I Corinthians.

Go ahead and read and then practice Bernard Ramm's book on hermeneutics, THE SCIENCE OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION; but before and after get and keep your head screwed on spiritually correct and in the right perspective with a Spirit led reading of I Corinthians 1:18-2:16.

1. Let the Word of God, written by the Spirit of God {the Holy Spirit} through Prophets and Apostles (read II Peter 1:21), and properly understood only through the personal assistance of this same Spirit overcome the dominant thought patterns of this world in which we live, the thought patterns of those who: (1) naturally {we must later distinguish between the natural and the spiritual man to divide the world into two major groups} consider the message of the cross foolishness (I Cor 1:18), and (2) are perishing as contrasted to those "who are being saved"¹ (1:18).

2. Surely you know and respect some wise in this world, either rich or with diplomas of the wisdom of this world; however did you realize that way back in the early days of the Spirit's development of the Bible through Prophets, in fact back at Isaiah in Isaiah 29:14--yes, you see it quoted in I Corinthians 1:19--God, the great ruler and Creator of this Universe announced WARFARE AND DESTRUCTION on "the wisdom of the wise"

"I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent." (I Cor 1:19 and Isaiah 29:14)

1. Actually we must deal with three major groups: besides (1) the world, (2) those who already think they are saved completely and perfect, and (3) and the most important group among which the Bible would want us to be, those who recognize that they "are being saved". You see right up front that no punches are pulled in these Bible studies on the Life and Letters of Paul, just as the Apostle would have had it!

NOTE: The "prudent" would be those of status and position in this world because they have money and possessions, while the wise would be teachers or any stepped in the ways and philosophies of this world.

3. It is still true today even in America, in spite of cultural propaganda, traditions and customs, that "not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called". (I Cor 1:26)

NOTE: While it seems almost foreign and un-American¹ to face these blunt words from the Word of God, without such a perspective you are hampered from understanding, knowledge, and wisdom as presented in this book of I Corinthians.

8-2: Great passages on the gifts of the Spirit.

Since "understanding" like prophesy {preaching}, or miracles, or healing, or even the speaking in tongues {languages, not exactly the same as unknown language which is not the language of a country or peoples}, is a gift from God the Father through the Holy Spirit, we should begin the in-depth Bible study of Understanding with the most famous passages on the gifts of the Spirit: (1) Romans 12:3-8; (2) I Corinthians chapter 12: and (3) I Corinthians chapter 14.

1. Romans 12:3-8.

People, even in churches, hardly change from the generations of first century Christianity until now, since basic human nature as it is under the maturing process after the new birth remains the same. There is absolutely nothing new under the sun about the new birth, spiritual development in maturity toward the likeness of Christ, and the still inherent nature of the sinful human nature. However, it does seem because of all the competitive emphasis in American society as encouraged and promoted in education, sports, and many other activities; there correspondingly has been a more competitive outbreak in church member and churches' competition for the best spiritual gifts of the spirit. In the nature of preventive {always better than corrective} prophesy, Paul attempts in Romans 12:3-8 to laid groundwork with not "thinking of yourself more highly than you ought to" (12:3) in order to discuss first (1) how to fit into the total pres-

1. For a more detailed treatment from the total Bible on the differences and distinctions between the American Democratic faith and the Christian Faith, please see the biblecombibleman.com webpage of biblecombibleman.com/AmericanDemocraticFaith.html. It is a distinction often blurred and overlook for self serving purposes by politicians and military leaders.

ently existing body of Christ {the actual assembly of the firstborn that are still and now on earth}, and (2) all members of the same body and as such also members of one another.

Having said these things, Paul is read to start spreading out part of this whole new after the life and death of Christ concept of the remaining on earth body of Christ with how it functions around the gifts of the Spirit:

(1) prophesy (preaching and other public utterances in any assembly of Christ} in proportion to the gift of faith in that speaker;

(2) ministry, let us use this gift of grace in the likewise grace of our ministering {essentially with a motive of profit and personal gain of any kind};

(3) he who exhorts, use this gift in exhortation with not other reasons or motivations;

(4) he who gives, with graceful and abundant reality in like measure as this gift of the ability to give was initially given to him by the Spirit of God;

(5) church leaders with diligence attempting to emulate the Spirit's like behavior; and

(6) the shower of mercy doing it cheerfully.

NOTE: Right up front if it is intended by the Bible that we are to correlate the 3 separate lists on gifts of the preventive passage above with the 2 to follow in I Corinthians, we are in for a challenge; for how do we correlate for example "showers of mercy" and "givers" with the gifts: (1) of word of wisdom, word of knowledge, faith from the Spirit, gifts of healing and working of miracles, prophesy, discerning of spirits, types of languages, translation of languages (the list in I Corinthians 12:8-10); and (2) first apostles¹, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, administrations, and varieties of tongues (the list of I Cor 12:28).

Some things are immediately obvious to us:

(1). church leaders can be correlated with administrations.

1. Contrary to the fist two listings of gifts, it is obvious in the 12:28 list that the pecking order is established with apostles at the top of the list, followed by pastors that teach and/or preach, then miracles and healing (please not as a preliminary warning of what remains to be discussed that miracles are separate from healing, although in the misguides present day thinking of Christians and other church members, the two are the same--just one more example of the present falling away of the church from sound doctrine), then helps, administrations, and work with languages.

(2). showers of mercy correlated with “helps” as we recall the charitable work of the first church in Jerusalem as members sold all that they had and put it in a common pot for giving to the poorer members and other needy.

(3). givers likewise can be correlated with helps.

2. I Corinthians 12.

If you have been reading your Bible along with this study, you are beginning to recognize the church related issue of competitive human nature that Paul dealt with in the first churches, the same local church and denominational problem of human nature today. Take the matter of human pride, arrogance, and a lack of Christian perspective on just one gift, well really two gifts since the same problem generally comes in the same duo, speaking in unknown tongues and healing and miracles. Jimmy Swaggart, as you have noticed, although we respect many things about his spiritual services {something largely lacking in other churches and on TV}, he definitely leaves the impression in the mind of the listeners that there are no Christians if they do not speak in unknown tongues.

There is a young relative new convert in Burleson Texas--who is just about the best Ford mechanic anywhere--who shows a marvelous conversion from a wild youth to an exuberant Christians witness; and who claims, and I and others believe, that he has the gift of healing {later we will understand it as miracles since it is the doctors that have more normally the gift of healing when God blesses them} which enabled him, as he explains to lay hands on the shoulder of a customer in the garage and he was healed immediately. Rather than doubt or cast any questions on the fact that God does give the gift of miracles to some Christians, and not all, and that this young convert does have this gift of healing; we still must in the nature of these 3 important passes on gifts in the NT, question an arrogance that comes with them. First of all, if you check the pecking order of 12:28, miracles is only fourth and healing is fifth, putting any healer in his proper 4th or 5th place to apostles, prophets, and teachers. Instead, possessing this gift has gone to his head, just like church members in NT days, where they think that they are the only Christians. In other words, any customer that comes into the garage is considered as either no Christian at all or considered as inferior to the healer. You see, this ought not to be! He should show some humility before a teacher or pastor of a church.¹

1. A very similar thing happened to Southern Baptist church with the advent of Freddie Gage on the scene as a recently converted drug addict turned youth evangelist. His gift, the gift of evangelism, was used by Gage and backers such as the SBC as a dominant and pervasive gift. In other words in his arrogance of a new covert without much Bible at all, he still assumed the position and was promoted as a “leader”, above pastors, and with a superior gift to many other more mature Christians. We are paying for this now in communities like Houston.

1. The very first verse of I Corinthians 12 leaves no doubt of the subject matters: it begs a needed lack of ignorance on "spiritual gifts" (12:1)
2. There are diversities of gifts but the source if the same Holy Spirit of God sent by God the Father to the earth after the ascension of Christ to continue the work of Christ. (12:4)

NOTE: This is like a subtitle, diversity of gifts, to the introduced in verse subject of spiritual gifts. Don't you see the positive of emphasis. All Christians are not the same as the diversity of the many gifts must be distinguished in each. Here is another place we have trouble in separating our Christian faith, based on the Bible, from our American democratic faith. In America, all have equal rights under the law; but in Christians you must consider with what gifts the Spirit of God has favored them.

3. Next, in 12:4-6, he warns us of what is to come with the use of 3 distinct phrases: (1) "diversities of gifts" but the same SPIRIT; (2) "differences of ministries" but the same LORD JESUS CHRIST; and (3) "diversities of activities" but the same God the Father that is above all and in all.

NOTE: Did you see two very interesting matters: (1) that with the one spirit of 12:4, and with the one Lord Jesus Christ of 12:5 and with the one God the Father of 12:6, we are back to the seven major Ones of sound doctrine of Ephesians along with the sparing of effort to advance in Christian testimony on all 7 fronts simultaneously. In fact, for unity the absolute necessity! (2) Even as you will notice that the hierarchy of heaven--Holy Spirit, Jesus, and God the Father is in ascending order from the bottom to the top, so the implementations on earth in churches is in descending order to the finest points of applications, in other words from "gifts" to "ministries" to "activities". Or you might want to consider the fine point of difference between gifts, ministries, and activities as flowing up also, this time from what the gift is in the individual Christian up to the ministry that member performs in a Christian body up to the assembled activities in the specific church.

WITH THIS OBVIOUS CONTINUATION OF 3 OF THE 7 ONE'S--ONE LORD, ONE SPIRIT, AND ONE GOD THE FATHER--WE NATURALLY COME BACK THE ORIGINAL STUDIES ON "SPARE NO EFFORT AT SYMMETRICAL BALANCE ON ALL 7 FRONTS--

"I therefore the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called {today, like with the young mechanic with the gift of healing at Burleson and in SBC history with Freddie Gage with the gift of evangelism that is always that ugly head of human nature that

forgets the true complete nature of the CHRISTIAN CALLING because of a warped sense of ego on one gift only, forgetting that they are only 1 of the 7¹ gifts and also forgetting the priority sequence of the gifts:

"And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues." (I Corinthians 12:28)

"And He Himself {Christ, the Ascended Christ} gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers." (Ephesians 4:11)

...with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." (Ephesians 4:1-6)

NOW WHEN YOU CAN COMBINE ALL THIS WORD OF GOD WITH THE BOTTOM LINE BLUNTNESS OF I CORINTHIANS 14:36--THAT WE MUST DISCUSS MORE THOROUGHLY LATER AS THE GROUND ZERO OF THE BAD ATTITUDE OF CHRISTIANS WHEN THEY GO ASTRAY ON ONLY 1 OF THE 7, GIFTS AND ONE'S, STATING IN OTHER WORDS "DID THE WORD OF GOD COME TO YOU ONLY OR DID IT COME OUT OF YOU ARE YOU GROUP.

Note: Don't you see in the ego of Swaggart, Darrell, and formerly Freddie Gage that bad attitude that the word of God either came out of them or came to them only. And today in the one church body, we can find many duplications of this same bad attitude, as Christians leaders and others in the body run amuck with only 1 of the 7 gifts and ONEs.

You know it is not really this complicated, and one simple verse could take care of all those destructive problems on the peace and unity of the one church body, that is "not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to"; and we could add "about your only little gift".

4. So "gifts", "ministries", and "activities' will outline what is to follow for us; however since we recognize quickly that only the first two are in chapter 12², you must study anew again in a refreshed perspective the 13th, or love chapter

1. You will find 8 below, but in this complete message/teaching you find that some can be combined, and you find evangelism is not listed specifically but like with pastors and teachers evangelism would be in the all inclusive and pregnant word PROPHECY.

of I Corinthians as the real activities of the church. Could we summarize it as manifestations of the love of the great God of this Universe, the Father of all.

8-3. Our Bible Outline of chapter 2 and 3 on I Corinthians.

Some of you have participated in the "Top 12 Topics of the Bible" online and free survey of the Bible, also called "The OT according to the NT" since it outlines and summarizes the whole Bible according to OT quotes in the NT that are interpreted in the NT.¹ In short, as you sequence simultaneously through both these top topics while you are also running through the Bible from Genesis to Malachi, and with explanations in Matthew through Revelation with the quotes, you will note or you have noted that Bible words like "wise", "wisdom" and "understanding" are oft repeated in the Bible. These as background for our study and in order to justify the gist of I Corinthians as "spiritual wisdom or Skill In Understanding,"² we briefly list them below.

1. While Paul in I Cor 15:45 is emphasizing the difference between the first Adam and Christ the second Adam, also the difference between the natural and the spiritual body, the first man from earth and the second from heaven, he also contrasts the living soul and the living spirit. {While it is not immediately clear from this topical statement in the Bible outline that "Wisdom on the Gospel" is in progress here, it will be clear as we look at the context of I Corinthians itself in this chapter.}

{Same on this one except it is part of Paul's development of "Wisdom on Marriage". This is also something not likely to be heeded today in churches or outside churches, as we have not yet learned to admit and confess guilt on God's pattern for marriage without become a rebel against the very will of God on marriage. In other words, it is not the end of the world if you have divorced; but you must admit to God and confess to God that you have committed this sin against His teachings, and then simply go on from there with a fresh slate as believers must do for all the sins in

2. This conclusion is demanded by the fact that the ministries of apostles, preachers, and teachers, etc are in the last verses of chapter 12, that we must go to a next chapter, the famous chapter on love for the "activities". Grand huh, that all the talents, gifts, ministries in a church must be governed through the activities of love.

1. This is also the ASPI interpretation of the Bible, for AUTHORIZED SEMI-PUBLIC INTERPRETATION, the only interpretation authorized by God, Christ, the Apostles and Prophets.

2. Many themes can be found in I Corinthians as in any other book of the Bible. "Skill in Understanding" as a lead subject in the study of I Corinthians best makes it fit into a study in totality of the 66 books of the Bible. It also assists us at this juncture in a proper study of the Life and Letters of Paul.

their lives! Denying that the clear Bible teachings are so will not get it, as Jesus reinforced the original concept God had for marriage in Genesis and Paul does it again here in I Corinthians: what you really do is become part of the world wide rebellion against the will of God! You might even consider that you are a "tare", placed in a church by Satan. Definitely part of the Falling Away as you rebel against the sound doctrine (alias sound behavior) of Bible marriage, as you desire and seek a pastor who will overlook that rebellion; and you also will find in that rebellion the correlation with a heart waxing cold toward Jesus, the Bible, and God as this sin of rebellion grows with you!}

2. So serious is this matter of joining with God that the Bible considers when a man has a relationship with a harlot that he becomes one body with her (I Cor 6:16).

3. Deuteronomy 32:12 and I Corinthians 10:20: (1) The LORD God led Israel and there was not to be any strange gods among them; and (2) The Gentiles sacrifice to demons not to God, and the Christian is to have no part in this worship of demons. {This is actually part of the point of Paul on "Wisdom about the Falling Away" and on sexual immorality, that is with the proper exercise of spiritual wisdom on conscience; and the actual quote of that context is from Exodus 32:6 in I Corinthians 10:5-8.

"But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, 'The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.'" Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in on day twenty-three thousand fell...." (I Corinthians 10:5-8 and Exodus 32:6)

{Actually the incident of sexual immorality was a Acacia Grove where "the people began to commit harlotry with the women of Moab" recorded in Numbers 25, and Numbers tells us that "24,000 died" (25:9); but you know how sometimes the numbering is different depending on whether it is only men, or men and women, or men, women and children; but what is the difference is 1,000 out of 24,000. The bottom line is that God killed them through a plague immediately after one of the men took a Midianite woman to his tent in the presence of the whole assembly.}

3. Job 5:13 and I Corinthians 3:19: God catches the wise in their own craftiness. {And now we have come to the point in the topical outline, to the start of the wisdom literature with Job, Psalms, and etc. where we are getting into the "wise" of this world, their wisdom, and which set a background or starting point for Paul to develop spiritual wisdom and understanding. Remember that during the second missionary journey Paul had an extensive ministry among the Greeks, a dominant aspect of their culture being a seeking after wisdom, at Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, and Corinth; and at Athens, just before Corinth he preached "in the midst of the Areopagus" (Acts 17:23) noting how "very religious" they were, and even showed some of their cultural wisdom by quoting from one of their poets, "For we are also His offspring" (Acts 17:28).}

4. I Corinthians 15:27. Granted that there are many stories, many chapters, verses, and books in the Bible; but the total subject matter for the practical purposes of Christian faith can be summarized as faith in God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Bible, and Salvation. Get that and you have enough of the Bible for life. The following important passage helps to establish the present and eternal relationship between God the Father and Christ the Son.

"The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things re put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all." (I Corinthians 15:26-28 KJV)

(1). There are still some enemies such as death that has not be subjected to Christ as the Son of Man, or Christ as the Lord of heaven and earth.

(2). God the Father has ordained that all in heaven and earth be under the feet of Christ, and heaven is already there. May Gods will be done on earth as it is in heaven as more people still on earth are subjected to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

(3). God the Father did not put Himself in subjection to the Lord Jesus Christ.

(4). After the Second Coming of Christ when everything on earth also comes under the actual Lordship of Jesus then Jesus will Himself be subjected to the LORDSHIP of the Father.

(5). God the Father may ultimately be all in all .

{While you do not find wise, wisdom, or understanding here, you do find death and eschatology; and it is part of the passage on "Wisdom about the Gospel", the end of the Gospel including glorification, or the resurrection body; and you just can find as little on the Bible on the latest of last things than this important passage where Christ delivers the subdued kingdom to God the Father in order that the Father may be all in all.} This is also an important doctrine that we sometimes overlook! And in keeping also with the message of I Corinthians 15:26-28 above, we think of the complete dominion by man over earth by overcoming death and sin of Hebrews, likewise the benefits of the Christian calling of Romans 8 previously discussed. By the way, the passage is also another good example of the kingdom without the use of the word kingdom.

5. Who Then Will See God and Be Saved? Those who are sensitive to the Conscience of others as well as his own Christian Conscience, seeking their good as well as his own good: Psalm 24:1 and I Corinthians 10:26. {How important it is today to consider this in the light of the American Conscience, which has become more guided by accusing others and excusing self like the non-Christian Gentiles conscience, and as much governed by the "toleration" of the American Democratic Faith {for more see the webpage on AmericanDemocraticFaith} as by any spiritual wisdom, so that we will outline this portion of I Corinthians, as also dictated and demanded by the context, as "Wisdom on Conscience".}

{Note: as we continued to scan coming to VI on the "Wisdom of God" where in the topical and historical sequenced outline get to what is normally considered as the wisdom literature of the Bible such as Proverbs, Ecclesiastes--among the writings of the King of Israel most noted throughout the world of that day as a man of wisdom, we do not at first find any quotes from I Corinthians, none at all from Proverbs which is also a shock {are we to think that Proverbs simply covers good wisdom of the world rather than spiritual wisdom, although we do find that James revels in quoting from Proverbs as well as Peter and John, and perhaps as you noticed on "Wisdom from God" in Proverbs, Paul does quote from Proverbs in I Timothy. Is this a clue for us as to some similarity between I Timothy and I Corinthians?}.

NOTE: Don't miss reading the June Newsletter which continues in I Corinthians and the "Skill of Understanding Bible" which begins with those Bible readers who are given the grace of Bible understanding. Yes, it is a grace and a gift of the grace of God to properly understand the Bible according to

the ASPI. {For a thorough biblical discussion of exactly what the ASPI, go to Authorized Semi-Public Interpretation, <https://sites.google.com/site/understandbible/bibleinterpretation%3Atheaspi> , the sister website of biblecombibleman.com }