

Practical Christianity!

I. Slide#1 Intro:

A. Here we now have the most *practical things*, in the most *practical way*.

1. There is no thought **too high** for Paul to scale, & there is no practical detail of administration **too small** for him to remember.

II. Slide#2 THE CORINTHIAN COLLECTION! (1-4)

A. When it comes to **finances** each individual church is usually guilty of talking about it **too much, or not enough!**

1. These principles apply to *special offerings* (λογισμός/Low-gay-ahs – *an extra piece of giving*) as well as our *regular giving*.

B. Slide#2a **PROBLEM!** A *severe famine* in Jerusalem.

1. Acts 11:27,29 **Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world,...** Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea.
2. Paul did his part in organizing a **relief effort**.
 - a) Luther, “God doesn’t need our good works, but our neighbor does!”
 - b) Spurgeon, “If you want to give a hungry man a **tract**, then wrap it in a sandwich.”
 - c) **He mentions this in:** Romans, 1st & 2nd Cor., Galatians, & Acts.
3. We also note it is not wrong to *let your needs be known*.

C. Slide#2b **PRINCIPLES!** 5 of them.

D. Maybe the reason Paul uses words like, **given orders** & **must do**, is because of the **indebtedness** he talked about in **Rom.15:25-27?**

1. Slide#3a **Prearranged** (2a) – **1st day of the week**.

- a) Giving shouldn’t be done haphazardly, but thoughtful, & regular planning.
- b) **How careful are you about planning in this area?**
- c) **How do you communicate this to your children?**

2. Slide#3b **Personal** (2b) – **each one of you**.

- a) **Everybody** is involved here. [S.S.worker, deacon/elder, new convert, oldest convert, rich/poor]
- b) **The poor?...Yep!**
 - (1) See **2 Cor.8:2**, & then see how they were able to give **vs.5!**
 - (2) I’ve seen the widow’s-mite given in Haiti. **And it’s beautiful!**
- c) **Are you contributing to needs you hear of, & to your church?**

- d) Do you see your individual gift as **significant**? Was the little widow & her penny she gave **significant**?
3. **Slide#3c Prepared** (2c) – **lay something aside**. [Lit. “keep putting aside & saving”]
4. **Slide#3d Proportionate** (2d) – **as he may prosper**.
- a) The **amount** is going to **differ** from person to person, **but** we can all have the same **attitude** in giving in **common**.
- b) 2 Cor.9:7 **So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.**
- c) **Story** – A lady brought \$50 as a gift one Sunday morning to church & she asked the pastor **if it was satisfactory?** He answered her, **“Does the gift represent you?”** She left & returned with \$5000 & asked **if it was satisfactory?** Again he responded, **“Does the gift represent you?”** She again left & returned w/\$50,000 this time she said, *“After earnest, prayerful thought, I have come to the conclusion that this gift does represent me and I am happy to give it.”*
- d) Do you give cheerfully? Or do you have to peel your fingers off your checkbook 1 x 1?
5. **Slide#3e Private** (2e) - **no collections when I come**.
- a) Paul didn’t want them to give because **Paul the Apostle** was there!
- E. **Slide#4 Paul’s Brink’s Service!** (3,4)
- F. **Accountability!** - So important in a church, & for the world to see.
- G. And a positive reminder that it is not only about “*our church*”!
1. This helped the Corinthian church view themselves not only as members of a **congregation...but** of **The Church!**
- H. **Slide#5 A few last thoughts on \$.** Giving should be **Grace Giving!**
1. Paul who spoke most freely on this topic in the NT never mentioned tithing (10%).
- a) We aren’t **obligated** to tithe, **instead** we have the **opportunity** to give as the Lord lays it on our hearts.
2. **Grace-giving not tithing!** (though tithing is a great principle, even pre-law) our motivation is **Grace**...not **Law!**
- a) Jesus said, **Freely you have received, freely give.**
- (1) CM you are givers...thanks!
3. **We’ve always used the “Agape Box” in the foyer.** Which is similar to 2 Kings12:9 **Then Jehoiada the priest took a chest, bored a hole in its lid, and set it beside the altar, on the right side as one comes into the house of the LORD; and the priests who kept the door put there all the money brought into the house of the LORD.**

4. We've never asked finances for our church from the pulpit *nor* to individuals. [However, we are installing ATM swipes on the top of the Pew rail for your convenience!]
5. We have & will as for \$ for others though! (Missionaries, indiv's in need) [Belize opp Sun]
 - a) Again, don't give **emotionally**, **but** pray & ask God, *Lord can I participate in this?*

III. Slide#6 PAUL'S PLANS & PALS! (5-12)

- A. Slide#7 PAUL! (5-9)
- B. If the Lord permits (7) – Paul didn't know everything that was going to happen.
- C. A Door is? (9) – a metaphor for *opportunity*!
 1. 2 Cor.2:12 Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a **door** was opened to me by the Lord,
 2. Col.4:3 meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a **door** for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains,
 3. Rev.3:7,8 And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, 'These things says He who is holy, He who is true, He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens:...I know your works. See, I have set before you an open **door**, and no one can shut it;
- D. Effective – or *adapted to success!*
- E. Open – Lit. *stands wide open*.
 1. Open infers that some doors are, or can be, **shut!**
 2. Alexander Graham Bell said, "When one door closes, another opens, but we often look so long and regretfully at the closed door that we do not see the one that has opened for us."
 - a) Are there any doors **in front of your face** at this time that you are still staring at?
 - b) Is it not a great way to **pray** to ask the Lord to **open** or **close doors** regarding His direction for your life? (i.e. *If the Lord permits* vs.7)
- F. There are many adversaries – expect them. Don't automatically see them as a "*closed door*".
 1. A **Pessimist** is one who "sees a **difficulty** in every **opportunity**";
A **Optimist** is one who "sees an **opportunity** in every **difficulty**"!
- G. When you find an open door, it doesn't help you unless you **walk through it!**
 1. At the Red Sea crossing in Ex.14:15 the LORD said to Moses, "Why do you cry to Me? Tell the children of Israel to go forward".
 - a) Any doors your trying to **kick down?**
 - b) Any doors you've just been **standing in its threshold?**

c) Any “opportunities” you haven’t taken because of **fear**?

H. **Slide#8 TIMOTHY!** (10,11)

I. Youth & inexperience!

1. I could relate to Timothy. **I took over the church at age 27 in 1989** [many jokes about my age]

J. Yet don’t treat him like he’s **2nd best**, or **2nd string**.

1. **Both** were doing the Lord’s work, **Both** deserved support & respect.

2. **Most churches attendance falls when the senior pastor is gone. Should it?**

K. **Slide#9 APOLLOS!** (12)

L. Corinth was a church torn w/**party politics** ...each of you says, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos," or "I am of Cephas," or "I am of Christ".

M. **Paul, Timothy, & Apollos**, all needed **help & encouragement** from God’s people!

1. **Are you praying for your church leaders?**

2. **Are you a help & encouragement to them?**

IV. **Slide#10 MARCHING ORDERS!** (13,14)

A. **5 Imperatives!** (1-4)

B. We can also see these 2 verses as, *How to grow a strong church/ministry/home study/S.S.class!*

C. (13) This makes us think of **military orders** from a **Commander** to his *Subordinates*.
[**Watch, Stand Fast, Be Brave, Be Strong, & Love**]

1. **Slide#11 Watch** – Be ever on alert. Keep staying awake.

a) Be on alert for our **enemy** be on alert for **sin!!!**

2. **Slide#12 Stand Fast in the faith** – When under attack stand fast in the faith & yield not an inch. [See that your belief is sound, also see that your belief is applied in your life]

a) **Counter** Satan’s great debates with **your faith!**

b) **Often times** it is easy to identify & stand against an **all out attack** from the enemy that is apparent to our eyes...**other times** we so easily stumble into the more **subtle forms** of attack...like when *all are friends are doing it!!!*

(1) **If you don’t stand** for something, you’ll **fall** for everything!

c) Eph.6:13,14a **Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand** in the evil day, and having done all, to **stand. Stand** therefore,...

3. **Slide#13 Be Brave** – (lit. act like men, grow up) **In time of battle, play a hero’s part. Grow up!**

a) **No wimps!** – David often spoke of his “mighty men”, even those made from his band that were in *distress, in debt, & discontented*. David never spoke of them as his mighty losers!

4. **Slide#14 Be Strong** - Be strong to fight for your King!
 - a) *Be strong* comes up **33 times** in scripture!
 - b) He's not looking for the "buff body", **but** the tough "inner man"! **One who can handle criticism & temptation.**
 - c) Paul prayed for the Ephesian Christians, **For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man.**
 - d) There is **no short cut** to **Holy living!**
5. **Slide#15 Love** (14)
 - a) Love always brings us back in that **perfect balance!**...**Lest** we become Zealots, **or** repeat the Crusades!
 - b) **Slide#16** This command adds **depth** to all the others!
 - (1) W/o Love you won't be **Watching** w/alertness, **you'll be Examining** w/suspicion
 - (2) Without Love you won't be **Standing Fast**, **you'll be Running Fast.**
 - (3) Without Love you won't be **Brave**, **you'll be a coward.**
 - (4) Without Love you won't be **Strong**, **you'll be Weak** w/tenderness.
 - c) Which of those 5 did you need to be reminded of this evening?

V. **Slide#17 HOLY HOMES! (15-24)**

- A. **Slide#18 THE STEPHANAS FAMILY!** (15-18)
 1. The Stephanas family was the only family we know of that **Paul baptized**, **Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas. Besides, I do not know whether I baptized any other.** 1 Cor.1:16
 - a) They were the firstfruits/1st converts of Achaia.
- B. We learn from this wonderful family...**"A family that serves together stays together!"**
 1. **Slide#18a 1st They Devoted themselves** (15b) **or** **"addicted themselves"** (lit. appointed themselves) which refers to a **self-imposed duty.**
 - a) They had appointed themselves to the service of their fellow Christians. [LKGNT]
 2. **Slide#18b 2nd They Worked & Labored w/Paul!** (16)
 - a) **Work** (to work together, to cooperate); **Labor** (to toil, to work to the point of exhaustion).
 - (1) T.C.Edwards, **"In the church many work, but few toil."**
 3. **Slide#18c 3rd They Supplied** what the Corinthians didn't take care of! (17)
 4. **Slide#18d 4th They Refreshed** Paul's spirit & the Corinthians also! (18)
 - a) What are you doing to help thirsty souls drink deeply from God's word?

- C. (18b) **Note:** it is ok to *acknowledge* these hard workers!
1. Do you acknowledge those who work with you?
 2. Can you come up with 3 ways to acknowledge your family members; co-workers at your work; laborers that help you in your ministry.
 3. Parents...raise up a “*Stephanas Family*”!
- D. **Slide#19 AQUILA & PRISCILLA FAMILY!** (19)
- E. **Aquila & Priscilla** originally lived in Rome. Were banished. Went to Corinth (where they met Paul). Next they went to Ephesus. Then lastly back to Rome.
1. In church history, we don't hear of any church buildings until the **3rd century**. – **The little congregations met in private homes.**
 2. We know Aquila & Priscilla had a church in their home in both Rome & in Ephesus.
 3. They seemed to always make their home a **center** of Christian **light & love!**
 - a) Their home was a haven of rest, peace, friendship.
 4. Home fellowships...are mini-churches!
 - a) I believe being a part of a *Home Fellowship* is one of the best ways to grow in your Christianity (can ask **questions**); one of the best **accountability's** (Where have you been?); & **fellowship** (getting to know other Christians).
 5. Ever think of **attending one?** (some are taking a break for summer)
 6. Ever think of **starting one?** (see Larry)
 7. Ever think of **Hosting one, teaching one, watching children for one?**
- F. **FAREWELL!** (20-24)
- G. **Slide#20** (20) **Greet one another w/a holy kiss** - Let's turn to one another &... :)
- H. **Slide#21** (21) **Harry Ironside** during the 1st half of this century, was a very popular **bible teacher, evangelist, pastor, & author**. Toward the end of his ministry he was virtually blind(*cataracts*). **Personal aides** stepped into accomplish tasks he could no longer perform, like his correspondence. **However**, he would never let a piece of mail go out w/o 1st scrawling his **signature & a brief, thoughtful note**.
1. **This did 2 things:** it added **warmth** to his correspondence & put a stamp of **authenticity** on the contents.
 2. Paul never failed to add his handwritten PS...2 Thes.3:17 **The salutation of Paul with my own hand, which is a sign in every epistle; so I write.**
- I. **Choose!** - You either do not love the Lord or, you Love & long for His Coming! Which is it?
- J. **Slide#22 Anathema** – dedicated for destruction, cursed.
1. Let them be set aside as objects of God's wrath.

2. **Jesus** said a similar thing in Mt.10:14,15 **whoever will not receive you nor hear your words, when you depart from that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet. Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city!**

K. **Slide#23 Maranatha** - *O Lord, Come!*

1. **Barclay** explains why this **Aramaic phrase** pops up in a **Greek** letter to a **Greek** church. He says it had become a **watchword** & a **password**.
 - a) **Watchword** - It summed up the vital *hope* of the early church.
 - b) **Password** - And, the Christians *identified* each other by it in a language the heathen couldn't understand.
2. Jesus is **coming back** again...to *right all wrongs, heal every wound, & wipe away every tear!*

L. **Slide#24,25** 2 most important ingredients! (23,24)

1. Paul ends with the 2 best gifts we can give as Christians...**God's Grace** & **our Love!**