

INTRODUCTION —WHO IS YOUR FAVORITE *SINGER* of ALL TIME? FRANK SINATRA!? ELVIS PRESLEY!? BARBRA STREISAND!? PAUL McCARTNEY (of the BEATLES)?!? ADELE?? BRUNO MARS? ADAM LEVINE? WHEN I have been in discussions like this before, IT IS VERY INTERESTING to hear people give their REASONS for their VOTE for their FAVORITE, and to hear the REASONS they DISAGREE with OTHER VOTES!!! The DISPARAGING THINGS and INSULTING COMMENTS people can say about some singers IT IS THAT WAY about OTHER votes for FAVORITE “*Whatever!*” I LOVE to get in a discussion with SPORTS FANS about their FAVORITE BASEBALL PITCHER, or their FAVORITE FOOTBALL QUARTERBACK!! WHAT ARGUMENTS will follow! ! IT is a NATURAL TENDENCY of HUMAN BEINGS to have FAVORITES in different aspects of INTEREST in LIFE — and as long as it is GOOD FUN, no harm done! We can ALL be “KIDS” about it!! BUT — when it comes to MATTERS of GREAT IMPORTANCE ,like the GOSPEL of ETERNAL LIFE in JESUS CHRIST, the APOSTLE PAUL tells us that IT IS NOT WISE to CHOOSE FAVORITES — we need to be “MATURE,” not like LITTLE CHILDREN

I. HOW TO DEFINE SPIRITUAL IMMATUREITY: (vv. 1—4)

1. The Apostle PAUL defined spiritual immaturity as “WORLDLINESS, ”Being “INFANTS” in Christ — needing “MILK, NOT SOLID FOOD”
2. AND WHAT was the ATTITUDE and BEHAVIOR that prompted PAUL to describe the CORINTHIAN CHRISTIANS as “IMMATURE”??
3. WHAT he had mentioned in the FIRST CHAPTER of the Letter— CHOOSING up their FAVORITE PREACHER!!
4. The Apostle PAUL is telling us that “CHOOSING YOUR FAVORITES” may be FUN when it’s a FAVORITE SINGER or FAVORITE BALLPLAYER, but when it comes to a PREACHER of the GOSPEL of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, appreciate them ALL, but DO NOT argue and fight over the “GREATEST!”
5. THAT — Paul said — is SPIRITUAL CHILDISHNESS!!
6. AFTER ALL, PAUL says, it is NOT ‘MY’ GOSPEL, nor PETER ’S GOSPEL, nor the GOSPEL of APOLLOS— it is the GOSPEL of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, for the GLORY of GOD our FATHER, in the POWER of the HOLY SPIRIT!!
7. WE PREACHERS — we APOSTLES — Paul says — are “*ONLY SERVANT, through whom you came to believe.*” (Read v. 5)
8. AND — to each of us, GOD HAS ASSIGNED TASKS— (Read 5—6)
9. “MY TASK,” Paul tells us, “WAS to PLANT” — to START and ORGANIZE the CORINTHIAN CHURCH. APOLLOS was given the TASK by God to “WATER” — or TAKE CARE of and TEND to the

CHURCH — but GOD CAUSES the GROWTH, not PAUL or APOLLOS or PETER or ANY OTHER HUMAN !!

10. SO — the PROPER ATTITUDE to have about CHURCH and PREACHERS IS — APPRECIATE them ALL for how GOD has GIVEN them GIFTS and TALENTS and ABILITIES and INSIGHTS, but they are ONLY GOD’S SERVANTS ,and NOT GOD—LIKE PERSONALTIES to REVERE and WORSHIP!!

II. THE RESULTS of SPIRITUAL MATURITY: (v. 10— 15)

1. SO PAUL tells us the DIFFERENCE between SPIRITUAL IMMATURITY and MATURITY .

2. FIRST of ALL — WHAT IS the FOUNDATION of our FAITH?!?

3. In v. 11 — *“No other foundation than JESUS CHRIST ”*

4. The ONLY BEGINNING POINT for ANY CHRISTIAN is — to BELIEVE in JESUS CHRIST as one’s SAVIOR !!

5. Then, in verses 12 to 15, Paul describes with what we might build a LIFE of FAITH in CHRIST — *“Gold, silver, jewels;wood, hay, straw.”*

6. These “BUILDING MATERIALS” are the QUALITY of each person’s WORK (v. 13) —or CHARACTERISTICS of LIFE.

7. What QUALITY of work are you putting into *YOUR* life?? Are you building your life with: HONESTY? INTEGRITY? KINDNESS to others? Willingness to FORGIVE? To avoid STEALING and all forms of DISHONESTY??

8. One of my best friends and I used to go out for breakfast once a week, and, on our way into the Restaurant, we always got a morning NEWSPAPER for each of us to look at while we waited for the BACON and EGGS.A few times, when he dropped a QUARTER into the PAPERDISPENSER machine, He PULLED out TWO newspapers from the machine, and said: *“They were having a TWO for ONE sale today.”*After he had done that a couple of times, I said, *“I ALWAYS HAVE SO MUCH CHANGE in my POCKETS — LET ME BUY the papers”* — and PAY for TWO !!! I just decided to be sure to BUILD *QUALITY* into our lives — and let there be no *“CHEAP”* BUILDING MATERIALS, but only TOP— QUALITY.

9. AFTER ALL — those kinds of building materials Paul mentioned — He said that they will be TESTED by JUDGMENT FIRES:*“Gold, silver, jewels;wood, hay, straw.”*What happens when you put those materials to FIRE?*“WOOD, HAY, STRAW”*? They burn up. What happens to *“GOLD, SILVER, JEWELS??”* They become REFINED — IMPROVED.

10.AGAIN I’LL ASK: What QUALITY of LIFE CHARACTERISTICS are you BUILDING into *YOUR* life??

III. HOW DO WE BECOME MATURE in CHRIST ??

1. Paul says it — FIRST: FOCUS on CHRIST.

2. In v. 16 — *“Don’t you know that you are God’s TEMPLE, and that God’s SPIRIT lives in you?”*

3. Or in v. 23 — *“You are of Christ, and Christ is of God.”*

4. SO FOCUS your HEART and MIND on JESUS ! !

AND, SECOND — we become MATURE in CHRIST —

6. Through HUMILITY in everyday life. (Read vv. 18— 21)

7. DO NOT think you are SO SMART or WISE! !The WISDOM of God is so *SUPERIOR* to that of THIS world — if you will become a “FOOL” by the standards of this world, you may gain God’s wisdom.

8. THIS MEANS we must CONSCIOUSLY DETERMINE that we are *NOT* going to UNDERSTAND SOME of the things that happen to us! INSTEAD, we should simply PRAY and ASK GOD to TEACH US, when we are ready, WHY SOME EVENT happened to us when it did.

— FOR INSTANCE — I have mentioned many times the car wreck I was in, in JUNE 1984. I don’t want to bore you with it now, but I have asked the LORD before, “WHY?? WHY did I need to go through that? Why did NANCY have to go through my almost dying, and 46 days at U.T. Hospital? Why did my PARENTS, and my SISTER, and my FRIENDS, have to go through that??” OVER THE YEARS, as I have often PRAYED and THOUGHT about those questions, it has OCCURRED to me that THAT CAR WRECK was an opportunity for me to EXPERIENCE the HEALING POWER of GOD ! I know, BY EXPERIENCE, that GOD DOES TRULY HEAL ! !

— IT HELPED NANCY and I to THANK GOD for our LIVES TOGETHER, when we got MARRIED a year later, in MAY 1985.

— BUT, ALSO — I have learned that THAT CAR WRECK reminded me of the FRAGILITY of LIFE. WHICH STRENGTHENED me a FEW MONTHS after we got MARRIED, when MY FATHER DIED of LUNG and BRAIN CANCER.

AND, THIRD — we become MATURE in CHRIST — 9. Through EXPERIENCE in LIFE. As we walk with FAITH in Christ EVERY DAY — we learn to TRUST HIM MORE, and OURSELVES, and OUR OWN WISDOM and STRENGTH, a LITTLE LESS.

— Someone once said, “Maturity begins to grow when you can sense your concern for others outweighing your concern for yourself.” 1

— Charles Swindoll, formerly the pastor of First Evangelical Free Church in Fullerton, CA, and now the pastor of a church in PLANO, TEXAS — Chuck said once: “One of the marks of spiritual maturity is the quiet confidence that God is in control ... without the need to understand why He does what He does.” 2

CONCLUSION — GROWING in SPIRITUAL MATURITY, the APOSTLE PAUL teaches here, is a GOAL for EVERY CHRISTIAN to aim for. BUT IT IS NOT EASY to ATTAIN, in a REAL and UN—PHONY WAY: “Many people think that a ‘spiritual Christian’ is mystical, dreamy, impractical, and distant. When he prays, he shifts his voice into a DEEP [sepulchral] tone. . . . This kind of OUTWARD, PHONY [unctuous] PIETY is a poor example of true spirituality. To be ‘spiritually minded’ simply means to look at earth from heaven’s point of view. The spiritually minded believer makes his decisions on the basis of eternal values and not the passing fads of society.”