

The All Sufficiency of Christ

Part 1

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[00:00:01] They're all in the first epistle to the Corinthians, 1 Corinthians chapter 1. 1 Corinthians chapter 1 verse 1 and verse 1. 1 Corinthians chapter 1 verse 1.

Chapter 11 and verse 17.

A few weeks ago, together with one or two who were here and a good number of others, we were at a conference dealing with the dispensations. [00:01:13] And it's quite interesting to find what people's views of the dispensations are.

Particularly because there seems to be a lot of, not quite disagreement, but people arrive at a different number of dispensations. It seems to me that whatever you start out with as the definition of a dispensation determines the number that you have. I only refer to it for this reason, that one of the things that seems to be lost when you start talking about dispensations, but I'm very thankful to God that at that conference, certainly there were a good number who were prepared to emphasize the most important part of dispensations. [00:02:03] And that's not how many there were, or the fact that God has been testing man. But every time a new dispensation dawned, it wasn't because a certain period of time had run its course. It was because God made himself known in a fuller way.

This is what Hebrews 1 and 2 say, when it says, God, who at sundry times and in diverse manners spoke unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.

That's really the key to dispensations.

When we were looking at them, we were looking at the one, if you are a Schofield reader, then you'll say it's the fourth dispensation.

But it's that dispensation which deals with the patriarchs particularly, Abraham especially. [00:03:06] And for a little while, we focused attention on that marvelous verse in Genesis 17, where God says to Abraham, I am the almighty God. Walk thou before me, and be thou perfect.

It's a marvelous verse, and in the particular place where it occurs, and what takes place afterwards, it seems that something very important connected with what God said of himself when he said, I am the almighty God. Now, when we think of almighty, our minds immediately focus on power. It's very interesting. There is a little bit of disputing amongst people who are able to say this, but for somebody

simple like myself, and using the concordances that we've got, it seems that the derivation of the word really has something more wide in view than power.

[00:04:11] Now, I got this firstly from George Davidson, so we're going back about 30 years. But a lot of things that George Davidson said stuck, and over the years, you've had opportunity to look them up. And there doesn't seem to be much doubt about the fact that the word almighty that's used there derives from a word which refers to the female breast. And the extension of it is as an infant is totally provided for to begin with by the mother's breast, what it's saying there is God is absolutely all-sufficient.

Now, I was interested actually the other evening when I was looking for something else to come across a comment of Scofield's in a book, [00:05:06] and it may well, I don't have a Scofield Bible, but I would think it probably is found in his Bible also, because he just makes a comment, he says, almighty, it has a suggestion of remoteness about it.

And I wouldn't for one moment want to diminish the fact that there's a great danger of becoming familiar. I'm not taking up a crusade against the use of language, but when we use these and the thous, in fact, we're using the language of scripture. Many people have been at pains to point out that in 1611, when we had the authorised version, the use of you and they was well established in England. So when we use those words, we're actually using biblical words, really. And he was making a comment on this matter of never ceasing to lose a sense of awe about the God with whom we have to do. [00:06:09] But he said it's a shame, really, that it's done that, because when God used those words to Abraham, this is what Scofield says, he could have been saying to Abraham, I am all sufficient.

And that's really what I would like during the meetings that we have this week in the Lord's Will, to look at the all sufficiency of Christ. Particularly in relation to the problems that occurred in New Testament assemblies. All the New Testament assemblies seem to have problems, all local assemblies have problems, I don't think there's any doubt about that. What the scriptures say, and I would be very thankful to God, if above any other impression that is left upon our hearts and minds, it is that Christ is absolutely sufficient to meet all difficulties. [00:07:05] And more than meeting difficulties, to give us the grace to live in the light and power of his word. Just before leaving the Old Testament, this matter of God being absolutely sufficient for his people is accentuated in some places which are remarkable. There's quite a remarkable one in the book of Nehemiah. Things had reached a very low ebb in Nehemiah. And in Nehemiah chapter 9, there is a remarkable statement made.

They look back and they think of the dealings of God with their nation. And they consider the lack of faithfulness in the nation. And towards the end of that chapter you find one of them saying this. Forty years didst thou sustain them in the wilderness. They lacked nothing, their clothing grew not old, and their foot swelled not. [00:08:07] What it's saying in fact is what Genesis 17 says. Genesis 17 makes the statement.

Nehemiah 9 is a practical verification of it. What God said he would be to Abraham and his people, he was.

And he's still the same. We live in a day when the full light of God has shone. But let us never forget that he who was almighty for Abraham is still the same for us. And Christ is all sufficient.

There is a puzzling scripture.

At least I found it puzzling for a lot of years. Until I read a comment one day which was the key to understanding it. This is Luke 22.

And these are the words of the Lord Jesus to the disciples. Luke 22 and verse 35.

[00:09:02] And he said unto them, when I sent you without purse and script and shoes, lacked ye anything?

And they said nothing. Then said he unto them, but now he that hath a purse, let him take it and likewise his script. And he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one. I found that very puzzling really. Why did the Lord say get a script and get a sword? And then reading one of those old writers one day, I got a shaft of light when he said this. He just happened to... Have I given a wrong reference? Sorry.

He just made a remark in passing. And what he said was this. He said, at that particular point, all the power of God that Christ demonstrated that was here for the providing for his own [00:10:03] and for their protection was no longer not only going to be used for their provision and protection, it was not going to be used to shield from himself all that judgment that would be poured down upon him.

And in fact, the Lord was saying there when he asked the question and the disciples replied, they were saying substantially what the saint in Nehemiah 9 said. The Lord said, you didn't have a script and you didn't have a sword. Were you ever without? Were you without provision? Were you without protection? And they said, no.

And in fact, that's what it's saying, that Christ was all sufficient for them. And against that background, let's look at the verses that I've read to you in the first epistle to the Corinthians. [00:11:01] Now, I know that any one of these could occupy more than the time that we have available tonight. But all I want to do is just to point out how by a ministry of Christ, an assembly which really was becoming grotesque in its testimony. I mean, when you look at the Corinthian assembly, they had party spirit.

They tolerated immorality, which even the licentious Corinthians wouldn't tolerate. They made the breaking of bread into a common meal.

They accepted teaching that was fundamentally destructive of the Christian faith, chapter 15, when it speaks about the resurrection. And yet, when Paul writes to them, the second epistle in chapter 3 and verse 203, he says this to them.

He says, ye are manifestly declared to be [00:12:05] the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone, but on fleshy tables of the heart. Now, you might ask the question, how was it possible that an assembly that was marked by so many sad features in the first epistle was so transformed that Paul was able to say, we needn't speak. You yourselves in your testimony are an epistle of Christ.

And he uses those memorable words when, and it's a marked contrast between the law and grace. He says, not on tables of stone that are hard to take an impression, but on fleshy tables of the heart that take a deep impression. [00:13:01] How could that transformation come about? It came about

because in the verses that we've read and many others in the first epistle, there was a ministry of Christ.

But a ministry of Christ in a very special way. All the ones that I've read to you speak about the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. And it's in the light of those that I want to look at the three that we've considered together.

Towards the end, we might make some reference. I hope nobody ever thinks that what happened in the early days of the church of God on earth don't happen today.

It wouldn't be difficult to put a parallel to all the things that are described here. But the key is, Christ is absolutely sufficient to correct what was wrong in the assembly at Corinth. [00:14:02] And not just correct it, but correct it to the extent that from an assembly which was marked by an increasingly grotesque testimony of Christ, it reached the position where Paul said, even if we didn't minister anything at all, if people take account of the way in which you behave, it is a ministry of Christ which is deeply written by the spirit of the living God on the fleshy tables of the heart. When Paul writes these words to the Corinthian assembly, as in all other epistles, apart from the epistle to the Galatians, he takes the greatest opportunity to commend what is capable of being commended.

And it's a remarkable thing, but in verse 2 he calls them God's assembly at Corinth.

[00:15:02] As they were, they were God's assembly at Corinth.

And I always take heart in this, that even in the broken and divided and difficult day in which we find ourselves, I know that God's assembly includes every believer.

I find it very difficult to avoid that the reference to a local assembly must mean a company of Christians who are trying to live in the light of all that the scriptures say, not just part of what the scriptures say.

You may know that about 12 miles north of us on the seacoast, there is a small port called Blyth and a small town there.

And until about two and a half years ago, one or two of us were going over to that very small meeting, [00:16:02] really to allow some very fine and godly sisters who had supported that meeting over many years, the opportunity of remembering the Lord. But the expectation was that the meeting gradually, as one by one they went to be with the Lord, that ultimately it would close.

What we didn't know was that in Blyth God had been working in quite a remarkable way. There was a, I think he had a car, you know, a driving school, car driving school. And I would think his business was failing from what little bit he said, certainly because I worked for many years in a job where alcohol was an occupational hazard. I became used to seeing alcoholics and it was not difficult to recognize that he must also have had an alcoholic problem. But he was at the end of his tether and someone gave him a Bible.

[00:17:04] And I think really at the end of things, one day he started reading the Bible.

He found something that was relevant to him and he just got down on his knees and he said, God, if

you're there, make these things good to me.

And he did.

And when he got up off his knees, he said, I knew something had happened. And he began to find, as the Thessalonians found, that he'd been turned round.

And on the Sunday, he thought the appropriate thing was to go along to the church. So he went along to the United Reformed Church. And he walked in.

Whoever was on the door said hello to him. Was he a visitor? He says, no, I'm from Blythe. And then he told them about his experience. And sadly, in almost as many words, [00:18:01] the man said to him, oh, well, soon that thing out of you. So after being there for a few weeks, he decided no longer to carry on. So he went somewhere else and got substantially the same treatment. And he thought, well, maybe nobody's had this experience. So he started going round the doors, knocking on the doors and telling others. And one or two got saved. And they started meeting in a house. And they began to read the scriptures. And the more they read the scriptures, the more they began to see that things that were normally accepted in a church had no place in scripture at all. And it was by sheer chance that one day when he was walking home, he walked past the meeting room.

And here there was a board outside which in no way reflected what was going on in the meeting because there was just one meeting a fortnight for the breaking of bread. He saw the Times. He came.

And somebody in the street thought he was up to no good [00:19:02] and called the police. And the police came. He said to them, he explained what had happened. And the policeman says, well, I don't know. Ask some of the people here. And somebody in the street said, well, I think someone comes once a fortnight. And to cut a long story short, looking through the frosted glass a week later at the breaking of bread, I saw the outline of a man. And in the Northeast, we have the unenviable reputation of being the worst place in the country for cars. If you see somebody buy a car, you can guarantee your car is about to be broken into or to be vandalized for it happens once every 36 seconds.

At any rate, I walked out and said, can I help you? And he says, can I come in? And we're just at the end of the meeting. And he came in.

And he told us his story. And we were able to put our hands on him and say, we've had the same experience.

Come in.

[00:20:01] You're welcome to come. And about five or six have come from a meeting that was about dying.

They know very little, but they're keen and they're learning and they want to do things that are right. And I would say that's what it means when it says God's assembly at Corinth.

I'm not again saying that all of the believers in place are part of the body of Christ and part of the

church of God. But I can never escape the idea that when it says God's assembly, it's people who really are trying to put into practice every part of the word of God, making mistakes, falling down, yes, but an honest attempt to respond to everything that the scripture says. And so Paul says that, God's assembly at Corinth. And he talks about the fact that there was no shortage of gift there at all. And so we read in verse seven, [00:21:02] so that you come behind in no gift, waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And then he uses these words, which are the bedrock really of any work of God. He says, God is faithful by whom you are called into the fellowship of his son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Certainly from the Philippian epistle, it's clear that there must be the evidence of that, but that's the bedrock of everybody's conviction that at the end of the day, it is the work of God that will triumph. So Paul says everything he can about the assembly of Corinth, which is encouraging and which reflects that which was to be commended before God.

But in verse 10, he says, now I beseech you brethren by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing and that there'd be no divisions among you, but that you'd be perfectly joined together [00:22:03] in the same mind and in the same judgment.

It's pretty clear from what he says in verse 12, that it was men who were assuming unduly large proportions in their eyes.

It may well be that one of the great dangers in meetings, if you read the history, is the danger of elevating men.

I don't know about you, but reading some of the things that happened years ago, some while ago I was asked to go and visit an elderly brother and sister.

And I'd seen them at funerals.

It's a sad thing really that funerals very often are the gathering center for believers today down here. Won't always be like that. There'll be another gathering voice shortly. [00:23:01] But I'd seen these couple and so I knew nothing about their background. And when I went in, I just sort of chatted to them and asked them questions. And I gathered they were going nowhere at all.

And then to my surprise, I found that way back in the 30s, he used to go to a meeting, which was a very vibrant meeting in those days, in St. Lawrence.

And I said, well, what happened that you didn't continue there?

He said, oh, did you not know? He said, Raven's Error. And I said, what is Raven's Error?

And he said, you don't know what Raven's Error is? I said, no, what is Raven's Error? Well, he couldn't tell me what Raven's Error was. However, what I did do, because I'm not a great reader of Raven, I did take down a book of his and read it.

And I could understand what he was saying, [00:24:02] but then I thought to myself, what would be the impression on a young believer? Someone said to him, if someone says to you, do you have eternal

life, what would you say?

And he said, well, if you have eternal life, show it to me. All right, I can understand the value of that, because if you have life from God, it must be there.

But if somebody said, as somebody did on that occasion, I have eternal life because the Bible says, believe, rather, John 3.16, whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. And his response was, that's just a verse of scripture. That's absolutely appalling, you know. Whatever any person says about the word of God ought to encourage every believer to implicitly, implicitly trust every word of it. [00:25:02] And at the end of the day, it's simple belief that gives us eternal life. Oh, that's right, when you've got it, it ought to be obvious to show it. But if you look down, you'll find that men have assumed an unduly large proportion in people's minds. Someone who is a capable teacher. We ought to thank God for every person who has the gift of a teacher, because it's a gift from Christ to his assembly for your benefit and mine. Don't envy them. Thank God for them and pray that they might be kept and that their ministry of Christ might enrich and establish.

But never give them a place beyond the fact that they are gifted servants of the Lord Jesus. And the most powerful word that Paul gives here, he says, was Paul crucified for you?

No, of course Paul wasn't crucified for them. [00:26:01] There's only one who could ever lay down his life as an offering for sin. There was only one who was ever prepared to leave the glory and at utmost cost to himself, shed his precious blood. And it's against that kind of background that people who are saying, I'm of Apollos, I'm of Paul, from what Paul says later, they were not the actual people because he says, I've transferred our names just to give the thing force.

But anything that eclipses the personal greatness and glory of Christ is to be abhorred and anything which emphasizes his greatness and glory and anything which underlines his greatness and glory to the degree that he alone is before the vision of our souls is to be strongly encouraged.

It's a very powerful word, isn't it? Was Paul crucified for you?

[00:27:03] No, of course Paul wasn't crucified for them. There's only one who is worthy of the supreme and central place and it's the Lord Jesus.

Some while ago, I don't know whether any of you have followed the history of it.

It's a very humbling thing really because maybe the same temptation is with us all.

But about, well, five years ago I have a fellow believer with whom I worked for many years and I was very thankful for that. The scripture is right, you know, two are better than one and on many occasions I was very thankful that he was there at work and together we could walk out of some meetings at times.

He's of the Reformed faith and about, say, five years ago a minister of the We Free community, [00:28:02] if you go north and west in Scotland you come across some believers strongly Sabbatarian and very strong on the Hebrides and they're delightful people to meet, very keen believers and from my personal contact very upright in the way in which they live their lives. And about five years ago one of these We Free ministers came down to Newcastle and he had a weekend with one of the

Evangelical churches there and I listened to some of the tapes afterwards and apart from one or two things they were very good. One of the things that he laid emphasis on is this.

The title, by the way, was The Marks of the True New Testament Church and one of the marks of the True New Testament Church is It has the desire and the power to discipline itself.

[00:29:01] It's a very weighty statement but absolutely right.

The New Testament assembly has the desire and the power to discipline itself.

The interesting or rather sad thing really is that man is straight up and down.

I mean, I've never met him at all but having listened to his tapes you thank God for him because he's a very clear voice in what he has to say and very close to the scriptures. Well, recently he was accused of indecent assault. I don't know whether anyone saw it. When it reached the High Court if that is right, in Scotland the judge ultimately threw the case out and said he commended the police to pursue a case for conspiracy and I just think the thing died.

But recently the man is now being accused [00:30:03] of heresy.

It all comes back to the fact that what he does is he puts his feet four square on the scriptures and he doesn't move at all.

He doesn't bend to allow things.

He says, this is what the scripture says and this is the way in which we should go and people who want to bend it always reminds me of what the Lord said about John the Baptist. Did you go out into the desert to see a man who's like a reed shaken by the wind that bends to every wind of opinion? John the Baptist wasn't like that. John the Baptist was faithful to his Lord.

But every time I look at the 5th of 1st Corinthians I think about the fact that he said the New Testament assembly has the desire and the power to discipline itself.

It was very sad really if you read [00:31:02] in history about Corinth it was a licentious place almost anything went.

But what happened in the assembly at Corinth was even outrageous by the low Corinthian establishment.

And the apostle Paul having heard of it by some who must have been concerned enough to contact them includes this in his epistle and in verse 2 he says to them and ye are puffed up and have not rather mourned that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from you.

That's a great comfort that isn't it? In the day in which we live things are very weak.

I've heard someone say about this we don't have the power to discipline that's absolute nonsense. If we have the desire to do what is right [00:32:01] there is always the power of God to support us in doing it. This is true in your own individual life it's true in assembly life. If you do what is right in the

sight of God whoever's support you may not enjoy you'll always have the unstinted support of God no matter how difficult it is. And the matter is not the lack of power it's the lack of desire to do what is right.

And so Paul says to them ye are puffed up and have not rather mourned that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you. Had there been those who were mourning before God he may well have intervened in a very severe way as he did in the 11th chapter that we'll look at later.

The verses I would like to focus your attention on are verses 6, 7 and 8.

Paul says firstly [00:33:01] Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? It's rather remarkable that from verse 6 of chapter 5 down to verse 19 of chapter 6 on seven occasions Paul uses the words do you not know?

And on every occasion when he raises this matter of knowing things very quickly he follows it up with practice which is consistent with knowing things. Now when it says here know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump it's talking about something which is very serious. I think we ought to be very clear about this both because of the way in which the Bible speaks of it and also because of the way in which historically it was practiced.

When it speaks about leaven here it's practice, immoral practice which is totally inconsistent for a believer. [00:34:04] When you go to Galatians chapter 5 and it uses the same words a little leaven leavens the whole lump it's talking about doctrine but note on both occasions it's talking about things which are fundamentally wrong. This is a matter of fact and it's still true today but if you read details about Plymouth not about the controversy that went on it was quite obvious that there were some people who were post-tribulation that meant they thought the assembly would go through the tribulation they didn't believe in the rapture they didn't believe in the peculiar calling of the church and yet in the same assembly there were people who believed in the peculiar calling of the church believed in the pre-tribulation rapture believed also in the millennium and they seemed to be able to go on with one another [00:35:01] without falling out it was not until there was fundamental error concerning the Lord's person that things immediately changed and action was taken.

I was in a meeting some while ago and speaking about the things that Paul was receiving directly from heaven and immediately the meeting finished a man marched up to the front and he said I am an amillennialist he didn't believe in the thousand year reign I do not believe in the rapture I do not believe in the peculiar calling of the church and he said what have you got to say to that and I said well you are certainly going to get a tremendous surprise when the Lord's voice calls you up and some people got very upset and I said afterwards well I think what you ought to do is look at what the scriptures say about these things [00:36:02] that's where the truth of things is found they are not things on which we ought to divide they are not things which justify somebody being put away from a Christian assembly there are things which are justifying that and this is the kind of thing which is spoken about here and these are most powerful words these are in verse 7 Paul says purge out the old leaven that ye may be a new lump even as ye are unleavened and these are the words that I'd like to lay emphasis on he says for even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us if you read the 23rd chapter of Leviticus where the seven feasts of the Lord are given the first of the feasts is the feast of Passover and this is the New Testament answer this is the anti-type in the New Testament Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us [00:37:04] that mighty sacrifice you know it's something that we often

ought to go over again and again the fact that he laid down his life at utmost cost but look at the way that the Apostle makes use of this ministry of Christ he says therefore let us keep the feast not with the old leaven nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth how can someone carry on or identify with that which is totally obnoxious to God in the light of the fact that he says Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us when he says let us keep the feast that's not the feast of Passover of course that's the feast of unleavened bread which is the second of the feasts of the Lord the feast of Passover was one day [00:38:03] the feast of the unleavened bread was kept the seven days afterwards and I'm sure that it's saying that every day we are to be in our life and practice what we are by the work of God that is unleavened it's remarkable that he uses in those words there in verse 7 he says that ye may be a new lump as ye are unleavened in Christ that's how we're found before the face of God we are absolutely unleavened and the apostle said that is also what your practice ought to be in the very same way the very same truth in a powerful way is used to address the problem at Corinth and when we come to the second epistle by the grace of God those strong words of the apostle are brought to bear on the consciences of the assembly of God at Corinth [00:39:01] to such an extent that the man who was guilty was put away but every putting away ought to be in view of restoration so in chapter 2 of the second epistle Paul says don't treat the man to the degree that he's swallowed up by grief but now confirm him of your love but the truth that produced that kind of action was the truth that said Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us therefore let us keep the feast I read to you the words in the 11th chapter particularly because observant readers have noticed that it's here that you get the first occasion in the Corinthian epistle [00:40:01] I think it occurs 6 or 7 times the expression when you come together now to my mind it's incontrovertible that if the first occasion when it speaks about the local assembly coming together is in relation to the breaking of bread there must be something very special about the breaking of bread and it must be found in the words of the Lord Jesus when he says of the bread this is my body which is broken or which is for you and in the words this is the cup of the new covenant in my blood which is shed for you and in the words this do in remembrance of me I don't know whether any of you have read the book it's a book which doesn't seem to be read very much but it's worthy of reading it was written by [00:41:01] the late F.A. Hughes it's called The Breaking of Bread Leading to Worship when I was a very young believer in the Isle of Wight in a very small meeting an old brother who said he hadn't any gift said things to me often that stuck and I recall on one occasion coming out after a particularly sweet breaking of bread he said to me every day I pray to God that I might be more deeply a true worshipper of him and he said I commend that prayer to you there are many avenues of service down here that we can engage in scripture is quite clear brother or sister every one of us has a gift from God [00:42:03] Ephesians 4 is very clear about that to every one of us is grace given according to the measure of the gift of Christ it does specify specific gifts there but every one of us has a gift to be used for the Lord's glory and for the benefit of his people but there'll come a day when all of those gifts and those avenues of service will be laid down but there is one way of response to God which will never be laid down but which will be taken up in a fuller way than could possibly be down here this is the matter of simply responding to God from the heart I always feel sad when I hear of the breaking of bread being put back for the sake of a family service or something like that it seems to me it's abandoning a scriptural order when it says when you come together [00:43:01] it immediately begins to speak about the breaking of bread it seems to me there is something very special about that which the Lord has asked us to do when he says this do in remembrance of me but it's what he has to say about this which is so surprising in verse 18 he says when you come together in the church in assembly I hear that there be divisions among you verse 19 there must be heresies among you verse 20 when you come together therefore into one place this is not to eat the Lord's supper for in eating every one taketh before other his own supper and one is hungry and another is drunken what a sad thing that that very special occasion was being reduced to the level of a common

meal where some even became drunk how can you attend [00:44:01] how can you rectify something like that it can only be done with this which the apostle Paul says he got directly from the Lord in heaven and so in verse 22 he says for I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you that the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread and when he had given thanks he break it and said take eat this is my body which is broken for you this do in remembrance of me and after and after the same manner also he took the cup when he had sup saying this cup is the new covenant in my blood this do ye as oft as you drink it in remembrance of me and in a very moving way he applies again this matter of the cross this matter of the laying down of his life the bruising of his precious body [00:45:03] and the shedding of his precious blood he applies it to the Corinthians and he applies it in a way and I just want to touch very lightly but very pointedly on this he applies it in the way of self judgment we had many things but rather first turning it upon yourself and then when in verse 29 he says he that eateth and drinketh unworthily and that's doing it in an unworthy manner he eats and drinks judgment to himself because he does not discern in it the Lord's body how sad if we come together that what rises before our hearts and minds is anything other than the fact [00:46:02] that the Lord Jesus laid down his life and his body and the shed blood are the evidence of it and his own words remember me are not looking for our blessing but rather looking back and viewing the Lord in circumstances in which it will never be necessary for him to go again but with the marks of which will be in his body to all eternity and they will wake our hearts then into simple worship and then in a fuller strain than they do down here but they do it when we come together and then in verse 30 they're very solemn words these are he says for this cause many among you are weak and sickly and many sleep now it's apparent because of what he says in the second epistle that this must not have been true of the man who was guilty of that gross immorality because he was still living but [00:47:01] it's very solemn really to think that when God looks down and he sees in his people practice behavior which is totally inconsistent with our calling and totally inconsistent with what we come together to remember sometimes God in a most severe way intervenes some were afflicted with sickness others were actually taken away from this world fit for heaven by the work of Christ but unfit for earth as a result of their practice and in verse 31 he says that if we would thus judge ourselves and the word there is exactly the same word which is used for discerning the Lord's body in verse 29 he says we should not be judged I've just tried to give a kind of view in a very simple way about the [00:48:01] ministry of Christ particularly connected with the cross which in the goodness of God rectified a position which seemed to be extremely serious and it's not an historical thing it's not difficult really to see the same kind of thing in chapter 1 happening today people polarizing for somebody's particular view rather than going back to scripture I don't know whether anyone else has done this but I certainly reproach myself over this that often times instead of encouraging people to go and hammer out on the anvil of scripture their own convictions there's a tendency sometimes to say go and read this now I'm not discounting the benefit from books I've richly benefited [00:49:01] from them myself but at the end of the day it's not the teacher and his ability which is the anvil upon which we hammer out our convictions it's God's word you might think that immorality of the nature of Corinth wouldn't be practiced in Christian assemblies I know a Christian assembly I can hardly think about it without weeping where over a period of years a married brother in the assembly formed a liaison with an unmarried sister it could hardly have been less than adultery and nobody would do anything about it and then ultimately God took away the man who was involved and over the years I've watched people pour energies into that meeting and it's gone down and down and down [00:50:02] you might think that eating and drinking unworthily like making the breaking of bread a common meal or people becoming drunk is not the kind of thing that we'd see today a few years ago I came out of a particularly sweet meeting not on time side at all and I was just walking by the side of another brother and we overtook another couple of brothers who'd been at the meeting and I heard one say to the other I caught ten boxes of fish in the meeting this morning and I thought to myself that

can't be very far from the thing that Paul speaks about when he talks about making that hallowed occasion an occasion when someone did not discern the body of the Lord Jesus they're not historical things brethren the same kind of Satan [00:51:02] is around today as he was before the same kind of dangers that afflicted God's assembly the possibilities are there as they were before but thanks be to God wherever Christ is given prominence and wherever there is a ministry of Christ there is always the possibility of rescuing things and it's a tremendous encouragement when you think of the solemn words that we've read together this evening to think that there came a moment where Paul said to that selfsame assembly ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of God written by us written not with ink but with the spirit of the living God not on tables of stone but on the fleshy tables of the heart can we sing in concluding the hymn which has the verse [00:52:01] we cannot do without it's 273 O Lord how does thy mercy throw its guardian shadow o'er us preserving while we're here below safe to the rest before us as weaker than a bruised wreath we cannot do without thee we want thee in each hour of need shall want thee too in glory and though our efforts [00:53:02] now to praise are often cold and lowly a nobler sweeter song we'll raise with all thy saints in glory we'll lay our trophies at thy feet we'll worship and adore thee whose precious blood has made us meet to dwell with thee in glory