

Church Live Re-Visited: Session Three - Part 1

by Ron Bailey

The sermon explores different ways of living according to 1 Corinthians, emphasizing the importance of perspective and the role of the church in God's redemptive plan observed by angels.

Duration: 31:30

Scripture: Romans 1:3-4, 1 Corinthians 3:3, 1 Corinthians 4:8-9, 1 Corinthians 4:17, 1 Corinthians 6:3, 1 Corinthians 7:17, 1 Corinthians 11:16, Ephesians 3:10

Topics: "Spiritual Living", "Church Unity"

Description

This sermon delves into three main sections: reference points, judgment, and labor with rewards, focusing on 1 Corinthians chapters 3 and 4. It explores the different ways people live: soulish, spiritish, and fleshish, drawing parallels from Adam's naming of animals to illustrate character. The sermon emphasizes the importance of living from the spirit rather than the self, highlighting the chaos that self-centeredness can bring to the church. It also touches on the significance of perspectives, the role of angels in observing human lives, and the interdependence of churches in the body of Christ.

Transcript

And for want of something to call it, I've called this sort of reference points. I'm going to look at, or points of view. I'm going to look at three parts again, we'll do three different sections.

And the first one I'm calling reference points. The second one I'm calling judgement. And the third one I'm calling labour and rewards.

And I'm going to sort of go through 1 Corinthians chapter 3 and 4. That's the idea. So we'll just have a word of prayer. And then we'll make a stop.

Father we come to you again. Thank you Lord for your availability. Thank you for the gift of your spirit.

Thank you Lord that you don't grow tired or weary. Thank you that there's always mercy and grace to help at the point of need. And we come Lord now and we ask you for enabling grace for the speaker and for the hearers.

Lord that you will open our hearts to hear what it is you want us to hear as we're together. Lord make this a time of blessing and challenge to our hearts. Amen.

Amen. Alright. The last time we were together I talked a little bit about sort of three options.

This is a little bit of a resume. Three ways that people can live that we have recorded here in the last part of 1 Corinthians chapter 2 and in the first bit of chapter 3. And if you remember we said that in the King James Version it actually refers to it as natural and then spiritual and then carnal. And I said that really the word natural is psuchikos which is actually the word for soul.

So one option is in a sense soulish. And the next one is spiritish. And the next one is fleshish.

This is perhaps very good English. In one sense I'm trying to use different words to make us think about it. This is just my way of illustration.

When God created men and then was going to create the woman. If you remember he brought to Adam all different kinds of animals and Adam gave them all a name. But you've got this implication that Adam was kind of looking for something that he wasn't actually finding.

And finally when God poured the deep sleep to fall upon him and Adam sleeps. And God creates the woman, builds the woman from the rib. And then brings her to Adam and Adam wakes up.

Adam uses this phrase and he says now this is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh. And you've got the impression almost that yeah this is it. This is what I was looking for.

And I suppose that when Adam was giving the creatures names. I suppose those names were in some ways descriptions of their character. And they wouldn't have just been kind of arbitrary labels.

They wouldn't have just been sounds. They would have been some purpose in the way he was giving names. In the Bible of course names always have to do with character, always have to do with characteristics.

So I'm presuming that Adam kind of looked at what we would call a bear. And he would say well yes it's kind of bear-ish. And he looked at a lion and he said yes it's kind of lion-ish.

And he looked at a monkey and he said yes it's sort of monkey-ish. There's something about it that somehow was characterised by that word. And of course when he came to the woman.

What he saw in the woman was something that corresponded to himself. So he actually said it's sort of man-ish. But man-ish of course means a different sort of thing.

The Hebrew word is ish. So he sort of said she is sort of ish-ish. In other words she's like me.

There's something about her that... The only way I can describe is to say she's like me. And what I want to do is to keep these things in mind. These are sort of options, possibilities of the way that we live our lives.

People can live their lives which are in a way which is soul-ish. That's to say the way they live their life comes from the dynamic of the soul. Their motivation comes from the soul.

Their way of looking at things comes from the soul. When a person is born again of God's spirit, they have an opportunity of living an entirely different kind of a life. And this life is spirit-ish.

In the way that the other kind of life was soul-ish. So this kind of life is spirit-ish. And these people are the dynamic is from the spirit.

Their perceptive, the way of looking at things is from the spirit. And then we looked at another kind of a possibility which is what I call flesh-ish. Because this word carnal is actually the Greek word for flesh.

And flesh-ish is really when someone is spiritual by nature. That's to say they really have had a genuine experience of God. They've really become partakers of the divine nature.

They've moved into this whole new realm. And yet they are not living from that source. They're not living from that dynamic.

They're not living from that point of view. They've actually either reverted or they haven't grown from this flesh-ish sort of a way of living. So we're going to try to see how that works out in Corinthians.

Because one of the things I said last time when we were together is that it's really important, I think, if we're going to understand the first lesson of the Corinthians, to remember two things and to keep them together. The first thing is that these people have had a genuine experience of God. They've come behind in no gift.

They have received the Spirit of God. Their vocal gifts are in their midst with great power. They have received the Spirit so that they might know the things that are freely given to them of God.

And yet something has gone wrong. They're not living in the way that they ought to live. And what we've said is that really they're living from the I. That's to say they are self-centred.

They are self-motivated. Their whole point of view is from where I stand and what I want and what I want to do. And the impact that that has on the church here is that it just throws everything into disorder.

It throws everything into a chaos. So that all that could have been operating in this church is not working in the way that it is. And even the precious gifts of God are actually just being used as a sort of an opportunity for even greater individuality or greater self-centredness.

We'll see that when we come later on to the passages of the gifts of the Spirit in operation. That even though these are genuine gifts of the Spirit it's possible to use these gifts in a particular way that draws actually all the attention to the receiver and not to the giver. And the consequence then is that the whole thing really just does not produce what God intended it to produce which is a revelation of God, a manifestation of the Spirit in the midst.

So I want to look a little bit then at sort of perspectives or points of view. There's a little word that's used in Greek. It's very simple.

It's just the word kata. And it's used often. If I give you one example of it.

In Romans chapter 1 and verse 3 and 4 it means something along the line of according to or with reference to or from the point of view of and you'll see how it comes here in Romans chapter 1 and verse 3 and 4 where Paul has spoken about the gospel of God, about the Lord Jesus Christ and then verse 3 he says concerning his son Jesus Christ our Lord which was made of the seed of David and then you've got this phrase according to the flesh. Now that's kind of kata-saka and that really means from the point of view of the flesh. It's not using flesh now as something that's bad.

It's just using flesh as something which is human. In other words what Paul is saying is that from a human perspective, from a human point of reference Jesus was descended from the flesh. That's to say he was a

real flesh and blood person.

He was a real descendant of David. But then in verse 4 he says and he's declared to be the spirit of God with power according to, that's to say with reference to the spirit of holiness by the resurrection of the dead. So you can look at Jesus from two points of view or look at his life with reference to two aspects of it and we need to at different times.

We need to remember that he was a real human being. That he was a real flesh and blood person that he was in that sense a real descendant of David. But we also know from him and these aren't in opposition to one another and they're not separated from one another.

There's a perfect union of God and man in Jesus Christ and the other aspect is that he is we can see him according to the flesh, the spirit. As we see him with reference to the spirit we see particularly as a result of the resurrection from the dead in which he was raised by the spirit and we see that aspect in his life as well. So you've got this sort of idea that there are different ways of looking at things and you know that a person's perspective can dramatically alter the way in which they see things and the way in which they live their lives.

I've done this before, I don't think I've actually done it here but if I was sort of trying to illustrate something about this if I were to say something like this follow this through in your mind don't do it physically, just follow it through in your mind. If I were to say I want you to stand up remember we're just playing a game here I want you to stand up I want you to take four paces forwards I want you to turn right by 90 degrees and I want you to take two paces I want you to turn left 90 degrees I want you to take one pace I want you to turn right 90 degrees I want you to take two paces and do you know where you are all of you?

If I've done my calculations right Andy will have just got to the door here the rest of you will be all over the place and it's simply because you're starting from different places from different perspectives and it really is important that we keep in mind the way we're looking at things because if you look at things in a different way you'll see things completely differently this is what Paul is saying in 1 Corinthians when he says that the preaching of the gospel it's not the act of preaching, we've said this before it's the content of the preaching the content of the gospel is foolishness from a certain point of view so there's no point in trying to use clever argument to persuade somebody that the gospel is a wonderfully sensible way of doing it because actually if you do that you're

actually contradicting what the scripture says that to a certain point of view the bible is foolishness to people who are looking for an intellectual proof as to say wisdom it's foolishness, that's the good for people who are looking for a physical demonstration of God in power as to say the Jews, it's foolish to them as well but to those who are God's people those who are looking at things in the light of the spirit those to whom the spirit of God has begun to open their eyes so they can see the things that are fully given to them by God there is in it a tremendous wisdom and a tremendous power but it makes no sense at all to people who are looking at it from different points of view so it's important that we do that as we look at this we in a sense we look at it from two we look at

what's going to happen with the Corinthians from two points of view we can look at it from in the midst of the Corinthian church and we can see the chaos that's kind of going on and we can see everyone striving for supremacy and mastery or we can look at it from outside where Paul is looking at it and see how these things ought to be and how they can be put right OK, one of the little kind of clues to how all this happens is I'm not going systematically through these two chapters I'm going to do it in a slightly different way if you

look at 1 Corinthians chapter 4 and verses 8 and 9 you'll see one of the little evidences where again we can see just what it was that was going wrong in the Corinthian church and it's 1 Corinthians chapter 4 and verses 8 and 9 where it says this you are

already full this is from the New King James Version you are already full, you are already rich you have reigned as kings without us and indeed I could wish that you did reign that we also might reign with you for I think that God has displayed us, the apostles, last as men condemned to death for we have been made a spectacle to the world and both to angels and to men and this is Paul kind of using irony or whatever you want to call it and he sees the way that these people have chosen to live their lives with themselves still as the king with themselves still on the throne with themselves still at the centre of their whole universe and Paul says this, you've reigned as kings but without us and then he shows how God has taught the apostles to live and you've got this little thing he says

here in verse 10 he says we are fools for Christ's sake you are wise in Christ, we are weak but you are strong, you are honourable but we are despised even to this present age we both hunger we both hunger and thirst and are naked and debuffed and have no certain dwelling place and there's this kind of amazing contrast as what's taking place here the way that they had chosen to live their lives and the way that Paul and the other apostles were living their lives and it's this thing he says here in verse 9 I think it's an amazing thing he says and I think it will have significance for us later on in 1 Corinthians, in verse 9 he says this I think that God has set forth us the apostles last as it were appointed to death for we are made a spectacle you know that the Romans loved kind of

great spectacular things they loved theatrical pageants and all this sort of thing and Paul said well actually this is what God has done with us he's kind of put us on display as apostles right at the end, we're right at the back of the show and then he says this here in verse 9 we are a spectacle to the world and to angels and to men and I think the one that intrigues me most in the middle of that is angels there are other people watching the way in which we live our lives the world is watching the men are watching but actually angels are watching the way in which we live our lives as well and that kind of raises the question as to why should this be there's something that's happened in Christ's death upon the cross which I think is sort of really totally beyond our understanding and we

just get little kind of clues to it I've sometimes said that the Bible is really man's history it's the history of man's fall, his redemption, God's purpose for him and in a sense there's another story which you might kind of say is the story of the angels and if you can imagine two circles and one circle represents what the Bible has to say from man's history which is the group that we have in front of us and there's another circle which is the angels' story these two circles intersect in other words their story touches our story and in fact all that we know about the angels is from that little intersection the Bible is not the angels' story, it's our story but in the little intersection we can see some little clues as to things that happen in the angels' story and we're not given the

full story so we have to be careful that we don't speculate too much but one of the things that it says in Hebrews is that Christ's death has cleansed heavenly holy places that have been defiled in Isaiah and in Ezekiel it talks about Satan, it talks about the cherubim and it says that he has defiled his sanctuaries as holy places and something has taken place in a realm which is far different to ours and in fact the death of Christ on the cross has effected a cleansing of heavenly realms I find it thrilling and kind of mystifying that this little world which the astronomers now tell us is so insignificant because there are billions and billions of them it really is the centre of the universe I don't mean geographically, I've got no idea where it is

geographically but I mean as regards

the purposes of God, this world is the centre of the universe God has accomplished things here in God becoming man and in dying the death that he did which is not just touching the redemption of man but is actually effecting another kind of a reconciliation and other kinds of cleansing Now let me speculate a little bit The angels, if we look at Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 we won't do it together now but if we look at it we'll discover that there's a story there about the leader of the angels, the greatest of the angels who rebels against God who turns upside down to God's pattern of authority and determines that he will set his throne by the side of God's throne So our sin, that Adam's sin is the consequence in one sense of the angel's sin Are you following this?

It says in Romans that by one man's sin entered by one man's disobedience and sin didn't begin with the human race it began outside the human race it began with the angel race Now don't ask me what's going to happen to them because I've got no idea but I do know that something was turned upside down and the patterns of authority were completely reversed and you've got hints of this in different parts of the scripture where it talks about angels who didn't keep their first estate but they rebelled and they went into other directions and you'll see in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 this pattern of Satan setting his throne up in competition with the throne of God Paul is interested in angels in 1 Corinthians I think it's significance that he's interested If you look for example in 1 Corinthians 6 and verse 3 you've got this little phrase where he's talking about people going to law outside the church in verse 3 he says this Do you not know that we should judge angels?

When I read that I sometimes feel like saying no I didn't know this, tell me more but of course he doesn't he doesn't tell us any more at all so there's a mystery here there's something that's going to happen in which we are going to judge angels I mean that's mind blowing to me I don't know what the implications of all that are but I know that part of it is that God is working out a purpose now in his church which is a demonstration to angels it's a manifestation of God's redemptive purposes of the empire fighting back of God's work being re-established again which the angels can actually see and if you remember there's another one this is kind of running ahead of ourselves but just so that we've got it all together if you look at 1 Corinthians 11 and verse 10 another one of these kind

of mysterious things this cause the woman ought to have authority on her head because of the angels and I know we can speculate we can say well yes it's because of this and this I don't think God gives us a full explanation as to what's happening here except that in some senses the church is to be now and this is Paul in Ephesians if you look at this in Ephesians chapter 3 and verse 10 talks about this mystery and then in chapter 3 and Ephesians verse 10 he says this to the intent that now not ultimately but now to the intent that now unto the powers and principalities in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God God is doing something in the church that isn't just our personal salvation it's something God is doing something in the church he is displaying his

power we are to be, this is again Ephesians we will be to the praise of the glory of his grace maybe it's going to be something like this that one day when we come to the culmination of things and all the judgments are set the thrones are set and angels are judged and men are judged that one of the things that will happen is that we will see what an amazing demonstration this of God it was in human beings these puny weak creatures who are less than the angels that God can actually work redemption in them and do something and I believe myself I say we are running ahead of ourselves but I believe in ourselves that this is kind of significant in what Paul has to say here when he says that there is a significance in the

woman covering her head in this authority because of the angels it's

something to do with the reasserting of God's order of things it's something to do with God putting things back the way they ought to have been sin is man in wrong relationship with God sin is man wanting to be God and redemption is actually man wanting God to be God you understand that? this is the promise isn't it that was given to the ancient people of God that you'll be my people said God and I will be your God and I don't know about you but that's exactly what I want I want a God I don't want me as a God I don't want angels as a God I want God as a God I want everything back in it's right order and there's something running through here and the thing that would hinder this and would hinder the church at Corinth being a real demonstration of what God is doing is if the people in

Corinth instead of living their lives as servants in the power of God actually determined to live their lives as kings again can you see what I'm saying? so what they're doing is they're actually repeating the whole folly all over again and now in the church which was intended to be the stage on which God manifests something the powers and principalities so the way we look at things is really very significant I'm going to say one more thing before I kind of move on and that is that I've talked about individuals in Corinth being individualistic but I think I've also mentioned that there's something about the church in Corinth itself which is individualistic that's to say the church was independent from other churches and seems to have kind of developed an arrogance that they'd got

everything they needed they didn't need anybody else so they didn't need to follow what anybody else was doing they didn't need to listen to what anybody else was doing they didn't need anybody else they were absolutely self-contained and several times through 1 Corinthians you'll see things that Paul will say which remind the church at Corinth that this isn't the language they would use but this is the language I'm going to use that would remind them that no man is an island and no church is an island there is a sense in which there's no such thing as the independence of the local church there is the interdependence of separate local churches and there's a real need for churches to have some kind of link together let me just show you some of these things Paul says this this is 1

Corinthians 4 and verse 17 he says this this is again some of these verses are really just amazing verses verse 17 for this cause I have sent to you Timothy who is my beloved son and faithful in the Lord who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ as I teach everywhere in every church this is Paul writing to the Corinthian church and telling them that Paul knows how the other churches behave the church at Corinth is not a one-off it's not just something absolutely on its own that can go in its own way and do its own thing actually it's part of the whole church of Jesus Christ but the way he says he expresses that it's my ways which be in Christ which I teach everywhere have you noticed just a pattern of that my ways which are in Christ which I teach this is Paul

actually saying of course what he says in verse 16 wherefore I beseech you be ye followers of me do you remember in the 60s they used to have this corny sticker that you could stick at the back of your car that said no follow me you follow Jesus do you remember that it's not here with me but old enough to kind of remember that well Paul wouldn't have said that Paul actually said be ye followers of me and what he said here to these Corinthians is not just followers of my doctrine but followers of my ways which are in Christ the way in which I'm living my life the pattern of my life is not it's part of God's example it's part of the doctrine the way that I'm living my life and this comes out several times the way that Paul has behaved in the other churches is part of it's part of a body of

truth that God has given to the church later on he'll call them traditions and I know we don't like traditions but sometimes traditions are good things a tradition technically is something which has been handed from hand to hand and it depends where it's come from as to whether it's a good tradition or a bad tradition look in 1 Corinthians 7 verse 17 and see how he keeps on mentioning things which remind the Corinthian church that they are not the only church verse 17 1 Corinthians 7 verse 17 but as God has distributed to every man as the Lord has called every man so let him walk and so I ordain in all the churches Paul's saying there's a pattern of the way that God is operating in all the churches and if you determine to kind of march to the sound of your own drum you'll actually miss

things that God wants us to sing in the whole church of Jesus Christ and then again in verse chapter 11 verse 6 verse 16 sorry where he's talking about head covering and he says and if any man seems to be contentious we have no such custom neither the churches of God can you see how he keeps on kind of using as a reference point other churches and he's saying to the church at Corinth look at what the others are doing not so that you can copy them as a just a mechanical copy of it but so that you can see what God is saying you can see what the spirit of God is saying and doing in the churches we need one another is what I'm really saying ok I'm going to stop there's others there but I'm going to stop we'll have 10 minutes

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