

I would like the first seven verses (of 1 Cor. 4). "So then, men ought to regard us as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the secret things of God. Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful. I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself. My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me. Therefore, judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God. Now, brothers, I have applied these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, so that you may learn from us the meaning of the saying, Do not go beyond what is written. . . . For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive. And if you did receive it, what do you boast as though you did not?"

This 7th v. is made up of three rhetorical questions. I think it's a good illustration of the fact that you cannot take a few words out of Scripture and simply feel that they taken by themselves will naturally give you exactly the idea that is contained in them. In the light of the words and context it is quite clear that these are the statements actually, they are the very strong statements but they are given the form of questions that certainly deserve to be answered, No.

I would like to look particularly at the second one of these questions: What do you have that you did not receive? So I'd like to ask the question, What Have We Received? I believe that the first part of the answer is that we have received from God an immortal spirit. It is wonderful to think that though nations may rise and fall, though all the relations (nations?) of the world may change, though the glory of man disappears like the flower of grass, yet God has given to every human being an immortal spirit.

A nation may last 300 years, 400 years. Very few last that long. But each of us is to last for all eternity. How tremendous that He has given us an immortal spirit! That is not perhaps the right way to say it. He hasn't given you the immortal spirit; if you weren't the immortal spirit there wouldn't be any you to receive it! He has created us. He has created each of us as an immortal spirit for His own wonderful purposes.

1 Cor. 13:3 I think brings out quite clearly the fact that I am not simply a physical body but that I am something distinct from the body. In that wonderful ch. of 1 Cor. we read (v.3), "If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing." There is an "I" which possesses the body, which uses the body.

I believe that this is something that all people through the ages until very recently have agreed upon. I believe that most people in their heart really believe on it now. Though there are those today, and they are people in positions of great prominence