"All That Glitters Is Not Gold"
*1 Corinthians 13:1-13 * June 10, 2007*

I. Can we truly expect to experience God's power in this life?
Scriptures:
Romans 1:16 – "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation."
1 Cor.4:20 – "For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power."
Ephesians 1:18-19 – "I pray…that…you may know…his incomparably great power for us who believe."
Ephesians 3:20 – [God] is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power."
Ephesians 6:10 – "Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power."
Philippians 3:10 – "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection."

Last week's key teaching point:
While we *can* experience God here and now, even so this life will not be one great experience of God after the other, one warm fuzzy after another, and so we must learn to *live by faith and not by sight.*

Why is it important to set the balance?
Because oftentimes, we will be tempted (if we're not careful) to make an <u>idol</u> out of experience.

II. Problems with being too obsessed with 'experience':

First – it may make us forget that at the center of our faith is a: <u>Cross</u>.

A. What was true about the founding of the Corinth church?

The Holy Spirit fell on this church in a powerful way. 1 Cor.1:6 – "Our testimony about Christ was confirmed in you." Confirmed, how? By the appearing of what the Bible calls 'signs and wonders'. Hebrews 2:4 – "God…testified to [the gospel] by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will." And this happened to the Corinthians.

B. What mistake did these young believers make?
Unfortunately, these young believers began to let these experiences get to their heads. And they began to think that Christianity was all about 'shazam!' if you remember your Captain Marvel. All about 'Wham!' if you remember your Batman. All about 'Bam!' if you remember your Flintstones. They began to believe that their Christian steak should always come with a sizzle.

C. How did this show itself?
Back in the first century, there were groups of traveling speakers, much like today, and what the Corinthian believers did is they became groupies of their favorite preacher or teacher. Whoever put on the best show, whoever gave them the best experience became their favorite speaker. And so Paul has to rebuke them for this. Chapter 1:11-12. "My brothers, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. What I mean is this: One of you says, 'I follow Paul', another, 'I follow Apollos', another, 'I follow Cephas."

D. What did Paul have to remind them of?
"For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." *Hello? Remember the cross boys and girls?* he was saying. *This thing isn't about you being entertained; it's about this guy who died on a cross, remember, so that you could be forgiven, so that you could then die to yourself, so that you could learn to put others first and grow in love. Remember?*

E. Do we do the same thing today?
When it's all said and done, it's not about you experiencing a good show. It's about a band of brothers and sisters in a local community gathering around the cross of Jesus Christ, to worship Him, to pray to him, to hear his word simply taught. It's a dagger to any pastor's heart to watch his people flock to the latest,

greatest megachurch because they put on a better show. It's a dagger to any pastor's hearts to hear his sermons compared to Charles Stanley or Chuck Swindoll or Rick Warren. Few pastors can compete with this. But when believers treat going to church the same way they treat going to the movies – where are they going to get the most bang for their buck? – this is what you get.

Second – it might lead us into great <u>sin</u> or great <u>apostasy</u>.

A. Why does this make sense?

If we've bought into the idea that 'having a good experience' or 'feeling good' is what it means to be spiritual, then logically, naturally, we are going to gravitate toward those things that give us warm fuzzies or make us feel good.

B. What sin was the Corinthian church tolerating? How could they do this?

"It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans: A man has his father's wife! And you are proud! Shouldn't you rather have been filled with grief and have put out of your fellowship the man who did this?"

***How could this happen? How could they wink at such a sin?* It's what happens when you make a God out of experience, out of feeling good, out of pleasure.**

C. What will happen in the last days? (2 Tim.3:1-5)

"But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive…lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God – having a form of godliness but denying its power."

D. What else will people do in the last days? (2 Tim.4:3)

"The time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear."

E. How do I guard myself so I don't get hoodwinked?

Who will be able to withstand such a dark and terrible moment, and not get hood-winked? Only those who cling to the gospel, who wrap their arms around the Bible and don't let go. Only those who have learned to walk by faith and not by sight.

Deuteronomy 13:1ff – "If a prophet or one who foretells by dreams, appears among you and announces to you a miraculous sign or wonder, and if the sign or wonder of which he has spoken takes place, and he says, 'Let us follow other gods,'…you must not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer. The Lord your God is testing you to find out whether you love him with all your heart and with all your soul It is the Lord your God you must follow."

Third – it might cause us to become <u>arrogant</u> to the point where we never become spiritually <u>mature</u>.

A. What happened to the Corinthians?

They let their spiritual experiences get to their heads.

B. What shows that we are mature in Christ? Is it:

1. *Knowledge of the faith?* **<u>No</u>**
2. *Spiritual-giftedness?* **<u>No</u>**
3. *Great faith?* **<u>No</u>**

C. What is it then?

1 Corinthians 13:1-3 – "If I speak in tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the flames, but have not love I gain nothing."

D. What attitude should always accompany us no matter what we are able to do for Christ?

"By the <u>grace</u> of God, I am what I am."
(1 Cor.15:10)