A HOPE ADDICT

TEXT:1 Corinthians 16:15-18

We live in a world of addicts. In 2016 the Surgeon General estimated that 1 in 7 Americans is addicted to drugs. Over 50% of the country has an immediate family member who is an addict.

The country is reeling from an Opioid crisis, an alcoholism crisis, and a crisis of addiction to prescription pain pills. And God knows we are almost all addicted to cell phones and social media.

But in the closing verses of this chapter, we learn about an addiction that would actually be a good thing. I mean we'd all be better if more people tested positive for this one…if the blood work, the saliva swab, and the breathalyzer confirmed that a person was addicted…to serving Jesus Christ.

I. THE RECORD OF THIS ADDICT

Addicted = appointed themselves, devoted, ordained, determined, set aside, designated

A. HIS PERSONAL BELIEF

Achaia is the region that contained Corinth and Athens. Paul came to **Athens in Acts 17** and to **Corinth in Acts 18.** Paul had a great evangelistic ministry in Corinth and one of the first converts was Stephanas.

I don't know how it happened…I know their services were not exactly like ours today. But **Acts 18:5 says that when Paul came to Corinth he was "pressed in his spirit and testified that Jesus was the Christ."**

Acts 18:8-11 - Many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized. Then the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not your peace: For I am with you, and no man shall set on you to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city. And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

A. HIS PERSONAL BELIEF
B. HIS PUBLIC BAPTISM

The Bible knows NOTHING of a person who wants to follow Jesus without being immersed in water as an outward sign.

How do we know that Stephanas was baptized?
1 Corinthians 1:16 - "And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other."

Paul knew all about this man. He'd led him to Christ and baptized him personally. There's no closeness like the closeness that comes when you lead somebody to the Lord and see them follow Jesus.

A. HIS PERSONAL BELIEF
B. HIS PUBLIC BAPTISM
C. HIS PERSISTENT BEHAVIOR

Paul appeals to the testimony of Stephanas...a man who was KNOWN to the Corinthian church. In fact, it seems as if Stephanas, along with 2 other men listed in verse 17, was the courier that brought a letter from Corinth to Paul. That letter from them prompted this letter to them.

By the way, most churches members are "known" for something.
For what are you KNOWN?

In Acts 19:15 the sons of Sceva sought to do an exorcism "in the name of Jesus whom Paul preaches." The demon cried out, **"Jesus I know and Paul I know but who are you?"**

Do the demons of hell know you?

I. THE RECORD OF THIS ADDICT
II. THE REASON FOR THIS ADDICTION

You could say, "Well, he got saved." It can't be that. I know plenty of saved people who aren't addicted to serving Jesus.

You say, "Jesus changed his life and he's grateful." Well, I know lots of people who SAY that but aren't addicted.

Why is anybody addicted to anything?

The American Society for Addiction Medicine defines "addiction" as a "Disease of "brain reward," motivation, memory and leads to biological and behavioral response to external THINGS, in turn triggering cravings and/or engagement in addictive behaviors."

This week I've studied the subject of addiction and I've come up with 6 common characteristics of addiction. Let me give them to you and ask you to check yourself: Are ANY of these signs characteristic of your relationship with Christ?

A. ADDICTS DON'T HAVE TO BE PLEADED TO ENGAGE IN THEIR ADDICTION

You don't have to ask a drunk to drink, a pothead to smoke dope, or a heroine addict to "shoot up." And you don't have to beg a "Jesus addict" to serve the Lord. It's in their rewired "nature."

So, it was with Stephanas. "They addicted themselves." They appointed themselves. They ordained themselves. They set themselves apart for the task. They assigned themselves a job.

What a far cry from the recruitment tactics that have to be used in most churches at this time of year. We ask, "Will you teach? Will you serve?" And often the answer is, "Well, I'll pray about it. Come back and ask me if you can't find anybody else."

A. ADDICTS DON'T HAVE TO BE PLEADED TO ENGAGE IN THEIR ADDICTION

B. ADDICTS HAVE ONLY ONE PRIORITY

The only thing that matters to them is getting their fix. They'll move heaven and earth...and a little bit of Hell to get it.

It's more important than family. Addicts will lie to their family. Addicts will steal from their family. Addicts will even kill their family if need be.
If anything conflicts with the addiction, the other thing loses and the addiction wins. It's not that an addict never does anything but drugs, it's that EVERYTHING he does is affected by and secondary to drugs.

And so it is with the "Jesus addict." He realizes Jesus demands absolute Lordship...total control. She understands, as **Colossians 1:18 puts it, "That in all things He might have the preeminence."**

It's not that an addict never does anything but Jesus, it's that EVERYTHING he does is affected by and secondary to Jesus.

Jesus is PRIORITY #1 in the family.
Jesus is PRIORITY #1 on the job.
Jesus is PRIORITY #1 in the finances.
Jesus is PRIORITY #1 in recreation.

A. ADDICTS DON'T HAVE TO BE PLEADED TO ENGAGE IN THEIR ADDICTION
B. ADDICTS HAVE ONLY ONE PRIORITY
C. ADDICTION IS CAUSED BY A CHANGE IN THE BRAIN AND IT'S HARD TO STOP

BOTTOM LINE: You don't think like you used to think. The brain is literally rewired.

Isn't that what happens at salvation?

The alcoholic says, "I'm going to stop." And they mean it.
The drug addict says, "That was my last hit." And they mean it.
But the brain has been rewired and they CANNOT stop.

As a Christian, you can't get away from serving God for long. If you can, you may not be a Christian at all.

Jeremiah 20:9 Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay.

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D. ADDICTION EVENTUALLY SHOWS UP ON THE OUTSIDE

Addiction will manifest externally and you can't stop it.

If you haven't seen a person in a couple of years and they've gotten hooked on drugs, when you see them, you can SEE IT on their face. You may even say to a friend, "I don't know what he's on but he's on something. He doesn't even look the same!"

They look different...talk different...act different
They dress different
They run with a different crowd
Stuff they used to have they don't anymore...
They go places they used to not go
They do stuff they used to not do
It affects them everywhere they go (home, work, play)
Sometimes we sing, "When I think about the Lord, how He saved me, how He raised me, how He filled me with the Holy Ghost, how He healed me to the uttermost...

We sing, "It makes me wanna SHOUT." But Stephanas said, "Shout if you want to. It makes me want to SERVE."

It makes me want to give.
It makes me want to teach.
It makes me want to win souls.
It makes me want to bless others.
It makes me want to go on mission trip.

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It begins to be what the person is "known for." If you start to date an addict, loving friends will warn you. He may have money. He may have a fancy car or a nice truck. But leave him alone...he's on drugs.

She may have an hour-glass figure. She may be what the Commodores called "A brick house." But leave her alone...she's hooked on everything but phonics

Verse 15 begins, "You KNOW that the house of Stephanas..."

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F. ADDICTION IS STRENGTHENED AND TRIGGERED BY OTHER ADDICTS

One thing a drug addict needs to avoid is another drug addict. I mean, if you're trying to quit drinking, you won't do it hanging around your old drinking buddies.

Similarly, if you want to become a Jesus addict, just hang around some other people who are addicted to Jesus. You'll be surprised at how much it will rub off on you.

Hebrews 10:24 And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:

Frankly, I don't know all of the reasons Stephanas was addicted to the ministry. But I do know two reasons he was an addict are listed in **verse 17. They are named Fortunatus and Achaicus. Bottom line, he hung around other Jesus addicts**

1. THE RECORD OF THIS ADDICT
2. THE REASON FOR THIS ADDICTION
3. THE RESPONSE TO THIS ADMONITION
Would anybody accuse you of being "addicted to serving Jesus?" If not, what are you going to change in RESPONSE to the admonition of this text? By the way, as long as you're breathing, it's never too late to start over!

A. SUBMIT TO WORK WITH SUCH MEN
(16) That ye submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with us, and laboureth.

If you see someone providing leadership by working, help them! Don't be like the man who said "Work doesn't bother me. I could sit and watch it all day." You say, "I'm not a Jesus addict." OK. Help those that are. You will likely find yourself HOOKED before very long.

If you get hooked up with people who work for Jesus it won't be long before you'll be hooked like those people.

A. SUBMIT TO WORK WITH SUCH MEN
B. SEEK TO WALK LIKE SUCH MEN
(17-18)
In fact, if he's a leader, Paul says, "Follow him...be like him!"
If he's a role model, Paul says, "Model your life after him!"

The website of Medical News Today lists the top signs that a person may have an addiction. I find these interesting in light of today's text.
A person with addiction will
1. Make sacrifices for the sake of their addiction
2. Will continue their addiction despite health problems
3. Drops other hobbies and activities
4. Changes in appetite
5. Changes in appearance
6. Craves more and more of the desired activity, no longer being satisfied with the previous dosage

In light of that, are you hooked on serving Jesus?