

## THE FIRST LETTER OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS

Collect Prayer for Fourth Sunday after Trinity

O GOD, the protector of all that trust in thee, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy; Increase and multiply upon us thy mercy; that, thou being our ruler and guide, we may so pass through things temporal, that we finally lose not the things eternal. Grant this, O heavenly Father, for Jesus Christ's sake our Lord\*. Amen.

Questions or Comments from the last session? For those of you following online you may email Fr. Bart at [frryanssc@frontiernet.net](mailto:frryanssc@frontiernet.net)

### 1 Corinthians 2

*<sup>1</sup>When I came to you, brethren, I did not come proclaiming to you the **testimony** of God in lofty words or wisdom. <sup>2</sup>For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. <sup>3</sup>And I was with you in weakness and in much fear and trembling; <sup>4</sup>and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, <sup>5</sup>that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.*

I. Paul speaks his mission. He began this concept in his introduction.

II. Note that he does not use the word Apostle, but the theme of being sent continues to develop.

### WORDS MEAN DIFFERENT THINGS IN DIFFERENT TIMES AND IN DIFFERENT CONTEXTS

III. Note the word Testimony in my translation. What does your Bible say? "Announcing a mystery" mysterion in the Greek. Why is the word mystery not used?

A. Ancient Hebrew understanding is different than our modern understanding. *RAZ* in Hebrew word means, a revelation that is connected to an eschatological meaning. That is a pronouncement about the end times.

B. The Hellenistic understanding is also different. For the Greeks the word is used to describe an experience outside the normal range of human experience. Thus we might say that the word *mysterion* would be used to describe the Revelation to St. John.

C. Today we think of a mystery as something that is not explainable, so using the word mystery would not convey the same meaning.

D. The **Testimony** that St. Paul is revealing what is known to Christians, The Gospel" and this knowledge comes from the self revealing of God. Not from human understanding, or by the power of human intellect. It is connected to the end time (Hebrew) and is extra-ordinary knowledge (Greek)

E. What we are to understand is that Paul's mission is to go our and proclaim the truth of the Gospel and to preach the whole Gospel not just the easy to hear or they easy to understand parts.

*<sup>6</sup>Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. <sup>7</sup>But we impart a **secret and hidden wisdom** of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glorification. <sup>8</sup>None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. <sup>9</sup>But, as it is written,*  
*“What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,  
 nor the heart of man conceived,  
 what God has prepared for those who love him,”*

*<sup>10</sup>God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. <sup>11</sup>For what person knows a man’s thoughts except the spirit of the man which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. <sup>12</sup>Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God, that we might understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. <sup>13</sup>And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who possess the Spirit.*

<sup>14</sup>*The unspiritual man does not receive the gifts of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.* <sup>15</sup>*The spiritual man judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one.* <sup>16</sup>*“For who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?” But we have the mind of Christ.*

I. The word *mysterion* is again present in the Greek of this passage. An alternative translation would be " *we speak of the wisdom of God hidden in mystery*"

II. We note the Trinitarian theology in this passage. vs. 10-11 (The clear union of the First and third persons of the Trinity)

I will continue to point out the fact that S. Paul writing have greatly influenced Christian Theology. I hope you are also noting the Collect prayers I am choosing from the BCP. These are also based on Paul's theological statements.

III. The theme of this section is the Wisdom of God

A. Developing the theme Paul uses the contrast between God and man God Spirit and the spirit of man

B. Continuing to develop this theme of mystery, Paul notes the absolute otherness of God. I would have you consider the Gospel for this Sunday (18th after Trinity BCP 215) Jesus confounds the teachers by asking them a simple question for Him and an impossible question for any man to answer.

C. Note that he explains God as the one who has preordained before the ages the source and summit.

D. For Paul all that happens within the Christian Community is of the Wisdom of God - His words are spoken - deeds are done because of His gifts

#### IV. The second issue of Paul's Mystery Language - Gnostics

A. I introduced to you the idea in Chapter I that the group that identified itself as belonging to Christ may be a group of Pneumatic Gnostics COR 1:12

B. We note the shift in the language and the use of the word we. Paul may be identifying himself as a member of the community in order to confront the Gnostic group. He uses their language to confront them 2:12 about Spiritual gifts and who has or has not received them.

C. He is also uses a carefully constructed two fold argument in this confrontation. He makes his statements and then follows up with the Scriptures that support his arguments.

D. The central Message of this confrontation is to correct the pneumatics understanding of what it means to be a human person and what it means to be human person Graced by God.

\* In this passage we also have another issue of language and translation differing from the understanding Paul wishes to convey. He uses the word *anthropos* and this is often translated as man. There is a Greek word for adult male *aner*. He does not use this word because we understand him to be referring not to males but to all human beings

#### V. Greek Thought and Body, Soul Language

A. Paul is instructing us on the unity of the human person when he is inspired- (Inspired in the sense of have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (God's Grace)- literally filled with the Holy Ghost)

##### B. Greek Thought

1. *Soma* - Body
2. *Sarx* - Flesh
3. *Psuche* - Soul

The Greeks divided body, soul and spirit. The body was the flesh and the soul. The soul was only free to attain it's full potential when freed from the body. Paul is influenced by Greek thought, but his writing contradicts the Greek Philosophy.

C. Paul's Teachings - when writing about the natural and the spiritual person Paul does not divide the person rather he explains the difference by the action of the Holy Spirit.

1. Natural Person - one lives a natural life
2. Spiritual Person - a natural person who has received the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

D. Paul then uses this explanation to argue against the divisions within the community at Corinth.

1. How can you be divided when you are no longer natural persons?
2. How can you be divided when you have received spiritual gifts for the whole community
3. How can you be divided when you have the Mind of Christ?

The Mind of Christ for Paul is the receiving and accepting the indwelling the Holy Ghost so that we may be informed, encouraged and enabled to do what God would have us do.

### 1 Corinthians 3

<sup>1</sup>But I, brethren, could not address you as spiritual men, but as men of the flesh, as babes in Christ. <sup>2</sup>I fed you with milk, not solid food; for you were not ready for it; and even yet you are not ready, <sup>3</sup>for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh, and behaving like ordinary men? <sup>4</sup>For when one says, "I belong to Paul," and another, "I belong to Apollos," are you not merely men?

<sup>5</sup>What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. <sup>6</sup>I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. <sup>7</sup>So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. <sup>8</sup>He who plants and he who waters are equal, and each shall receive his wages according to his labor. <sup>9</sup>For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building.

## I. The third time that Paul talks about his ministry

### A. Confrontational Tone

1. Not Spiritual but carnal - the word is flesh *sarx*
2. Not perfect but children
3. Not wise but fools

### B. The Images Paul Uses

1. He is like a Mother feeding children with milk
  - a. Flesh not spiritual
  - b. divisions are evidence of the lack of spiritual maturity
2. As a worker in God's Garden - Planting and Watering
  - a. He is nurturing the "plants" in the garden
  - b. He and Apollo have worked together all for the benefit of the community in Corinth, but it is God's Garden not theirs

<sup>10</sup>According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and another man is building upon it. Let each man take care how he builds upon it. <sup>11</sup>For no other foundation can any one lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. <sup>12</sup>Now if any one builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw—<sup>13</sup>each man's work will become manifest; for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. <sup>14</sup>If the work which any man has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. <sup>15</sup>If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

<sup>16</sup>Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? <sup>17</sup>If any one destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and that temple you are.

## I. God's Construction - parallel to the farm explanation

### A. Construction is God's Temple

1. Hebrew Understanding was the Temple in Jerusalem - center of God creation
2. Paul is going to teach that they are God's Temple

B. The Corinthians are to be building God's Temple

C. Paul notes the complimentary tasks

1. The issue of God's Grace - *Charis* in Greek
2. Gods Grace = Charismas

D. Paul notes his role in laying the foundation

1. Preaching the teaching the Gospel of Jesus
2. This is the Apostolic Role

He notes that the foundation is laid is the ONLY FOUNDATION Jesus Christ

E. The construction will be tested

1. Paul exhorts each worker to note the quality of his work
2. The building material will also be tested
  - a. He uses a list of materials - to note the different gifts of the community
  - b. Durable - non flammable - similar to the precious material used to build the temple in Jerusalem
3. Finally he talks of the final evaluation looking at the work in light of the second coming

This section also contains a basis for the theological understanding of Grace and Works. Note in verses 12-15 the idea that fire will test and so materials some work will survive that that survives will lead to a reward for the worker-wages. If the work does not survive it is lost, but the worker although he will not receive wages he will be saved - Grace alone

F. The Final Turn in the Temple Illustration

1. Remember the Temple in Hebrew thought
2. Recognize the great revelation Paul uses in telling the Corinthians that they are God's Temple
  - a. This is a visible sign of unity - why the divisions are wrong
  - b. The cosmic center of the universe has shifted - The old ways -eye for an eye - honoring one over another by occupation, wealth or social status is wrong

3. A Warning for those who ignore this instruction
  - a. Destroy God's Temple and you will be destroyed
  - b. Destroying God's Temple is destroying yourself, because you are part of the Body, part of the Temple

<sup>18</sup>Let no one deceive himself. If any one among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. <sup>19</sup>For the wisdom of this world is folly with God. For it is written, "He catches the wise in their craftiness," <sup>20</sup>and again, "The Lord knows that the thoughts of the wise are futile." <sup>21</sup>So let no one boast of men. For all things are yours, <sup>22</sup>whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future, all are yours; <sup>23</sup>and you are Christ's; and Christ is God's.

I. Paul closes this section of his argument by referring again to himself, Apollos and Cephas. His primary reasons:

- A. Do not deceive yourselves - You are not wise
- B. Become fools so that you can become wise
  1. Pride blocks learning
  2. The wisdom of the age is not wisdom at all
- C. The slogan "All things are yours"
  1. May have been used by one or another of the parties at Corinth
  2. Used to explain behavior that is outside the norm
  3. Is part of the reason for the disruptions in the community

We should consider the issue of Reformed Theology and the "Are you Saved Question". What Paul is teaching is that we have everything in Christ. We are redeemed, but salvation is what we work on day by day with behavior that reflects our exalted status as the Temple of God.