

THE FIRST LETTER OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS

Collect Prayer for the 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.

Are there questions or comments from the last session? For those of you following online you may email Fr. Bart at frfryanssc@frontiernet.net

Corinthians 4

¹This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. ²Moreover it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy. ³But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. I do not even judge myself. ⁴I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me. ⁵Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then every man will receive his commendation from God.

I. Paul turns again to the language of the law courts

A. Forensic language

1. Judging
2. Held against
3. Being found
4. Being acquitted

B. Why this language?

1. To defend his ministry that is being attacked
2. To use a more formal tone to set-up the next transition
3. To contrast the use of the word *oikonomos* (household slave)
 - a. this word defines his ministry

b. He begin to form the concept of imitation of household acts

C. The Issues of Judging

1. Paul is refraining from judging others - but he is pointing to their action of judging
2. He contrasts Judgment with Judging
 - a. Judging is for the great high priest at the end of time
 - b. The Corinthians are being judgmental of others and this is a source of the discord.
3. The final admonition is in pointing to the end time, Paul is reminding them that they should be living as if they expect the second coming tomorrow

The Eschatological Imperative

This five dollar phrase refers to the fact that Paul and the early church were sure that the second coming would not be delayed. That Jesus would be returning and that the return would be soon. The delay causes pastoral problems for the early church and her leaders. The issue of death among members of the community is but one example of this pastoral problem.

⁶I have applied all this to myself and Apollos for your benefit, brethren, that you may learn by us not to go beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up in favor of one against another. ⁷For who sees anything different in you? What have you that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if it were not a gift?

I. The theme of the Household servant *oikonomos* is now going to be developed further.

- A. Paul now addresses the Corinthians not as Judges, but as siblings
- B. Apollos is also identified as family
- C. This family identification is to suggest that the Corinthians might learn from their older, wiser sibling
 1. Their pride in themselves and their gifts (another source of division) is silly.
 2. They are boasting not of their work but of what was given to them

II. The phrase "beyond what is written"

A. There are several possible understandings of this phrase

1. Rhetorical device
2. Could have been referring to Paul's past instructions
3. Could be reminding the Corinthians of Paul's first description of them (children)

All these are to explain that Paul is speaking about an issue or issues that the readers should understand have already been explained

B. How do we understand the phrase today - Is it important?

1. First Paul is stating the obvious - God's Word (what was written) is the most important - beyond the word - explanations or additions are man's word and less important
2. If we are very strict with our selves in our discipline or our behavior it is our choice and is not a source of pride or should it be used to instruct others.
3. Anglican Application - vow of conformity - the written vow concerning the Old and New Testament

⁸Already you are filled! Already you have become rich! Without us you have become kings! And would that you did reign, so that we might share the rule with you! ⁹For I think that God has exhibited us apostles as last of all, like men sentenced to death; because we have become a spectacle to the world, to angels and to men. ¹⁰We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ. We are weak, but you are strong. You are held in honor, but we in disrepute. ¹¹To the present hour we hunger and thirst, we are ill-clad and buffeted and homeless, ¹²and we labor, working with our own hands. When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; ¹³when slandered, we try to conciliate; we have become, and are now, as the refuse of the world, the offscouring of all things.

I. Paul is using yet another rhetorical device as he begins this passage

- A. He compares and contrasts the ones he has identified as part of their family (Paul and Apollos) with the Corinthians understanding of themselves.
- B. This comparison and the radical contrast is the device he employs to teach the Corinthians

II. How Paul Teaches - note the triad

- A. You are satisfied - you are enriched - you have acted royally - without us
- B. Their actions are all an illusion says Paul - if it were not their would all (The Church) be sharing in the richness
- C. Paul then uses his own actions, persecution and suffering as an example to prove that the Kingdom is not yet (The phrase "to this hour" RSV)
- D. He also uses his response to the events of persecution to teach the proper response for the Christian Disciple

The central message is the connection with the events of the last days and the Kingdom to come. These events (persecution) would not be coming upon Paul or any Christian disciple if the Kingdom had come. The Corinthians are happy and carrying on as if they were already living in the Kingdom, not by God's Grace, but because of illusionary wealth.

II. This listing of suffering has precedent in the ancient world

A. Philosophers used this type of list as an example of how they lived and noted their response. Living with a set of difficulties they were still able to be inwardly calm. This the philosopher used to prove the effectiveness of his philosophy.

B. Paul is doing the same thing as he notes the difficulties and the response to show the effectiveness of living as a Christian Disciple.

III. Labor with our own hands

- A. Paul speaks as a rabbi - not in the typical sense, but in the role of teacher that every adult male in the Jewish community is to teach

B. He notes his physical labor - this is also a Hebrew understanding - even a rabbi is expected to work and support himself and his family

This contrasts the Hellenistic World View - where the philosopher is supported by the community or by fees paid by his students. The reason for this is the nature of the philosophy itself. There is separation of the mental activity, the arts, philosophy and religion and the ordinary bodily pursuits. The wise are those who rise above the human activity, human needs.

C. Paul notes manual labor as one of his hardships this may be for two reasons.

1. Paul may have been from a wealthier family and manual labor may not have been a day to day necessity. Some commentators suggest that his learning a trade may have been a youth's rebellion of his family's station in life

2. The Corinthians in the Christian Community are wealthy. It may have been that they looked down on Paul for working. He may have even refused their offers of support, so as to distance himself from any influence.

¹⁴I do not write this to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children. ¹⁵For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel. ¹⁶I urge you, then, be imitators of me.

I. Now that Paul has asserted his position he now clarifies why he is writing to the Corinthian Church

A. As a parent instructing his children

B. Not to make them ashamed, but to move them to corrective behavior

There is an interesting word in this passage for us to consider, *Pedagogue*. We get the word pedagogy from this root. Pedagogy is the science and art of teaching children. We might from that infer that a pedagogue was a teachers of children,

but it is not so. A *pedagogue* was not a teacher, but a household servant or slave who walked with the children to school. It was also the responsibility of the *pedagogue* to discipline the children so that they behaved and learned their lessons.

Therefore, Paul is pointing to a truth about the theology of Christian ministry. We have One Truth, One Teacher One Great High Priest, Jesus. All others are acting for him by caring for the sheep; walking with them and helping them understand what He taught. Paul wants us to know that he is not the teacher, but one who walks with those who are being instructed by the Master.

¹⁷Therefore I sent to you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church. ¹⁸Some are arrogant, as though I were not coming to you. ¹⁹But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I will find out not the talk of these arrogant people but their power. ²⁰For the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power. ²¹What do you wish? Shall I come to you with a rod, or with love in a spirit of gentleness?

I. The Introduction of Timothy - Who is Timothy?

- A. One instructed by Paul - Paul's child in the faith
- B. A fellow worker - not just a Christian, but one called to ministry
- C. A fellow missionary - one who has worked closely with Paul
- D. A close and personal confidant - Paul states he has no one like Timothy

II. Paul is sending him to the Corinthians to be present for him (*Parousia*)

- A. The theology of presence and absence - developed further in Chapter 6
- B. The ancient understanding of an emissary
 - 1. All power of the one who sent him
 - 2. Not a political slight as today - Sec. of State rather than the president to a funeral
- C. It is possible that Timothy is the person who carried this letter to the Corinthian Church

1 Corinthians 5

¹It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and of a kind that is not found even among pagans; for a man is living with his father's wife. ²And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you.

³For though absent in body I am present in spirit, and as if present, I have already pronounced judgment ⁴in the name of the Lord Jesus on the man who has done such a thing. When you are assembled, and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, ⁵you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

⁶Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? ⁷Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our paschal lamb, has been sacrificed. ⁸Let us, therefore, celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

I. Paul moves to a new topic to reinforce his basic argument - Sexual Immorality

Greek Word *porneia* is used by Paul and has been translated as sexual immorality by the Church and the Fathers. For your interest, it is this word that the present rebellious generation (if I may borrow a phrase) wants to translate differently. The "modern" definition is living in a sexual way in a state of life different from your biological state. While at first consideration that seems to be relatively innocent, consider that people consider all forms of sexual deviance to be biological. No longer does the devil make us do it - today it is our genes.

II. The central issue for this argument is incest and Paul ties the reason for writing the letter back to this section of the letter.

III. Paul is calling for the community to judge and take action

A. A man is having relations with his father's wife

1. Activity was unacceptable to Jewish Tradition

2. It was also unacceptable to the Hellenistic world

B. Paul use of judicial language leads to the conclusion that he believes that the community has the right and duty to judge and punish

Convene - render judgment - hand-over - day of the Lord (day in court?)

1. Normal Roman Law should have been in force
2. Corinth had not been given the authority as a city state to enforce their own laws
3. Although the Jewish Community in many area had a times the right to enforce a law code that was not so at that time in Corinth

Consider the trial of Jesus - the repeated reference is made to the authority of the Jews to try and punish according to the Jewish law)

C. The consideration of Qumran

1. The Qumran Community had a central council with he authority to hear disputes, bring individual to account for their activities and to render judgment
2. There is evidence that early Christian Communities were organized with the Qumran as the model - this may be what Paul is referencing

IV. What does Paul Propose and Why

A. A little yeast - Paul considers the incest to be a symptom of the problems as Corinth

B. The whole community is sinning both personally and corporately

1. The lists of sins is to identify and address the individual sins - for each individual to recall their own sins
2. The corporate sin is the attitude of the community (Do your own thing) if it does hurt me directly I don't care

C. Paul's Direction to the Corinthians

1. Call together the church

2. Rely on the teachings you have received
3. Evaluate the behavior of the members of the community
4. Ban those whose conduct is unacceptable
5. The judgment will come from God

⁹I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with immoral men; ¹⁰not at all meaning the immoral of this world, or the greedy and robbers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. ¹¹But rather I wrote to you not to associate with any one who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or robber—not even to eat with such a one. ¹²For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? ¹³God judges those outside. “Drive out the wicked person from among you.”

I. From the Specific to the General - Paul now expand his understanding fo evaluation of behavior from a specific instance to a mode of operation for a Christian Community

We note Paul's reference to his letter - this is another letter he previously wrote to the Church at Corinth. This is the letter of tears that Paul refers to in second Corinthians 2:4, 9

II. Paul's Argument

A. The community at Christian Community is to be a holy gathering a people set apart not because they are perfect, but because they seek to be perfect - the community should not settle for anyone doing what ever they want - that weakens the whole community

1. Clear division of in the community (Family) and out
2. Table fellowship is used to explain this intimate relationship

B. The list of Vices

1. Paul uses these lists to good effect and he also contrast them with the virtues in many of his letters

2. He links the fruit of sin - alienation to the fruits of the Spirit

At this point it may be an interesting point for us to note that the outline for Christian evaluation of behavior and the shunning or expulsion of members not meeting the standards of the community is the basis of our modern penal system. Note that Paul does not prescribe punishment other than banishment. It is in the banishment that individual finds themselves cut off from the life of the community and liable for the Judgment of God.

Our modern penal thought even to the theory of capital punishment is based upon this concept. We banish criminals - we remove them from society so that the society is protected. The process in its earliest form was to give the criminal time to consider their actions and chose to reform their lives so that they could return to the life of the community. This was contrasted to the less prevalent form of Hard Labor punishment.

In the latter form those in prison were not only cut off from the community but required to work. The difficulty of the work and the relative ease of the type of work one did in the society were to allow the criminal to consider the alternatives and again choose to reform.

Even Capital Punishment was understood as the ultimate banishment and allowing the criminal to be judged by God.