

1Corinthians ... Sanguine in the Midst of Scandal

These notes rely heavily on Kenneth Baily's work *Paul Through Mediterranean Eyes*.

Who is this letter written to? Just a church? (Read 1Cor. 1:1-3)

- This is more of a general letter than one just to one church.
- The material is disjointed, often jumping around. Why? The layout is not typical for Paul, who likes to write theology first and then the practical. This book is purely practical. Does it still teach us what to think? Does it teach theology? Is it a random juxtaposing together of random ideas?
- What does 2Corinthians 10:10 teach? The people found his writing weighty?
- We will take the approach that this material is meticulously laid out with deep theological implications.

General layout of the book (consider these essays):

1. The Cross and Christian Unity (1:5-4:16)
2. Men and women in the human family (4:17 – 7:40)
3. Christians among pagan; to join or not to join (8:1 – 11:1)
4. Men and women in worship (11:2 – 14:40)
5. Resurrection (15)

Each of these essays will be presented using the same pattern:

- a) A tradition is stated
- b) A practical or ethical problem is stated
- c) A foundational theological statement is composed
- d) The ethical problem is re-stated in light of the theology given
- e) A personal appeal is given

- Paul will tie into his framework some questions that the Corinth church asked him. However, it is important to note that Paul is setting the overall flow of the letter, not the church at Corinth.

Why does Paul change his writing style here?

- We really do not know. Perhaps in his first general epistle, he is trying a new approach (see 2Cor. 1:13-14).

Some of the themes we will develop:

- 1) Christian unity and why it is important
- 2) How should Christians really view the cross
- 3) Sexual practices for Christians
- 4) Living the life God called us to in the midst of a hostile world
- 5) Marriage
- 6) Communion
- 7) The place of men and women in spiritual leadership
- 8) Spiritual gifts
- 9) Love
- 10) Understanding the resurrection

We must begin our journey in a slightly more academic way, in an understanding of rhetorical structures

1. Parallelism, Chiasms, Step Parallelism

- a. This follows the form of ... “A, and what’s more, B”
- b. State an idea, pause and then restate the idea again.
- c. See Isa 55:6-7 for an example of three parallel statements
- These pieces form a very sophisticated piece of literature.

Paul’s Introduction To Corinth:

- Julius Caesar rebuilt this city as a Roman outpost in 44BC
- Roughly 80,000 lived there by Paul’s day with another 20,000 in the suburbs
- Every 2 years, the city played host to a massive tournament, second only to the Olympics.
- The goddess of Love ... Aphrodite had a temple at the top of the hill of the city.
- Also here, a temple to Asclepius, god of healing, Isis and Poseidon (both related to seas)
- Paul ministered here for 18 months (AD51 – 52)

Sosthenes

- See Acts 18:12-17
- He instigates a legal challenge against Paul, which he loses. Gallio dismisses the case, and publically humiliates the Jews. He is beaten for this. What happens next?
- Note that overcoming evil with good is Paul’s plan (Romans 12:19-21, 1Corinthians 4:12)
- Sosthenes was certainly well known to the Corinth church.
- How radically should I treat my enemies?

Sanctified In Christ Jesus

- How? These folks are getting drunk at communion, one is sleeping with his mother-in-law, there are fights, perhaps with the rich oppressing the poor; they cannot agree as to spiritual gifts, their services are constantly being interrupted.
- Remember what God starts, He can keep (see Jude 24-25).
- Remember that God is fully capable of fixing what needs to be fixed.

Note that gifting often involves speaking

- Be sensitive to those around you ... be curious. Ask questions and be ready for the Lord to give you the right answer in the right time.

Verses 1:1-9 Introduction

- Note the mention that Sosthenes had something to do with the writing of this books, perhaps not so much as author as a Corinthian sounding board ... to examine what Paul wrote and give his approval to it.
- How can verse 2 call this church sanctified ... unless Paul could see them as Christ sees them ... what they can become rather than where they are right now. Do people really change?
- Note that Paul reminds them that their speaking and knowledge has been enriched.
- They do not lack any spiritual gift ... but they are improperly used.
- God keeps us!

Verses 1:10 – 4:16; Christian Unity; Paul’s First Essay

I appeal ... same Greek word used to describe the father of the Prodigal reaching out to the eldest son.

No divisions among you ... a term from a tentmaker that a cloth must be seamlessly joined that it would not leak.

Corinth was known for its brass work ... no one wants a pot that has a poorly fitted handle.

The fact that Paul was willing to reveal the name of Chloe’s household is significant; clearly they were highly respected in the church.

The Greek word for quarreling was Eris ... the goddess of war

Verses 1:17-2:2 Paul's Essay on the Cross

- Wise words and wise people do not save.
- Using highly polished words, Paul reminds us that it is NOT through highly polished words that the Gospel moves forward.

Dio Chrysostom visits the city of Corinth during the Isthmus Games;

"That was the time, too, when one could hear crowds of wretched sophists around Poseidon's temple shouting and reviling one another, and their disciples, as they were called, fighting with one another, many writers reading aloud their stupid works, many poets reciting their poems while others applauded them, many jugglers showing their tricks, many fortune-tellers interpreting fortunes, lawyers innumerable perverting judgment, and peddlers not a few peddling whatever they happened to have.

- Paul would refuse to enter into such discourse, arguing back and forth.
- Note the placement of the two Bible verses in the green cameos.
- Why no boasting? Because boasting equates to self-reliance.
- Note verse 30: righteousness (God granting the right to be accepted by him – The Father), sanctification (rescued from the power of sin – The Spirit), Redemption (purchased by the work of Christ on the Cross)
- Verse 28 ... the language speaks of the birth at Bethlehem and the cross ... these are the lowly things that confound the world ... not the Corinth church.

Preaching The Cross

1. My need for Christ's substitutionary death (1Corinthians 15:1-4)
2. Preaching the life and message of Christ (Acts 8:35)
3. Preaching a message of identification with Christ (Romans 6)
4. Preaching the Church (Ephesians 2:15-16)

Verses 2:1-10

- Did Paul fail at Athens? The very fact that Paul was invited to speak there was amazing and he knew that his mission was to plant seeds.
- Fear and trembling was not so much just a fear of failure but an understanding that the gospel work could not be based on the human standards of this world. Indeed, Phil. 2:12 tells the church to work out their salvation with fear and trembling.
- See the trinity played out in verses 7, 8 and 10.
- Verses 8 and 9 seem to be NOT blaming either the Romans nor the Jews for Christ's crucifixion. Father, forgive them ... The verse Paul quotes is from Isa. 52:15, the beginning of the suffering servant passage.