

STUDY ON THE BOOK OF CORINTHIANS

First Corinthians – Chapter 2 & 3

Chapter 2

“And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.” (2:1-4)

Paul was making clear his experience when he was at the church in Corinth. He said:

- He was not eloquent or have any form of natural wisdom that persuaded them unto the gospel of Jesus Christ. If anything, he was weak, in fear and with much trembling, shared the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- He confirmed that his speech was in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. This would signify that Paul relied heavily on the gifts of the Spirit in his ministry to the people of Corinth.
- The reason behind Paul’s choice of ministry is that their faith may not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

Thoughts:

- Considering that the city of Corinth was high in paganism, why was it important that Paul ministered in the way he did?

Wisdom

Although, Paul stated that human wisdom played no part in the gospel he preached at Corinth, yet, it appears to spend the rest of the chapter on wisdom – comparing the wisdom from God and the wisdom of this world. He said:

- He will only speak wisdom among those who are mature
- This wisdom which is of God is revealed in a mystery
- This wisdom was revealed by the Spirit of the Lord.

The last 2 verses on this chapter gives a clear indication on whom Paul refers to as the “mature”.

“But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one. For “who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him?” But we have the mind of Christ.” (v15-16)

Thoughts:

- How would you explain v15 – “But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one”
- What evidence did Paul give to explain how the world and rulers of the world missed out on the wisdom of God?

Chapter 3

“And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men? For when one says, “I am of Paul,” and another, “I am of Apollos,” are you not carnal?” (3:1-4)

As we begin chapter 3 of the book of 1st Corinthians, we get to the beginning, if you like, of Paul’s expression of frustration about the church in Corinth. It would appear that Paul is saying:

- You are carnal – you people in the Church at Corinth. You have always been carnal and you are still carnal hence they could only drink milk (a metaphor for babies food) and not solid food (a metaphor for an adult meal).

In Hebrews, the writer clarified that anyone who partakes of milk only is unskilled in the word of righteousness... and solid food belongs to those who are full of age (mature).

“For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” (Hebrews 5:12-14)

- By their fruit you shall know them. Paul’s conclusion on this church was based on what they are manifesting... carnality revealed in “envy, strife, and divisions”

Lessons from Paul’s Correction

1. It doesn’t matter as much who does what. It is all about God who gives an increase to our labours in the vineyard.

“I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase.” (v6-7)

2. Each person will receive his own reward according to the person’s labour. There is no denying this point.

“... and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labour.” (v8)

3. We are all God’s fellow workers. This will connote that God is a worker and we are co-labouring with Him. Remember the church we are speaking about here... and yet Paul called them fellow workers.

“For we are God’s fellow workers...” (v9)

“For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is. If anyone’s work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.” (v11-14)

4. We should be careful on what we build on the foundation that Christ has laid! The verses above is a good warning that we build what will endure.

Thought

- What are your thoughts on work revealed as gold, silver, precious stones...and those that are wood, hay, straw?

Temple of God

“Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.” (v16-17)

These two verses provide a strong warning for the body of Christ today. How do you understand these verses? How do you understand... “defilement”?

Conclusion:

Paul ended this chapter by advising this church in Corinth to avoid human wisdom; carnal wisdom and the wisdom that had originated from their previous pagan life. Everything is theirs once they are in Christ and they should settle for that.