Paul’s Letters to the Church at Corinth

A Plea for Unity
1 Corinthians 1
Lesson 1

Trinity Bible Church Sunday School
January 6, 2013
Corinth

- Great luxury
- Great learning
- Great moral depravity
- Great idolatry
Paul and the Corinthian Church

- 18 months in Corinth (2nd missionary journey)
- 3 years in Ephesus (3rd missionary journey)
  - 1st letter (5:9)
  - 2nd letter from Ephesus – 1 Corinthians
  - A painful visit (2 Cor. 2:1)
  - A “sorrowful letter” (2 Cor. 2:3-4; 7:8, 9)
- 4th letter from Macedonia – 2 Corinthians (2 Cor 7:5-7)
- 3rd visit (Acts 20:2-3)
1 Corinthians

I. Salutation (1:1-9)
II. Reply to report from the house of Chloe (1:10-4:21)
III. Reply to a report of immorality (5:1-6:20)
IV. Reply to questions in letter (7:1-16:9)
V. Concluding Salutations (16:10-24)

▪ “Will the First Epistle to the Corinthians be a heap or a building?” (F. Godet)

▪ “If you and I expect to glorify God in our day, we must be prepared to stand against the moral degeneration, and let our lives be guided by God through His Word.” (LD Custis)
A Plea for unity
1 Corinthians 1:1-31

- Greeting (1:1-9)
- A plea for unity (1:10-4:21)
Salutation (1:1-9)

- Customized greeting – sets the foundation
- Paul – apostle by the will of God
- Church of God in Corinth
  - Sanctified in Christ Jesus – holiness in Christ Jesus
  - Called to be saints (holy) with all in every place who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ
  - Call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ
  - Grace and peace from God (Father and Son)
Thanksgiving for grace given

- Grace given to them in Christ Jesus – cf. 1:30
  - Enriched – speech (logos) and knowledge (wisdom)
  - Testimony about Christ confirmed among them
  - Spiritual gifts
  - Eagerly awaiting Christ’s return
  - God is faithful
A Plea for Unity (1:10-31)

- An appeal to brothers that by the name of Jesus Christ there be no divisions
- The reality in the church – divisions and quarreling
  - Of Paul
  - Of Apollos
  - Of Cephas
  - Of Christ
What were the issues?

- “Of . . .” or “Followers of . . .”
- Without the same mind and judgment (v. 10)
- Desire for eloquence (2:1-2)
- Non-spiritual (3:1-4) – fleshly approach to Christianity
- Wisdom of the world valued (3:18-22)
- Misunderstand the role of the minister (4:1-2)
- Pride (4:6)
Paul’s conclusion: 16:12-13

- Paul promotes Apollos . . for his ministry
- Paul exhorts them to be firm in the faith and act in love
- Submit to every fellow worker and laborer
The cross of Christ (1:17-31)

- Not with words of eloquent wisdom
- Resting in the power of the Cross of Christ
- The cross of Christ reveals two kinds of wisdom
Wisdom of God

- God’s wisdom is foolishness to worldly wise men
- God’s wisdom is powerful to save
- God’s wisdom is to destroy the wisdom of man
- God’s wisdom makes the wisdom of man to be foolish
- Wisdom of man cannot know God
- God’s foolishness brings knowledge of God
- Jews desire a sign; Gentiles desire wisdom
The cross of Christ is not marketable

- It offends – sinners with no recourse
- It offends – death and eternal wrath
- It offends – to bow before the bloody cross of Christ
- It saves – “power of God and the wisdom of God”
The wisdom of God in salvation (1:26-31)

- Consider your calling
- God chooses to bring down the pride of man
- God’s design: no flesh will glory before God.
The Capstone of God’s wisdom (1:30)

- Of God
- In Christ Jesus
  - God’s wisdom
  - Righteousness
  - Sanctification
  - Redemption
- Only boasting in Christ crucified
A PLEA FOR UNITY

- The wisdom of man v. the wisdom of God
- The wisdom of God in the message of the Cross
  - Irreconcilable with human wisdom
  - It is the power of God for salvation.
- Unity in knowing Christ and Him crucified
- This must be our common mind and judgment (1:10)