

The Village Church – Rancho Santa Fe
Week #3 – Adult Bible Study

I Corinthians 2:6 – 3:4
September 24 & 25, 2024

1. This section of I Corinthians continues Paul’s pastoral teaching and admonition about the problem of the divisions within the Corinthian church
2. Paul has affirmed that *true* wisdom regarding matters of God has to do with the Cross: with a God who himself acts within the world to redeem the world
3. This wisdom has more to do with understanding and accepting what God has done in and through Jesus on the cross than with human ability or capacity to come to the truth on our own
4. To realize and accept that God was at work in the Cross is to have entered the “new age” – and not to understand is to still be in the “old age” that depended on human understanding and human ability to act religiously according to that human understanding
5. The final proof of those who actually do have true wisdom from God is that they always act from love rather than from jealousy or quarreling

I Corinthians 2:6-16

6. Key words in this section:
 - a. “*Sophia*” = wisdom
 - b. “*Teleioi*” = the mature
 - c. “*Nepioio*” = the infants, or novices
7. Apparently, the various Corinthian factions were all claiming to be mature, as evidenced by their wisdom
8. The problem is that the factions thought their maturity/wisdom was superior to the other groups
9. For Paul, however, their dissension, division, and quarreling simply proved that they had not yet arrived at true spiritual wisdom, otherwise they would now be unified and loving
10. True wisdom is revealed by God’s Spirit, and is not like any wisdom the world has ever known
11. Only those who have humbled themselves to learn from the Spirit of God will be/are those who will have attained this gift of wisdom from God
12. The conflict and division is “of the old age” – it has to do with incomplete and even dangerous views of God
13. The Cross, however, proves that God has acted in a completely new way, unanticipated by anyone, though foreshadowed in the scriptures (the OT)
 - a. Paul’s citation of the OT is not actually there, meaning that:
 - i. He was working from an imperfect memory
 - ii. He was working from a text that we no longer have
 - b. The meaning is clear, though: God’s way of dealing with the world through the cross was something God had in mind all along
 - c. The cross is about how God saves the world (we do not save ourselves) and how God acts from out of grace (rather than from a duty to pay us what we are owed because of our good works)
14. Those of the “old age” were so clueless as to the true ways of God that they actually crucified God!
15. Another way to say all of this: true “spirituality” springs from reliance on God’s grace and results in loving community, rather than in superior “knowledge” or “understanding.”
16. It is no wonder that “the world” does not understand Christians because the heart of Christianity is in what God did on the cross

I Corinthians 3:1-4

17. Here, Paul becomes quite simple and explicit in going further to help the Corinthians that all the old categories and understandings of “religion” that have to do with superior knowledge are completely supplanted by the Cross
18. The various factions considered themselves to be “spiritual” people (*“pneumatikoi”*).
19. In reality, however, according to Paul, the Corinthians are all infants rather than mature, to the extent that they do not understand and adopt the way of God in the world as demonstrated by the Cross, a way that leads only to unity, peace, and love toward each other
20. Paul describes the old ways of division as “of the flesh”
 - a. “of the flesh” does not mean lacking in spiritual wisdom (of the type that does not understand the Cross)
 - b. “of the flesh” also does not mean living in lust and sin (as much of the church would later understand it)
 - c. “of the flesh” means living in rivalry and disunity within the church
21. Paul says that those who are truly mature, who are truly “spiritual,” are those who act always out of love and peace
22. To do so is to “have the mind of Christ” – to act as Christ acted

Questions for Your Life Today

- A. In what ways have you experienced “spiritual elitism” within the church?
- B. How does such elitism damage the unity and peace of the church?
- C. What does “having the mind of Christ” mean to you?
- D. What are some ways that you might help the church become less fractious and divided?
- E. What are the spiritual benefits of moving away from any sense of spiritual superiority and more toward a sense of humility, peace, and love, and a way that always points to the saving work of God in the Cross of Christ?

Notes by The Rev. Dr. Jack Baca, Senior Pastor, The Village Church, Rancho Santa Fe, California

Resources:

- Interpretation Commentary on First Corinthians, Richard B. Hays, John Knox Press, Louisville, Kentucky, 1997
- Interpretation Commentary on Second Corinthians, Ernest Best, John Knox Press, Louisville, Kentucky, 1987
- The Bible Speaks Today: The Message of I Corinthians – Life in the Local Church, David Prior, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, Illinois, 1985
- The Bible Speaks Today: The Message of 2 Corinthians – Power in Weakness, Paul Barnett, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, Illinois, 1988
- The Communicator’s Commentary, 1, 2 Corinthians, Kenneth L. Chafin, Word Books, Waco, Texas, 1985