

Notes on the Greek New Testament Week 72 – 1 Corinthians 1:1-31

Day 356: Introduction to 1 Corinthians

The Completion of Paul's Second Missionary Journey

We take up the story of Paul's second missionary journey from the point where we left it in our introduction to 1 Thessalonians.

Corinth the City

The City of Corinth had fallen to the Romans and had virtually been demolished in 146 BC but had later been refounded as a Roman colony by Julius Caesar in 44 BC.

The city is situated on an isthmus commanding the north-south land route between the two halves of Achaia. Five miles to the east was the harbour of Cenchraea facing towards Ephesus and the Roman province of Asia; a mile and a half to the north lay the harbour of Lechaem facing west towards Italy. An ancient roadway had been laid across the isthmus at its narrowest point allowing transportation of cargo and even light ships. Corinth was therefore an important centre of trade: it was both wealthy and cosmopolitan. Murphy-O'Connor says, "Corinth had more business than it could comfortably handle. The immense volume of trade was augmented by huge numbers of travellers. Profit came easily to those prepared to work hard, and cut-throat competition ensured that only the committed survived." Travellers included the crowds who came to the biennial Isthmian Games.

Corinth provided ready opportunities for the skilful entrepreneur to become wealthy. Social stratification was therefore complex with the competing claims of the nouveau riche and the noble born. Witherington comments, "In Paul's time many in Corinth were already suffering from a self-made-person-escapes-humble-origins syndrome." Self-promotion and patronage were important elements of public life: "Corinth was a city where public boasting and self-promotion had become an art-form. The Corinthian people thus lived with an honour-shame cultural orientation, where public recognition was often more important than facts... In such a culture a person's sense of worth is based on recognition by others of one's accomplishments."¹ Thistleton concludes, "Corinthian culture has much in common with the social constructivism, competitive pragmatism, and radical pluralism which characterises so-called postmodernity as a popular mood."

All of this shaped the role of rhetoric at Corinth. Thistleton comments, quoting Pogoloff, "The pragmatic criterion of becoming a winner in the marketplace, sometimes with a sacrifice of personal integrity, made its impact on Corinthian rhetoric. 'Declaration increasingly became the major opportunity for oratorical displays... In the classroom the competition might be over theory. But in declamations ... the contrast was ... between rival performers. The drive for adulation, we learn from Seneca the Elder, often overcame the more basic goals of rhetoric.' Seneca observes that too many times the aim was 'to win approval for yourself rather than for the case.' ... The casualty is truth; the focus is 'the speaker,' as in the case of the twenty-first century chat-show host or participant in the mass media."

Corinth – The founding of the Church

Paul must have been attracted to Corinth as a strategic centre for mission. The city had a sizeable Jewish community, swollen by the edict of Claudius which had driven many from Rome. The travellers and visitors for the games would also have meant that there was considerable demand for Paul's trade as a tentmaker.

"Paul made a firm decision (1:18) not to aspire to the status of a professional rhetorician, newly arrived to market the gospel as a consumer commodity designed to please the hearers and to win their approval... He would earn his keep as a tentmaker and proclaim the cross of Christ." (Thistleton). He

¹ Ben Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1995.

began his ministry in the synagogue where he reasoned with both Jews and Greeks, testifying that Jesus was the Christ. However, he soon met the customary opposition from the Jews. In response, Paul shook out his clothes and set up camp next door in the house of the newly converted Titius Justus. Here Paul continued to teach this infant church which now included Crispus and his family – Crispus had formerly been leader of the synagogue.

Paul remained in Corinth for some 18 months. Paul and the Corinthian church continued to face opposition but Paul received encouragement through a vision in which the Lord told him, "Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city" (Acts 18:9,10).

After 18 months the Jews sought to have Paul convicted of some crime and so dragged Paul before Gallio the proconsul of Achaia. They claimed that Paul was "persuading the people to worship God in ways contrary to the law" (Acts 18:13). But Gallio refused to get involved in a religious dispute between Jewish factions – for so he perceived it.

When Paul left Corinth, "He left behind him a thriving church, throbbing with vitality and full of gifts and services (1:4-8; 12:1-14:40). The problems which would emerge would be those of life, not of decline." (Thistleton).

From Corinth Paul sailed to Ephesus where he stayed for a short while before continuing on his way to Caesarea and Jerusalem. Paul promised that he would return to Ephesus if God would permit it. Priscilla and Aquilla had left Corinth with Paul but remained at Ephesus.

While Paul was away, a Jew from Alexandria named Apollos came to Ephesus. He was a powerful preacher and had a fine knowledge of the Scriptures. He was a believer and seemed to possess a clear understanding of the gospel except that "he knew only the baptism of John." Priscilla and Aquilla took him under their wing and "explained to him the way of God more accurately." After continuing to minister for a while at Ephesus, Apollos wanted to go off to Achaia. The church at Ephesus sent him off with their blessing and with letters of commendation to the churches. In Achaia, and particularly in Corinth, Apollos' ministry proved the source of great encouragement, "For he vigorously refuted the Jews in public debate, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ" (Acts 18:28).

Paul's Third Missionary Journey

Having visited Jerusalem, Paul returned to Antioch. Having spent some time back in his 'home church', Paul set out again, returning first to the churches of Galatia and then travelling on into Phrygia as he had done on his second journey. This time, however, he continued across the province of Asia until he came to Ephesus.

Ephesus

Drane says of Ephesus that it "was the capital of the Roman province of Asia. It was the centre from which, by road or sea, Paul could easily keep in touch with most of the young churches he had already established in Asia Minor and in Europe."

Paul's ministry at Ephesus followed the usual pattern. For three months he ministered boldly in the synagogue before opposition drove him out. Paul then began daily discussions in the lecture hall of Tyrannus (Acts 19:9). Paul's ministry continued there for two years during which time the churches at Colossae and Laodicea were planted (see Acts 19:10).

However, this period was scarcely without problems for the apostle. There are suggestions in Paul's letters that he may have suffered imprisonment while at Ephesus (some even suggest that he was imprisoned several times). Furthermore, it was during this period that he had to deal with the problems of the church at Corinth.

Problems at Corinth

Drane writes, "The letters to Corinth ... confront us with one of the most complicated historical puzzles of the entire New Testament... We depend entirely on the vague hints and allusions which Paul made as he wrote." However, there is general agreement that Paul's dealings with the church at Corinth during this time can be summarised in six stages:

- i) Paul received news concerning the church at Corinth in response to which he wrote the letter referred to in 1 Cor 5:11. Some believe this letter is preserved but displaced in 2 Cor 6:14-7:1.
- ii) Members of Chloe's household brought reports of divisions in the church at Corinth, divisions which included challenges to Paul's authority. These reports were later confirmed by Stephanus and two others (1 Cor 16:17) who brought with them a letter from the church asking a series of questions. 1 Corinthians is Paul's response to these divisions and to the Corinthians' questions.
- iii) Paul learned from Timothy that his letter was having no effect and so made a brief and painful visit to Corinth (2 Cor 2:1; 12:14; 13:1).
- iv) After his return from Corinth Paul sent Titus with a much stronger letter written "out of much affliction and anguish of heart" (2 Cor 2:4). Some think this is preserved and displaced in 2 Cor 10-13.
- v) Paul left for Macedonia having been driven out of Ephesus (Acts 20:1). In Macedonia he met Titus who brought news of a change of attitude in the Corinthian church. He also carried an invitation for Paul to go to Corinth (2 Cor 7:5-16).
- vi) Paul sent a letter to Corinth with Titus; this is at least the first nine chapters of what we know as 2 Corinthians.

Some scholars think that 2 Corinthians 10-13 was actually written at a date later than 2 Cor 1-9.

1 Corinthians

The church at Corinth was made up of people from a variety of social backgrounds. Theissen says, "The Corinthian congregation is marked by internal stratification. The Majority of members, who come from the lower classes, stand in contrast to a few influential members who come from the upper classes."² Among the latter would seem to be Stephanus Gaius and Crispus, the last of whom had previously enjoyed a prominent office in the synagogue.

In his book, *An Introduction to the Sociology of the New Testament*³ Derek Tidball describes how these social divisions gave rise to the variety of controversies at Corinth. He writes, "Many of the problems at Corinth can be understood in the light of the fact that people from different social classes still found it difficult to relate to each other even after their conversion to Christianity. They would be aware that, as far as God was concerned such distinctions were no longer of any importance (1 Cor 7:22; Col 3:4) and yet in reality mutual acceptance still had to be learned through hard experience... In this socially heterogeneous church the leadership fell upon those who were middle class and elitist. They were the natural leaders, not only because of their social and educational skills, but because of their having the property in which to host the meetings of the church. Paul accepts their right to lead and supports them... He is not happy, however, about certain attitudes they adopt or actions to which they are party. Much of 1 Corinthians is a pointed address to them, encouraging them to overcome their deficiencies and forsake their worldly pretensions; however understandable these conceits may have been from a human standpoint. These activist leaders at Corinth needed to be wary lest they run the church as they would an ordinary business and less the working class people did not receive the standing in the church that God intended them to have."

Paul's letter addresses a series of issues, some raised by the news conveyed to him, others in the letter requesting his advice and direction. Thistleton says that "issues of 'knowledge,' the ministry, ethical laxity, advantages sought at law, marriage and celibacy, meat associated with pagan temples or worship, dress codes in public worship, the divisions at the Lord's Supper, misperceptions of the significance of what counts as 'spiritual' in the context of 'gifts' and Christ's Lordship, and perhaps a premature anticipation of eschatological 'glory' all relate to the differing outlooks (some of them manipulative) on the part of specific groups." But he is also keen to emphasise that Paul's response is not fragmentary: "The unifying theme of the epistle is a reproclamation of the different value system of grace, gifts, the cross, and the resurrection as divine verdict, criterion, and status bestowal within the new framework of respect and love for the less esteemed 'other.' Glorifying in the Lord and receiving status derived from identification with the crucified Christ (1:30-31) lead to a new value system demonstrable in a wide array of life issues. These range from attitudes towards 'the less esteemed' in

² G. Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity: Essays on Corinth*, Philadelphia, Fortress, 1982. See also RJ Banks, *Paul's Idea of Community*, Exeter, Paternoster, 1980

³ Exteter, Paternoster, 1983.

civil actions (6:1-11) to eating meat in the precincts of temples or bought at market (8:1-11:1); or from dress-codes in public worship (11:2-16) or mutual respect for differing gifts (chs 12-13) to the 'ranking' and use of prophetic discourse and glossolalia (ch 14)."

Referenced Works

- John Drane *Paul*, Lion Publishing, Berkhamstead, 1976
- Leon Morris *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, Tyndale New Testament Commentary, 2nd Ed., IVP, Leicester, 1985
- Anthony C Thistleton *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 2000

Day 357: 1 Corinthians 1:1-9

Verse 1

Παῦλος κλητὸς ἀπόστολος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ διὰ θελήματος θεοῦ, καὶ Σωσθένης ὁ ἀδελφός,

κλητος, η, ον called, invited

There is a parallel between Paul *called* to be an apostle and the Corinthians *called* to be a holy people (v.2). All Christians are called.

ἀπόστολος Thistleton argues that apostleship entails witness to Christ in both an 'objective' and 'subjective' sense. Apostleship involved witnessing to the events of Christ's death and resurrection, but also entailed "a practical experience of sharing in the weakness of the cross of Christ and in the transforming power of Christ's resurrection... Apostleship thereby entails 'the establishment of the kerygma (1 Cor 1:21) and indeed the proclamation of the kerygma,' in both word and lifestyle." Thistleton

θέλημα, ατος n will, wish, desire

Cf. Gal 1:1. "What a believing Christian is called to be depends not on what people might judge for themselves to be 'fulfilling' or self-affirming but on the loving and purposive will of God. Thus the pattern of Christ and the cross ('not my will but yours') reflects the sovereign centrality of the will of God for all life and every lifestyle." Thistleton.

It is unclear whether this Sosthenes is the same as the leader of the synagogue mentioned in Acts 18:15-17 – it was a common Greek name in the first century. Commenting on Paul's mention of a fellow-worker Thistleton says, "Paul does not perceive himself as commissioned to lead or to minister as an isolated individual, without collaboration with co-workers. The role of co-workers emerges clearly in 1 Cor 16:13-20." Sosthenes may have been Paul's amanuensis.

Verse 2

τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ τῇ οὔσῃ ἐν Κορίνθῳ, κλητοῖς ἁγίοις, σὺν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἐπικαλουμένοις τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ, αὐτῶν καὶ ἡμῶν·

ἐκκλησια, ας f assembly, congregation, church

The basic meaning is 'assembly'.

του θεου The church does not belong to any local leader but to God.

Some ancient texts read τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ, ἡγιασμένοις ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, τῇ οὔσῃ ἐν Κορίνθῳ. Some favour this as the more difficult reading but the UBS committee rejected it as *too* difficult and Thistleton argues that it represents an early corruption in the Western text.

οὔσῃ verb, present part, f dat s εἶμι

Bengel speaks of the "paradox" of a church which is simultaneously 'of God' and, of all places, at *Corinth*.

ἡγιασμένοις Verb, perf pass ptc, m & n dat pl ἁγιαζω sanctify, make holy, set apart as sacred to God

Cf. 1 Cor 6:11. Set apart to be God's (people) by virtue of union with Christ.

ἅγιος, α, ον holy, set apart to/by God

Called to live out what they are – they have not yet arrived.

ἐπικαλεω call, name; midd call upon, appeal to

The Corinthians are part of a wider family and cannot behave as if they were a law to themselves.

ὄνομα, τος n name, person, authority

Cf. Joel 3:5. "It signifies an act of appeal and request which is simultaneously an act of commitment and trust on the part of the worshiper... To call on the name of the Lord, partly in Joel, but more fully here, means not to invoke some shadowy, unknown, deity, but to commit oneself in trust to the one whose nature and character have been disclosed as worthy of this trust." Thistleton

τοπος, ου m place

αὐτων και ἡμων qualify Ἰησου Χριστο and not τοπω as some suppose. "Jesus Christ is not the exclusive 'Lord' who serves only the interests of some specific group. He may indeed include them within wider Lordship, but he remains 'both their Lord and ours.'" Thistleton

Verse 3

χάρις ὑμῖν και εἰρήνη ἀπο θεου πατρος ἡμων και κυριου Ἰησου Χριστου.

χαρις, ιτος f grace, unmerited favour

Paul transforms the conventional greeting χαρειν (cf. Acts 15:23; Jas 1:1) into the Christian greeting and prayer χαρις ὑμῖν.

εἰρηνη, ης f peace

Not so much an inner sense of peace as a relationship of peace with God.

πατηρ, πατρος m father

For Paul, 'Father' is "the distinctively Christian way of referring to and addressing God." Thistleton

Verse 4

Εὐχαριστω τῷ θεῷ μου πάντοτε περι ὑμων ἐπι τῇ χάριτι τοῦ θεοῦ τῇ δοθείσῃ ὑμῖν ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ,

εὐχαριστεω thank, give thanks

The present tense has continuous force.

μου is included by κ^a A C G P Ψ etc. while omitted by κ^{*} B eth Ephraem. The omission is followed by RSV, NJB, NIV, Barrett and Fee while Metzger argues strongly for its retention.

παντοτε always

I.e. 'at every opportunity,' or 'as a regular habit' cf. 15:58.

ἐπι introduces the cause.

δοθείσῃ Verb, aor pass ptc, f dat s διδωμι give

Every spiritual benefit the Corinthians possess they have received *in Christ*.

"There are ten references to Christ in the first ten verses. Only overfamiliarity with biblical texts can obscure the remarkable nature of this repetition." Thistleton

Verse 5

ὅτι ἐν παντι ἐπλουτίσθητε ἐν αὐτῷ, ἐν παντι λόγῳ και πάσῃ γνωσει,

παντι here probably 'every kind ... all sorts'

πλουτιζω enrich, make rich

γνωσις, εως f knowledge, understanding

Paul's words reflect the two gifts the Corinthians prized most, word (prophecy) and knowledge. Despite the abuses at Corinth, Paul speaks of word and knowledge (understanding) as genuine and precious gifts from God.

Verse 6

καθως τὸ μαρτύριον τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐβεβαιωθη ἐν ὑμῖν,

μαρτυριον, ου n testimony, witness
βεβαιωω confirm, verify, strengthen

The word preached to them had become a living reality in their lives. "In multi-cultural, pluralist Corinth, each new experience of God and each new convert confirms as valid this witness to Christ. Calvin observes, 'God set his seal to the truth of His Gospel among the Corinthians.'" Thistleton

Verse 7

ὥστε ὑμᾶς μὴ ὑστερεῖσθαι ἐν μηδενὶ χαρίσματι, ἀπεκδεχομένους τὴν ἀποκάλυψιν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ·

ὥστε so that, with the result that
ὑστερεω lack, have need of; pass be lacking; midd be in want

'You fall short in no gift.'

μηδεις, μηδεμια, μηδεν no one, nothing; no;

χαρισμα, τος n gift (from God)

"This word is used (i) of Salvation (Rom 5:15), (ii) of God's good gifts in general (Rom. 11:29), and (iii) of special equipment of the Spirit, for example, speaking with tongues (1 Cor. 12:4ff). Here the thought is the wide one (ii). God has enriched their lives and they lack no spiritual gift." Morris
"Gift, for Paul, draws attention to the free, generous, giving of the Giver." Thistleton

ἀποδεχομαι wait expectantly, welcome

Cf. 16:22 'Our Lord, come.'

ἀποκαλυψις, εως f revelation

Implies public and cosmic disclosure.

"The connection of thought may be that the present foretaste of the Spirit turns our thoughts to the fuller experience of the last great day (cf. Rom. 8:23; Eph. 1:13f)." Morris It also reminds the Corinthians that they have not yet arrived. GE Ladd views the double eschatology of 'now' and 'not yet' as a unifying or common theme in all NT writings.

Verse 8

ὅς καὶ βεβαιώσει ὑμᾶς ἕως τέλους ἀνεγκλήτους ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ [Χριστοῦ].

It is unclear whether ὅς refers to God or Christ. "Linguistic arguments favour *Christ*; theological arguments favour *God*... The Greek leaves the matter open. This need not trouble us since Paul's language here concerns the promises of God-in-Christ." Thistleton

βεβαιώω see v.6.

ἕως prep with gen to, until, as far as
τέλος, οὐς n end, conclusion
ἀνεγκλητος, ον beyond reproach, without fault

I.e. in that final day, when God pronounces his verdict on them, they will be declared blameless. "The main point is that as night dissolves into day (Rom 13:2) the hidden will become publicly visible and all that is wrong or that disrupts intimacy with God will be set right. It is unfortunate that the very clarity of this theme in Romans has tended to distract attention from its prominence in our epistle. The verdictive character of justification by grace is underlined by the role of definitive judgment on the day of the Lord in the OT, apocalyptic, and the NT." Thistleton

Χριστου is omitted by p⁴⁶ B. It would seem to be an early accidental omission.

Verse 9

πιστὸς ὁ θεὸς δι• οὗ ἐκλήθητε εἰς κοινωνίαν τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν.

πιστος, η, ον faithful, trustworthy

The faithful God who called them (and us), will complete the work that he has begun. "Whatever God begins, he will carry through to completion." Calvin

κοινωνία, ας f fellowship, sharing in

Implies communal participation – "being stakeholders in a sonship derived from the sonship of Christ. Just as the fellowship of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 13:13) means participating in the sharing out of the Spirit (which then secondarily gives rise to a fellowship experience within a community), so the fellowship of his Son (1 Cor 1:9) means communal participation in the sonship of Jesus Christ. Godet rightly speaks of 'participation in the life of Christ.'... The link with unity in 1:10-17 (cf. chs. 12-14) and with the cross in 1:18-25 seems thus to be established. 'The Corinthians are called to realise the fellowship into which they have been called by God.'" Thistleton

Day 358: 1 Corinthians 1:10-17

1:10-4:21

This constitutes an identifiable section concerning Causes and Cures of Splits within the Community.

Verse 10

Παρακαλῶ δὲ ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί, διὰ τοῦ ὀνόματος τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ἵνα τὸ αὐτὸ λέγητε πάντες, καὶ μὴ ἦ ἐν ὑμῖν σχίσματα, ἧτε δὲ κατηρτισμένοι ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ νοῦ καὶ ἐν τῇ αὐτῇ γνώμῃ.

παρακαλεῶ exhort, encourage, urge

Thistleton argues (at length) that the sense here is 'I ask' or 'I request.' It is a request which draws its force from Paul's relationship with them – not from rhetorical device.

ἀδελφοί is an inclusive term, including the women in the community. It reminds the Corinthians that they belong to one family.

ὄνομα, τος n name, person, authority

The addition of 'in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ' directs the Corinthians to the authority for such a request.

ἵνα τὸ αὐτὸ λέγητε πάντες An appeal or request for them to make up their differences.

ἦ Verb, pres subj, 3s εἶμι
σχίσματα Noun, nom & acc pl σχισμα, τος n division, split, opposing group

Paul is seeking to deal with a power struggle, not a theological controversy, though this struggle reflects also "a diversity of spiritualities based on individualism, on loyalty to specific groups or factions as 'spiritual' groups within the one church." Thistleton

κατηρτισμένοι Verb, perf pass ptc, m nom pl καταρτιζω mend, restore, make complete

καταρτιζω A Greek verb used of restoring anything to its rightful condition – such as mending fishing nets.

νοῦ Noun, dat s νους, νοος, νοι, νουv m mind, thought, understanding

Thistleton suggests that "mind-set in the present context draws out the meaning of outlook, stance, orientation, or attitude, without entirely losing the dimension of rational judgment which is nearly always implicit."

γνωμη, ης f purpose, intent, decision

Thistleton suggests that the term here means 'consent'. "Paul tells Philemon that he does not wish to keep the services of Onesimus 'without your consent' (χωρις δε της σης γνωμης, Philem 14). In this sense 'agreement' entails not uniformity but voluntary constraints of one's 'rights' (cf. on 6:12, below) for the good of the whole. Paul expounds this as a key theme in 8:1-9:27.

Verse 11

ἐδηλωθη γάρ μοι περὶ ὑμῶν, ἀδελφοί μου, ὑπὸ τῶν Χλόης ὅτι ἔριδες ἐν ὑμῖν εἰσιν.

ἐδηλωθη Verb, aor pass indic, 3 s δηλωω make clear, indicate, inform

ὑπο των Χλοης 'by Chloe's people.'

Thistleton suggests more likely to be business associates, business agents or slaves of Chloe rather than members of her family.

ἔριδες Noun, nom pl ἔρις, ιδος f strife, rivalry

Verse 12

λέγω δὲ τοῦτο, ὅτι ἕκαστος ὑμῶν λέγει, Ἐγὼ μὲν εἰμι Παύλου, Ἐγὼ δὲ Ἀπολλῶ, Ἐγὼ δὲ Κηφᾶ, Ἐγὼ δὲ Χριστοῦ.

ἕκαστος, η, ον each, every

Κηφας, α m Cephas (Aramaic equivalent of Πέτρος, rock).

"The mood of staking personal loyalty to some group which finds its focus in one of the leaders with whom it has become closely associated may be conveyed by rendering 'I am for Paul' 'I am for Apollos' ... But 'I belong to Paul' ... 'I belong to Apollos' must [also] be considered." Thistleton

Thistleton includes a lengthy discussion on the four 'so called groups' of 1:12.

Apollos was a skilled orator and may unwittingly have lent his name to an overemphasis on rhetoric and 'wisdom' at Corinth. "The lesson for leaders is that too high a personal profile, which substitutes too much personal history and personal style for gospel content, can sidetrack 'followers' into 'taking sides,' even if this was far from the original intention."

The Paul group "almost certainly had as their nucleus Paul's first converts at Corinth." They probably viewed themselves as "maintaining faithfully the old, duly authorised, ways, in contrast to newer trends which emerged with the more recent church members or visiting leaders." This 'group' may also have included some who claimed to follow Paul in resisting patronage.

The Peter group: It is uncertain whether Peter visited Corinth. Barrett thinks that he did and that the Peter party included those who had been converted under his ministry.

The 'Christ' group: Bruce and Barrett think these may have been ultraspiritual pneumatics who declared they needed no human leader since, unlike others, they had direct communion with Christ. From a similar perspective Chrysostom writes, "Even those who said they were of Christ were at fault because they were implicitly denying this to others and making Christ the head of a faction rather than the head of the whole." Thistleton thinks that this may be correct, but, on the other hand, Paul may here be speaking of *himself* when saying 'I am of Christ'. He may be using rhetorical irony leading naturally into v.13 'Is Christ apportioned out?' and ultimately to 'you all are Christ's' (3:23).

Verse 13

μεμέρισται ὁ Χριστός; μὴ Παῦλος ἐσταυρωθῆ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν, ἢ εἰς τὸ ὄνομα Παύλου ἐβαπτίσθητε;

μεμέρισται Verb, perf pass indic, 3s μεριζω divide, assign, apportion

The picture behind this question is that of the church as a body, all members having a part in the one Christ – Christ has not been divided or fragmented.

σταυρω **crucify**

μη Παῦλος ἐσταυρωθη a question expecting a negative answer, 'Surely Paul was not crucified...'

ὄνομα, τος n **name, title, person, authority, reputation**

Schnackenburg paraphrases the verse, "Christ is undivided... Christ alone died for you... You belong to Christ alone... You were baptised in the name of Christ (and in the name of no other)."

Verse 14

εὐχαριστῶ [τῷ θεῷ] ὅτι οὐδένα ὑμῶν ἐβάπτισα εἰ μὴ Κρίσπον καὶ Γάϊον,

εὐχαριστεω **thank, give thanks**

It is difficult to decide whether the omission of τῷ θεῷ from κ* B and a few versions represents the original.

οὐδεις, οὐδεμια, οὐδεν **no one, nothing**

Crispus is almost certainly the Jewish synagogue ruler mentioned in Acts 18:8.

It seems that some were boastful concerning who had baptised them and felt that this gave them a particular connection with the baptiser. The following verse underlines the fact that it is not the one performing the baptism who is significant but the name into which a person is baptised.

Verse 15

ἵνα μή τις εἴπῃ ὅτι εἰς τὸ ἐμὸν ὄνομα ἐβαπτίσθητε.

ἐμος, η, ον 1st pers possessive adj **my, mine**

ὄνομα see v.10

Verse 16

ἐβάπτισα δὲ καὶ τὸν Στεφανᾶ οἶκον· λοιπὸν οὐκ οἶδα εἶ τινα ἄλλον ἐβάπτισα.

ἐβάπτισα δὲ καὶ 'On second thoughts, I also baptised...'

"Lightfoot and Findlay consider the delightful possibility that in mid-dictation Paul's flow was interrupted by a tactful reminder from his amanuensis, who might just possibly have been either Stephanus himself or one of his household. 1 Cor 16:17 confirms that Stephanus was present with Paul when the letter was being written."

οἶκος, ου m **home, household, family**

λοιπος, η, ον **rest, remaining, other:** (το) λοιπον adv. **finally, in addition**
οἶδα (verb perf in form but with present meaning) **know, understand**

'I do not recall'

ἄλλος, η, ο **another, other**

Verse 17

οὐ γὰρ ἀπέστειλέν με Χριστὸς βαπτίζειν ἀλλὰ εὐαγγελίζεσθαι, οὐκ ἐν σοφίᾳ λόγου, ἵνα μὴ κενωθῇ ὁ σταυρὸς τοῦ Χριστοῦ.

ἀπέστειλέν Verb, aor act indic, 3 s

ἀποστελλω **send, send out**

εὐαγγελίζω act. and midd **proclaim the good news**

σοφια, ας f **wisdom, insight, intelligence**

"In its context at Corinth, both βαπτίζειν and ἐν σοφίᾳ λόγου are aspects of potential ministry which, given the Corinthians' own presuppositions about both, call attention to the agency and status of the minister, and together these stand in contrast to εὐαγγελίζεσθαι, which from any viewpoint calls attention to the gospel (εὐαγγελιον)."

Thistleton

Thistleton suggests that in context, οὐκ ἐν σοφίᾳ λόγου means 'not by manipulative rhetoric.'

κενωθῇ Verb, aor pass subj, 3 s **κενωω**

deprive of power, empty of meaning

σταυρος, ου m **CROSS**

"If everything rests on human cleverness, sophistication, or achievement, the cross of Christ no longer functions as that which subverts and cuts across all human distinctions of race, class, gender and status to make room for divine grace alone as sheer unconditional gift... Second, rhetoric alone may win the emotions and even the mind and perhaps the will, but the human self is more than all of these modes of being. Today we may speak of a 'psychological' conversion which may result causally from manipulative factors without touching the self's spiritual depths in an authentic turning not simply toward a new set of beliefs and lifestyle, but to God. This constitutes an authentic recognition of Christ's Lordship through the work of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:3). Overreliance on clever rhetoric may in this sense provide an inauthentic shortcut to transformation by the cross of Christ, which becomes nullified as a means of restoring a relationship with God himself."

Thistleton

Day 359: 1 Corinthians 1:18-25**1:18-2:5**

This section is entitled by Thistleton, "The Contrast between Human Wisdom and the Transformational Power of the Cross as God's Wisdom." C Blomberg says, "1:18-2:5 explains ... how genuine, full-orbed Christianity stands opposed to the foundational values of a fallen, sinful world but provides the necessary antidote to the self-centred functionalism of the Corinthians." And Thistleton, quoting Martyn, remarks concerning the pride some of the Corinthians place in 'spiritual knowledge', "The 'spiritual elite' monopolise and pre-empt the hitherto Pauline contrast between 'secular' or *ordinary* (ψυχικός or κατά σάρκα) knowledge and *spiritual* (πνευματικός or κατά πνεύμα) knowledge. But amidst the continuing struggles and realities of Christian experience *before* the eschaton (cf. 1:26-31; 2:1-5; 4:8-13) in Paul's judgment in the context of this letter 'the implied opposite of knowing κατά σάρκα is not knowing κατά πνεύμα, but rather knowing κατά σταυρόν. He who recognises his life to be God's *gift* at the *junction of the ages* recognises also that until he is completely and exclusively in the new age, his knowing κατά πνεύμα can only be in the form of knowing κατά σταυρόν.' ... The cross projects a new world which Paul defines in terms of 'having the mind of Christ' (2:16)."

Verse 18

Ὁ λόγος γὰρ ὁ τοῦ σταυροῦ τοῖς μὲν ἀπολλυμένοις μωρία ἐστίν, τοῖς δὲ σωζομένοις ἡμῖν δύναμις θεοῦ ἐστίν.

λογος here is parallel with κηρυγματος in v.21. The meaning is 'proclamation'. "The phrase serves, in effect, as Paul's definition of the gospel." Thistleton

σταυρος, ου m cross
ἀπολλυμι destroy, kill, lose; midd be lost, perish, die

'Those on their way to destruction.'

μωρια, ας f foolishness

Thistleton suggests 'wisdom' and 'folly' were theological slogans or catchwords at Corinth. "Hence Paul transposes the wisdom-folly contrast into that between what is humanly self-defeating, stultifying, and foolish on one side and what becomes effective, operative, powerful and transformative by divine agency. Paul uses this rhetorical technique of transposition or 'code-switching' elsewhere."

σωζω save, rescue, heal

The present participles express a continuing process. "The temptation to assume that Christians have already 'arrived' nourishes a mood of self-congratulation which is entirely at odds with the proclamation of the cross: a Christ wounded, humiliated, and done-to-death." Thistleton

δύναμις θεοῦ ἐστίν "The cross, then, constitutes the point at which, and/or the means through which, God's presence and promise becomes operative as that which actualises and transforms. It differs from human weakness and folly not in degree but in kind. For as we noted in our reading of v.17, a merely rhetorical or psychological exercise in communicating some belief system remains empty if it fails to engage with the cross precisely as a saving proclamation, but reflects some degree of human achievement in gaining and communicating 'wisdom.' Such play with words may seem to be wise and sophisticated, but only to those who are on their way to ruin. Those who are on our way to salvation perceive it as sheer folly." Thistleton
And Bonhoeffer writes that wisdom or grace without the cross is what is "sold on the market like a cheapjack's wares." "Cheap grace means the justification of sin without the justification of the sinner ... forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline ... the world goes on in the same old way ... grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ."

Verse 19

γέγραπται γάρ, Ἀπολῶ τὴν σοφίαν τῶν σοφῶν, καὶ τὴν σύνεσιν τῶν συνετῶν ἀθετήσω.

γέγραπται Verb, perf pass indic, 3 s γραφω

Isa 29:14 LXX

ἀπολῶ Verb, fut act indic, 1 s ἀπολλυμι
destroy

σοφια, ας f wisdom, insight, intelligence
σοφος, η, ον wise, experienced

In the context of the original quotation, particularly the wisdom of the learned and politically dominant classes.

συνεσις, εως f understanding, insight
συνετος, η, ον intelligent, possessing
understanding

"Properly, the former denotes mental excellence in general, the latter the intelligent critical discerning of ... things." Morris
Thistleton thinks 'shrewd' for συνετος conveys the required sense of "street-wise political life skills."

ἀθετεω reject, set aside, refuse

Verse 20

ποῦ σοφός; ποῦ γραμματεὺς; ποῦ
συζητητῆς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου; οὐχὶ
ἔμωρανεν ὁ θεὸς τὴν σοφίαν τοῦ κόσμου;

που σοθος i.e. 'where does that now place the sage?'

γραμματευσ, εως m scribe, expert in
Jewish law, scholar

The expert, the person of letters, the professional.

συζητητης, ου m skilful debater,
reasoner

The scholar, debater.

αἰῶνος Noun, gen s αἰων, αἰωνος m
age, world order

The use of αἰων indicates the passing nature of this world – 'this current world order.' "The world is but a passing show and its wisdom passes with it." Morris

οὐχι (emphatic form of οὐ) not, no; used
in questions expecting an affirmative
answer.

μωραινω make foolish, make tasteless

'Has not God made a fool of this world's wisdom.' The cross provides a radically new frame of reference for Christian understanding.

Verse 21

ἐπειδὴ γὰρ ἐν τῇ σοφίᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐκ ἔγνω
ὁ κόσμος διὰ τῆς σοφίας τὸν θεόν,
εὐδόκησεν ὁ θεὸς διὰ τῆς μωρίας τοῦ
κηρύγματος σῶσαι τοὺς πιστεύοντας.

ἐπειδη since, because, for

ἔγνω Verb, aor act indic, 3 s γινωσκω

εὐδοκεω be pleased, take pleasure in

"By God's design human wisdom did not lead to the saving experience of God." Collins
The wisdom of this world order is "fallible, temporary, short-term, and self-absorbed." Thistleton.

For Paul's own commentary on the first half of this verse cf. Rom 1:18-3:20.

μωρια, ας f see v.18

κηρυγμα, τος n what is preached,
message, proclamation

This word denotes not the act of preaching or the method of communicating the Gospel but the content of the message. "It has nothing to do with whether the mode of communication is in a pulpit rather than a variety of modes which may or may not include lectures, dialogue, disputation, or living the gospel out... God's self-disclosure, however, is, as Barth points out, not simply about God, but 'the Word of God is itself the act of God,' an 'address' which presupposes God's own presence." Thistleton

πιστευω believe (in), have faith (in)

Verse 22

ἐπειδὴ καὶ Ἰουδαῖοι σημεῖα αἰτοῦσιν καὶ
Ἕλληνες σοφίαν ζητοῦσιν,

Ἰουδαῖος, α, ον a Jew, Jewish, Judean
σημεῖον, ου n miraculous sign, sign

αἰτεω ask, request, demand

Ἕλλην, ηνος m a Greek, non-Jew

ζητεω seek, search for, look for

Highlights a difference between the two cultures: the Jewish, with its focus on the concrete – what can be seen and touched; the Greek with its love of speculative philosophy. "The respective role of signs and wisdom in relation to Jews and Gentiles is not accidental. Jews already had access to 'wisdom' in the scriptures, but required signs to locate their situation within the promised purposes of salvation history. In one sense they were right. For the resurrection of Christ constitutes the sign that the cosmic turning point has arrived and casts essential light on the christological and cosmic significance of Jesus of Nazareth. Paul expounds God's power as an 'eschatological motif.' On the other hand, the Gentile 'Greeks' go on seeking what will bring success in politics, the courtroom, philosophy, or in everyday affairs of trade, love, or the household: what will bring 'mastery' of life and especially the approval or admiration of patrons, masters and their own peer group." Thistleton

Verse 23

ἡμεῖς δὲ κηρύσσομεν Χριστὸν
ἑσταυρωμένον, Ἰουδαίοις μὲν σκάνδαλον
ἔθνεσιν δὲ μωρίαν,

κηρυσσω preach, proclaim

ἑσταυρωμενον perf pass ptc. σταυρωω
crucify

The perfect implies that Christ "continues in the character of the crucified one. The crucifixion is permanent in its efficacy and effects." Morris

σκανδαλον, ου η that which causes sin/
offence, obstacle

"It was an affront to those who ask for signs since the disgraceful and humiliating execution of a Jewish teacher by the occupying power hardly seemed to constitute a sign of God's saving action." Thistleton
Cf Matt 16:23 – Peter's suggestion that Jesus should avoid the cross is itself a σκανδαλον to Jesus.

ἔθνεσιν Noun, dat pl ἔθνος, ους η nation,
people; τα ἔ. Gentiles
μωρια, ας f see v.18

"It was folly, i.e., the very reverse of a 'mastery' of life that brings success, honour, and esteem, for the figure whom Paul proclaimed passively accepted the kind of suffering and death which shouted failure, dishonour, and shame." Thistleton

Verse 24

αὐτοῖς δὲ τοῖς κλητοῖς, Ἰουδαίοις τε καὶ Ἑλλήσιν, Χριστὸν θεοῦ δύναμιν καὶ θεοῦ σοφίαν·

κλητος, η, ον called, invited

The emphasis is on what *God* has done.

τε enclitic particle and, and so; τε και and also

Verse 25

ὅτι τὸ μωρὸν τοῦ θεοῦ σοφωτερον τῶν ἀνθρωπων ἐστίν, καὶ τὸ ἀσθενὲς τοῦ θεοῦ ἰσχυρότερον τῶν ἀνθρωπων.

μωρος, α, ον foolish; το μ. foolishness

το μωρον perhaps a particular object is in view – the cross as perceived by the world as 'a foolish thing.'

σοφωτερος, α, ον wiser – comparative from σοφος

ἀσθενης, ες sick, weak, helpless

The cross, if proclaimed to be the place of *God's* action seems to be a demonstration of his weakness, even defeat.

ἰσχυροτερος, α, ον stronger – comparative from ἰσχυρος

"Paul's marvelously succinct rhetorical parallelism both recapitulates vv.18-24 (first paragraph or section of 1:18-2:5) and points forward to the next sections (1:26-31 and 2:1-5)." Thistleton

Day 360: 1 Corinthians 1:26-31

Verse 26

Βλέπετε γὰρ τὴν κλήσιν ὑμῶν, ἀδελφοί, ὅτι οὐ πολλοὶ σοφοὶ κατὰ σάρκα, οὐ πολλοὶ δυνατοί, οὐ πολλοὶ εὐγενεῖς·

βλεπω see, look at

κλησις, εως f call, calling

I.e. the circumstances and background against which you were called, cf. v.24. Robertson and Plummer paraphrase, "Summon before your mind's eye what took place then; note the ranks from which one by one you were summoned into the society of God's people; very few came from the educated, influential, or well-connected class."

πολυς, πολλη, πολυ gen πολλου, ης, ου much, many

σοφος, η, ον see v.19

σαρξ, σαρκος f flesh, human nature

κατα σαρκα 'as the world counts cleverness.'

δυνατος, η, ον powerful, able, influential
εὐγενης, ες of high or noble birth, of high social status

"The things which elevate men in the world, knowledge, influence, rank, are not the things that lead to God and salvation." Hodge
There *were* people of considerable socio-economic status within the church at Corinth but they were a minority. Paul's point is that they are one people, the poor no less than the influential, and that God's calling was not influenced by issues of social status and power – neither then should be relationships within the church. "Christian 'status' depends on the gift of grace and divine verdict, not upon compensatory self-esteem or self-promotion as 'wise' or 'spiritual' people." Thistleton

Verse 27

ἀλλὰ τὰ μωρὰ τοῦ κόσμου ἐξελέξατο ὁ θεὸς ἵνα κατασχύνῃ τοὺς σοφοὺς, καὶ τὰ ἀσθενῆ τοῦ κόσμου ἐξελέξατο ὁ θεὸς ἵνα κατασχύνῃ τὰ ἰσχυρά,

μωρος, α, ον foolish

"The neuter concentrates attention of the quality of foolishness possessed by these people rather than on themselves as individuals." Morris. It is not that they *are* fools, but that they lack the supposed sophistication which was prized by the Greeks. There is a proper simplicity to faith.

ἐξελέξατο Verb, aor midd dep indic, 3 s

ἐκλεγομαι choose, select

κατασχυνω put to shame, humiliate

"God is no human construct, called in to legitimate human power interests, but the very reverse. His love for the nobodies and the nothings discounted as nonentities and as insignificant in the value system of the world puts the world to shame by its reversal of judgment." Thistleton

ἀσθενή Adjective, n nom & acc pl
ἀσθενής, ες see v. 25
ἰσχυρος, α, ον strong, mighty, powerful

Verse 28

καὶ τὰ ἀγενῆ τοῦ κόσμου καὶ τὰ ἐξουθενημένα ἐξελέξατο ὁ θεός, τὰ μὴ ὄντα, ἵνα τὰ ὄντα καταργήσῃ,

ἀγενῆ Adjective, n nom/acc pl ἀγενής, ες
low born, insignificant, inferior

ἀγενής is the direct antithesis of εὐγενής of v.26.

ἐξουθενημένα Verb, perf pass ptc, n
nom/acc pl ἐξουθενεω despise, treat
with contempt

τὰ μὴ ὄντα 'the nothings' "God's activity in men is creative. He takes that which is nothing at all and makes of it what he pleases." Morris

καταργεω render ineffective, cancel, do
away with

'bring to nothing'

Verse 29

ὅπως μὴ καυχῆσθαι πᾶσα σὰρξ ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ.

ὅπως (or ὅπως ἄν) that, in order that
καυχαομαι boast, boast about

"The Corinthian people lived with an honour-shame orientation, where public recognition was often more important than facts, and where the worst thing that could happen was for one's reputation to be publicly tarnished. In such a culture a personal sense of worth is based on recognition by others of one's accomplishments, hence the self-promoting." Witherington

σὰρξ, σαρκος f see v.26
ἐνώπιον prep with gen before, in the
presence of

Thistleton, quoting Martin, says, "These two dimensions together [divine election and the cross] give v.29 its full force: glorying is inappropriate in God's presence because whatever provides grounds for such glorying has come from God as his gift. Hence v.30 begins ἐξ αὐτοῦ ... (It is from him that ...). 'Paul disrupts the intuitive status expectations of his audience by invoking a belief he knows they share: the belief that in Christ, who was crucified, they have a common source of salvation and a common paradigm of leadership.'"

Verse 30

ἐξ αὐτοῦ δὲ ὑμεῖς ἐστε ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, ὃς ἐγενήθη σοφία ἡμῖν ἀπὸ θεοῦ, δικαιοσύνη τε καὶ ἁγιασμός καὶ ἀπολύτρωσις,

ἐξ αὐτοῦ "The saved are *of him*, ἐξ giving the idea of source. Their new life derives from God." Morris

'It is as a gift from him that you are in Christ Jesus.' A double emphasis on the act of God and their status deriving solely from being 'in Christ.' 'In Christ' must be understood in terms of "objective status and corporate solidarity... Its content now manifests itself in sharing the gifts of righteousness, sanctification and redemption." Thistleton

ἐγενήθη Verb, aor indic, 3 s γινομαι
σοφία, ας f wisdom, insight, intelligence

"The wisdom of God is embodied in Christ, who offered himself that men might be saved. He is the real wisdom, let the philosophers argue as they will." Morris

δικαιοσύνη, ης f righteousness, what
God requires

τε see v.25

ἁγιασμός, ου m sanctification, holiness
ἀπολύτρωσις, εως f redemption,
deliverance, setting free

= 'purchased from one owner to another by means of a costly transaction.'

"The four qualities, then, belong together, and both characterise Christ and are imparted by Christ. Just as Barth insists rightly that what real humanity consists in appears only in the perfect 'real man' Jesus Christ, so here Paul redefines what real wisdom consists in, namely (in Moltmann's language), The Way of Jesus Christ, as exhibited and made effective in God's own action in Christ on the cross. As against the obsession with status seeking and success at Corinth, wisdom is redefined and explicated as receiving the gifts of righteousness, sanctification and redemption freely bestowed through Christ and derivative from him. It is only that for Christian believers. Hence to glory in their new found status as righteous, holy and redeemed is to glory in the Lord, and in no other person, no other thing. These other things are 'nothings' not merely in a social sense, but, in isolation from God, also in an ontological sense. Thus Barrett comments, 'Not only do your sources of supply – wisdom, strength, and so forth – come from God: your very being comes from him.'" Thistleton

Verse 31

ἵνα καθως γέγραπται, Ο καυχωμενος ἐν κυρίῳ καυχάσθω.

Cf. Jer 9:22-23.

γέγραπται Verb, perf pass indic, 3 s γραφω
καυχασθαι see v.29