**The Church at Corinth**

**A Church Facing Inner Problems – #12**

**The Church’s Growth**

**1 Corinthians 3:18-23**

*Our end-of-class carry-in dinner is next Wednesday, Dec. 5, 6:30 p.m., in the E91 Community Room. We’ll have food sign-up sheets in class this evening, or feel free to contact Pam with questions at 317-727-7917 or nana.10554@yahoo.com.*

*George’s weekly study of 1 Corinthians continues Jan. 9, 2013.*

**1 Corinthians 3**

***18*** *Let no one deceive himself. If someone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool, in order to become wise.* ***19*** *For the wisdom of this world is folly in God’s sight. As it stands written, “He catches the wise in their craftiness.”* ***20*** *And again, “The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile.”* ***21*** *Consequently, no one should boast about human beings. For all things belong to you,* ***22*** *whether it be Paul or Apollos or Cephas, or the world, or life or death, or the present or the future—all belongs to you,* ***23*** *and you belong to Christ, and Christ to God.*

**Warning about Self-Deceit**

Verse 3:18 – *Let no one deceive himself.*

Paul begins his exhortation with a warning about self-deceit, and this rebuke finds a parallel in 1 Corinthians 6:9 and 15:33. This is addressed as a warning to all members of the Corinthian community, and not just to those preaching to them. He considers such self-deception dangerous and disruptive of God’s people, because it comes from within. It is not a deception that comes from without, as in Ephesians 5:6, from whence probably comes the added phrase “*with empty words*,” i.e., meaningless terms, and catchy vocabulary. The added phrase is also found in LXX Exodus 5:9 and Deuteronomy 32:47: *“If someone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool, in order to become wise.”* Literally it says, “*If any one imagines that he is wise.*” So it is from the imagination that comes the human wisdom that human beings normally have (1 Cor 1:20), “*the wisdom of the world,*” made foolish by God because it does not take notice of:

1. God’s way of love and mercy,
2. God’s dealing with the broken and the fallen.

This wisdom is rooted in power that crushes the weak, walks over the bodies of the fallen.

**Self-Deception**

1. Paul, self- deception is the mark of those who imagine that they are wise with the wisdom of this age; so Paul prefers that Christians be accounted fools, when it comes to the way people normally judge, seeing “the message of the cross” as sheer folly (1 Cor1: 18). Once Christians become foolish in this sense, they can become wise in God’s sight.

2. Why is there no room in the sight of God for wisdom that amounts to self-assertion or self-deception? Why must one become foolish by acknowledging the folly of the cross?

1. Self-assertion is that kind of vision where the self is the law and the measure of everything.
2. It is close to Narcissism but is different from Narcissism in one important aspect that is it seeks cooperation with others on its terms while Narcissistic persons deny cooperation.
3. God reveals divine wisdom; it was not the discovery of the human mind. Because this wisdom is despised by the world, Christians are better off to become fools rather than to become wise by the world’s standard.

(Try to read Dorothy Day, Sarah Melici, *Fool for Christ*)

**Symeon of Emesa, Fool for Christ**

 [](http://2.bp.blogspot.com/_qvPhN819jKw/TGE6K-Xb3yI/AAAAAAAAAAU/3WLHfj9HQXs/s1600/symeon_deaddog.gif)

Simeon was Syrian by origin and born in Edessa, where he lived unmarried with his old mother. With his fellow ascetic friend John, at the age of 30 years, Symeon took monastic vows in the monastery of Abba Gerasimus. After 29 years in the desert getting close to God, the holy Symeon moved to Emesa. The saint asked God to permit him to serve people in such a way that they would not acknowledge him. By feigning madness he drew attention away from himself and prophetically preached Christ. As a first example of this kind of behavior we note that he entered Emesa dragging a dead dog behind him tied to his foot. He thereby showed to those who would receive it the truth that we all have death clinging to us, and often without noticing its stench.

On the next day, which was Sunday, St. Symeon of Emesa took nuts, and entering the Church at the beginning of the Liturgy, he threw the nuts and put out the candles. When they hurried to run after him, he went up to the pulpit, and from there he pelted the women with nuts. With great trouble they chased after him, and while he was going out he overturned the tables of the pastry chefs, who (nearly) beat him to death. Seeing himself crushed by the blows, he said to himself: “Poor Symeon, if things like this keep happening, you won't live for a week in these people's hands!”

* *Life of St. Symeon of Emesa, Fool for Christ* (d. 570 AD) – by Leontius of Neapolis)

**Notes from Philemon**

**Warning**

“Don’t try to imitate these persons because any imitation of these heroes may have a driving pride for heroism rather than the driving power of being united to Christ that made these persons fools for Christ.”

**On being a food for Christ’ sake**

“What does the wisdom of the world do to us? It makes us divine but without communion with the divine. It is self-deification where we sit on the throne of judgment and judge others according to our laws. This wisdom has no room for love because love does not operate with or according to a law. Whatever has no love is alien to God. The world will judge you as a fool because you accept love and the wisdom of love. This wisdom rises up the fallen and refuses to walk over them. It behaves like the Good Samaritan attends the wounds. It seeks the lost like that of the Good Shepherd.”

**God Catches the Wise**

Verse 3:19 – “*For the wisdom of this world is folly in God’s sight” (*as in Romans 2:13, and then) “ … *God catches the wise in their craftiness.*”

These words seem to be a quotation of LXX Job 5:13, which describe God as “*the one overtaking the wise in their intelligence.*” Then this following verse speaks of the “plans of the crafty” which immediately gives “intelligence” a pejorative connotation. Paul used this verb ***drassomai***, “grasp, grip,” which does not appear elsewhere in his writings. It is a derivation of the LXX Book of Job part of Eliphaz’s first discourse, in which he argues that hope for mortals lies in God’s greatness, when He confounds the crafty designs of human beings. Paul just says that God acts to upset the deceitful conduct of those who are wise to turn human wisdom into its opposite for the divine wisdom does what human wisdom rejects (compare 1 Cor 1:20, 2:8).

Verse 3:20 – *And again the Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile*. These words are taken from LXX Ps 94:11. The Lord here is ***Kyrios*** and this could be God, the risen Christ.

Verse 3:21 – *Consequently, no one should boast about human beings …*

One should not be conceited in his or her wisdom, or brag that they have allegiance to a preacher who is merely human. Boasting should not be the mark of any Christian, because it is a preacher who puts the seed but God brings their growth. Paul ended by quoting the words of Jeremiah 9:22–23, “*Let the one who would boast, boast of the Lord.*” (See Rom 3:27)

*… for all things belong to you.,*”

The corporate sense of these words is the conclusion that ends the division and the slogans “*I belong to Paul*,” or “*I belong to Cephas*.” Paul asserts, “*all things (including Paul, Apollos, and Cephas belong to you.*” “All things” in this world belong to the Christian, who as such becomes rich and a king (1 Cor 4:8) and even judges the world (1 Cor 6:2).

**Note from Philemon**

“Brother, if we are in Christ, we shall inherit the “world to come” (Heb 2: 5). It is not to angels that he has subjected the world to come, all will be given to us as gift from God the Father. Let us be in Christ; that is, be patient. Let love rule, so that we may be co-heirs with the Lord Jesus who rules in love.”

Verse 3:22 – *Whether it be Paul or Apollos or Cephas, or the world, or life or death, or the present or the future*.

Literally, “or things at hand” or “things coming to be.” “All” covers what we have and what will come. We have that in Christ and if we look carefully, we can see the kingdom of God. But how does death belong to us? It is easy to say life belongs to us, but death is no longer an enemy. Christ defeated death and this victory does not belong only to Christ but to us too. How is this possible? In Romans 6:1ff, we die with Christ for we are crucified with him in Baptism. Death is not what we shall meet later, but was what we had encountered when we believed and were baptized. Death of our body is no longer death, the end of life, but puts our bodies as seeds so that they may grow up new.

1. “The world,” ***kosmos***, the whole ordered universe, in which human beings live, as in 1 Corinthians 6:2.
2. “Life” is our physical and spiritual life.
3. “Death,” ***thanatos***, is that fearful experience.
4. “Present” is age or the time that encompasses our being.
5. “Future” is what we are looking for that is our hope.

Paul spells out some of the Christian teaching on “death.” In Galatians 1:4, he tells us that Christ Jesus gave himself for our sins in order to deliver us “*from the present evil age*.” This “age” is that where death still works. Read this very descriptive passage from 2 Corinthians 4 … ***7****But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.* ***8****We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair;* ***9****persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.* ***10****We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.* ***11****For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus’ sake, so that his life may also be revealed in our mortal body.* ***12****So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you.* ***13****it is written:“I believed; therefore I have spoken.” Since we have that same spirit of faith, we also believe and therefore speak,* ***14****because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you to himself.* ***15****All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God.* ***16****Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.* ***17****For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.* ***18****So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.* (2 Cor 4:7-18)

**You Belong to Christ**

Verse 3:23. *You belong to Christ, and Christ to God*.

Literally, “*you (are) of Christ, and Christ (is) of God.*” (Cf. Rom 14:8; Gal 3:29.)

1. We don’t belong to ourselves and this is easy to understand. Our belonging to Christ or literally “*you are of Christ*” seems to be unfamiliar, but is a fact because of the Incarnation, for Jesus became one of us. We read in Hebrews 2:***4*** *Since, therefore, the children share flesh and blood, he himself likewise shared the same things, so that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil …* ***15*** *and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death.*

***16****For it is clear that he did not come to help angels, but the descendants of Abraham.* ***17*** *Therefore he had to become like his brothers and sisters in every respect, so that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people.* ***18*** *Because he himself was tested by what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested.* (Heb 2:4-18)

1. Christians were called “Christians” because they belong to Christ and even bear the name of Christ, i.e., (Greek) ***Christianoi*** (see Acts 11:26d; cf.). The Corinthian community belongs to Christ because of Christ’s relation to God the Father as His Son. God has called Corinthian Christians “*into companionship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord*” (1:9), and it is he who has revealed and implemented his Father’s designs for them, as Romans 8:31 makes clear. This relationship will be expressed in yet another way in 1 Corinthians 11:3; 15:28, and Philippians 2:9–11.

**Paul’s Best Title**

“Belonging to Christ” is the title that Paul sometimes uses of himself, ***doulos Christou Iesou***, or “slave of Christ Jesus” (Rom 1:1; Gal 1:10; Phil 1:1), which stresses his total submission and commitment to Christ, who is his ***kyrios***, “master,” but also his “Lord”. Such allegiance to the crucified Christ and his lordship should replace allegiance to rival preachers, because now he is recognized as “the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Corinthians 1:24), and this assertion fittingly concludes Paul’s monitory exhortation.

**Belonging to Christ**

“We are Christ's because we were made by him, both physically and spiritually.”

Ambrosiaster, Commentary of I Corinthians 3:24

“We belong to Christ because he created us and because he redeemed us, and since he took our humanity and united our humanity to the divinity, we rest with him in the Godhead forever.” Abbot Sophronius

“What a great love, a love that can’t be compared to any form of love that we know. He united himself to our nature, a nature that is totally different from his nature. What a great love, for He kept this nature forever.” Abbot Sophronius

***Pope’s Notes***

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