

St. Andrew**Academy**

1 Corinthians: You think you've got problems!

Week 8

A Community Called to Love



Looking back

- ❖ In the first 15 chapters, Paul has dealt with a large set of diverse and important problems, ranging from factions in the church to marriage to chaos in worship.
- ❖ The underlying problem is the “over-spiritualization” of some Corinthian Christians. This led some to even deny the resurrection of the body and the resurrection of Jesus.
 - Chapter 15 concluded Paul’s responses to all the contested issues.
- ❖ Now, in his closing, Paul will put all of this to work in the context of love.



The Collection (16:1-4)

- ❖ The Corinthians already know about this project. Paul is collecting financial offerings from all the Gentile churches to take to Jerusalem for “the poor among the saints in Jerusalem” (Romans 15:26).
 - This is a way for the Gentile congregations to be of service to the Jerusalem community through whom they had been blessed.
 - This is to be a concrete expression of Christian unity. Paul worries that the Christians in Jerusalem may not accept it! (Romans 15:30-31)
 - Its symbolic value is enhanced by the fact that Paul wants Gentiles to accompany him.
- ❖ Paul's comments are directed to all the Christians, not just the wealthy. Paul wants them to set money aside and hold it until he comes.



Paul's travel plans (v. 5-12)

- ❖ Paul is going to stay in Ephesus until Pentecost
 - Pentecost was the Jewish Festival of the offering of new grain, fifty days after Passover (Lev. 23:15-21).
 - Thus, Paul is going to leave Ephesus in late spring, head north to Macedonia and southward to Corinth where he may stay for the winter.
 - In the meantime there is a lot of work to do in Ephesus.
- ❖ Paul is sending his associate, Timothy, and he puts the Corinthians on notice that they are to welcome Timothy and take his direction.
 - You can bet that Paul's own letter has heightened the tension!
 - Apollos will come when he can – but it is Timothy that is coming now.
- ❖ A thought – there was nothing “idyllic” about the first-century church. They are God's temples, but they are still human too – hanging between “heaven and earth” – living between the times – still waging war against the powers of the ‘flesh’ (our sinful nature).

The Eastern Mediterranean in Paul's Day



Paul's farewell

- ❖ "Keep alert [eschatological], stand firm in the (NIV) faith [the *kerygma*, the apostolic message, the gospel], be courageous, be strong [Psalm 31:23-24; the strong are those who wait for the Lord]. Let all that you do be done in love."
- ❖ What does love look like?
 - Love is seen by the service of Stephanas and his household. Stephanas and two friends went to see Paul in Ephesus and are now going to carry back Paul's letter.
- ❖ "all the brothers and sisters"
 - Paul reminds that they are part of something much bigger than themselves. They are part of a new family!
- ❖ The "holy kiss" is a powerful sign of reconciliation; a symbol of their deep relatedness.
 - Our equivalent is the "passing of the Peace" – a hug or a handshake



Paul picks up the pen

- ❖ “Let anyone be accursed who has no love for the Lord.”
 - Paul writes about both love and discipline. Those who reject Jesus are not and cannot be part of the community.
 - From the beginning, the Christians understood the danger posed by those who present themselves as Christians but reject the kerygma, the apostolic proclamation of the gospel.
- ❖ “Our Lord come!” *Maran Atha* – Aramaic.
- ❖ Paul closes the letter with a word of grace, as he usually does. But here he adds a note about his own love for the Corinthians.
 - He may discipline them and tell them things they don't want to hear . . . But he loves them!!



2 Corinthians

- ❖ Later correspondence . . . Paul's relationship with the Corinthian Christians has been very difficult! See 1:23-2:4
 - It is possible that 2 Corinthians is a collage of two letters from Paul, with chapters 10-13 being from a later letter . . . after Paul has gotten news of some fresh attacks on himself.
- ❖ Paul is the target of some Corinthians. In chapter 10-12 he defends himself. He is in a fighting mood!
 - There is a lot of strong stuff here!
 - The Gospel and Paul's apostolic authority are bound up together!
 - See 11:16-33 and 13:1-4



New Testament Timeline

