

Class No. 5 Outline
Quinquagesima
Galatians 6 (EP2) – Ash Wednesday (EP2) – I Corinthians 1-2 (MP2)
Week of March 3, 2019

- I. Opening Prayer
 - a. BLESSED Lord, who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning; Grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of thy holy Word, we may embrace, and ever hold fast, the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. *Amen.* (Collect for the Second Sunday in Advent. BCP, p. 92.)
 - II. Flash Card (Memory Item) of the Week: **Name the Seven Lively Virtues**
 - a. **Charity** (*Greed*), **Chastity** (*Lust*), **Diligence** (*Sloth*), **Forgiveness** (*Wrath*), **Humility** (*Pride*), **Kindness** (*Envy*), **Temperance** (*Gluttony*)
 - b. “Antidotes” to the Seven Deadly Sins
 - c. Charitable Chastity Diligently Forgave Humble and Kind Temperance
 - III. Questions from Last Week’s Class
 - a. What do Jews believe about the afterlife?
 - i. Many different beliefs, ranging from no afterlife to resurrection.
 - ii. Beliefs sometimes vary even within synagogues.
 - b. If Paul’s “proof” of the Gospel from scripture was so convincing, why didn’t more Jews believe?
 - i. For all the same reasons many Gentiles didn’t believe – particularly pride.
 - ii. “Lest you be wise in your own conceits, I want you to understand this mystery, brethren: a hardening has come upon part of Israel, until the full number of the Gentiles come in, and so all Israel will be saved.” (Romans 11:25-26)
 - IV. Recommended Reading/Listening – See p. 2
 - V. Paul and the Supernatural – See Appendix, p. 10
 - VI. Review/Comments/Questions from Previous Weeks’ Readings: Galatians 3:19-5:26
 - a. Translation Exercise, Galatians 4:12: “Become as I, because I also as you” (Greek)
 - b. “Be as I am; for I am as ye are” (KJV). Compare Galatians 2:15-16, 19-20; I Thessalonians 1:5-7; Philippians 2:1-5, 3:4-11; I Corinthians 9:19-23.
 - VII. Ordination Preview
 - a. The First Deacons: “Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, the Hellenists murmured against the Hebrews because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. And the twelve summoned the body of the disciples and said, ‘It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. Therefore, brethren, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this duty. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.’ And what they said pleased the whole multitude, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Proch’orus, and Nica’nor, and Timon, and Par’menas, and Nicola’us, a proselyte of Antioch. These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands upon them.” (Acts 6:1-6)
 - b. This relatively informal process became quite formal over time. See, e.g., “The Discernment Process for the Diaconate in the Diocese of East Tennessee.” (http://s3.amazonaws.com/dfc_attachments/public/documents/3150182/fulldiaconate.pdf)
 - i. Key elements are Discernment/Calling, Postulancy, Sponsorship and Ordination
 - ii. Deacons have a special relationship with the Bishop, regardless of their home parish.
 - c. Sponsorship: The Ordinal, *Book of Common Prayer*, p. 530
 - ¶ The Congregation.
- REVEREND Father in God, we present unto you this person present, to be admitted Deacon.**

¶ The Bishop.

TAKE heed that this person, whom ye present unto us, be apt and meet, for his learning and godly conversation, to exercise his Ministry duly, to the honour of God, and the edifying of his Church.

¶ The Congregation shall answer,

WE HAVE inquired concerning him, and also examined him, and think him so to be.

¶ Then the Bishop shall say unto the Congregation,

BRETHREN, if there be any of you who knoweth any Impediment, or notable Crime, in this person presented to be ordered Deacon, for the which he ought not to be admitted to that Office, let him come forth in the Name of God, and show what the Crime or Impediment is.

d. Personal Comments

e. A Postulant's Prayer:

Almighty God, who by thy grace, by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit, and by the discernment of thy Bishop David, hast called me to be a Postulant for the Office of Deacon, grant unto me by that same Spirit, and by the intercession of blessed Saint Stephen, Deacon and Protomartyr, the humility and eagerness to serve thy Church faithfully and eagerly in matters both great and small; the knowledge and wisdom to provide, when called upon, a sure defense of the hope that is within me; and the courage and Christ-like love shown by thy holy martyrs who, in the face of torture and death, prayed that their persecutors might be forgiven. These things I beg of thee in the Name of thy Blessed Son Jesus Christ, our only Mediator and Advocate. Amen.

VIII. Brief Overview of this Week's Readings (Time Permitting) – Galatians 6 (EP2) – Ash Wednesday (EP2) – I Corinthians 1-2 (MP1)

IX. Closing Prayer

a. O GOD, who, through the preaching of the blessed Apostle Saint Paul, hast caused the light of the Gospel to shine throughout the world; Grant, we beseech thee, that we, having his wonderful conversion in remembrance, may show forth our thankfulness unto thee for the same, by following the holy doctrine which he taught; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.* (Collect for the Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul. BCP, p. 229.)

Recommended Reading/Listening:

- Another Brant Pitre video: "The Biblical Roots of Ash Wednesday." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2vnGEJHg05E>. Although his comments are based on the Roman Catholic lectionary, the primary scriptures that he references – Joel 2:12-18 and St. Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18—are roughly the same readings assigned for Ash Wednesday in our Prayer Book at pp. 124-25.
- "The Church's Discipline as to Fasting and Abstinence." <http://www.episcopalnet.org/TRACTS/fasting.html>
- "Five Things to do During Lent." <http://www.episcopalnet.org/TRACTS/5ThingsLent.html>
- Gary Habermas – The Resurrection Argument that Changed a Generation of Scholars https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ay_Db4RwZ_M (highly recommended)

Additional Resources

- St. Luke's web page (www.episcopalnet.org) – Daily Offices, Ordo Kalendar, Tracts for Our Times, archived sermons, adult education classes...*and more!*
- St. Luke's Facebook Page: – Upcoming events, daily Saints, interesting articles...*and more!* (<https://www.facebook.com/Saint-Lukes-Church-Sedona-AZ-1441369559466896/>)
- Andrew Scourby's readings of the King James Bible on YouTube.
 - Galatians: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EjFd9KIgQPk>
 - I Corinthians: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MLfxgoEwb1A>

(Refer to the class materials for February 17 (Septuagesima) for the introduction to Galatians.)

Introduction to I Corinthians (for Thursday and Friday’s lessons): Paul, after being called to Macedonia in a vision (Acts 16:9-10), was chased out of the first three cities in which he preached: Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea. (Acts 16:11-17:15). He temporarily took refuge in Athens (Acts 17:15-32), where he attempted – apparently without much success – to convert those who “spent their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new.” (Acts 17:21) At least he wasn’t chased out of town, as before. Perhaps feeling somewhat discouraged about the impact of his Macedonian mission up to that point, Paul moved on to Corinth. (Acts 18:1)

Like Thessalonica, Corinth was a large, metropolitan city. Situated near the center of the Roman province of Achaia, it had a Jewish synagogue, and it was plagued by licentious pagan practices. Upon arriving in Corinth, Paul “found” Aquila and Priscilla, who – like other Jews – had been driven from Rome by decree of the Roman Emperor Claudius. They, like Paul, were tentmakers, and Paul stayed with them during his eighteen-month mission in Corinth. (Acts 18:2-3) Happily, Paul experienced much success with the Gentiles in Corinth. The Jews, however, continued to vehemently oppose him, so Paul “shook out his garments” and declared that from then on he would “go to the Gentiles.” (Acts 18:6) He promptly set up shop “next door” to the synagogue in the house of Justus, a Gentile “worshiper of God”! (Acts 18:7) Somewhat rubbing salt in the wounds of the non-believing Jews, Paul even converted Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, and “all his household.” (Acts 18:8)

The importance of Paul’s mission in Corinth was such that Jesus appeared to him in a vision, encouraging him to remain there and assuring him that he would come to no harm. (Acts 18:9-10) Eventually, though, the Jews made “a united attack” against Paul and brought him before Gallio, the proconsul of Achaia, on charges that Paul was preaching sedition (*i.e.*, “persuading men to worship God contrary to the law”). (Acts 18:12-13) Before Paul could even defend himself, Gallio announced that he had no interest in adjudicating what was, essentially, a question of Jewish law. (Acts 18:14-16) Although Paul was free to go, the crowd beat Sosthenes – the ruler of the synagogue – instead, but Gallio “paid no attention.” (Acts 18:17) Sometime later, Paul left Corinth for Ephesus. (Acts 18:18-19)

Purpose, Date and Authorship: Paul wrote I Corinthians primarily to address internal dissension that had arisen in the Corinthian church and to answer questions the Corinthians had posed to him on questions such as marriage and celibacy, food offered to idols, and spiritual gifts.

The date of Paul’s visit to Corinth can be precisely determined by the fact that Gallio was proconsul of Achaia when Paul was there. Historical records establish that time period as 51 A.D. It is more difficult, however, to determine when Paul wrote the letter known as I Corinthians because various scriptures suggest that Paul might have written as many as four letters to the Corinthians, and it is not certain that I Corinthians is actually the first letter. Even so, there is strong agreement that Paul likely wrote this epistle around 55 A.D., probably from Ephesus during his Third Missionary Journey.

Nearly all New Testament scholars – including the most committed skeptics – accept I Corinthians as genuinely Pauline, along with II Corinthians, Romans, Galatians, Philipians, I Thessalonians and Philemon.

Outline of Contents: (*from* Morris, “Tyndale New Testament Commentaries – I Corinthians” (Eerdmans 1983))

- I. Introduction (1:1-9)
- II. Division in the Church (1:10-4:21)
- III. Moral Laxity in the Church (5:1-6:20)
- IV. Marriage (7:1-40)
- V. Meat Sacrificed to Idols (8:1-11:1)
- VI. Disorders in Public Worship (11:2-14:40)
- VII. The Resurrection (15:1-58)
- VIII. Conclusion (16:1-24)

1 Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. **2** Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. **3** For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. **4** But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. **5** For every man shall bear his own burden. **6** Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things. **7** Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. **8** For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. **9** And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. **10** As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

v. 1: *in a fault*; in a trespass (sin)

v. 4: *prove*: test

v. 6: *i.e.*, Let him who is taught in the word share all good things with him who teaches. (RSV)

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Exegesis: At first glance, verse 2 (“bear ye one another’s burdens”) seems to be at complete odds with verse 5 (“for every man shall bear his own burden”). However, the Greek words translated in the KJV as “burden” in both verses, are actually slightly different. The “burden” referred to in verse 2 reflects back to the obligation stated in verse 1: assisting the weak. Or, as Paul says elsewhere: “We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves.” (Romans 15:1 (RSV)). In verse 6, however, “burden” is more properly translated as “load”: “For each man will have to bear his own load.” (RSV) Those who are “more spiritual” ought to help bear the burden of those who are less spiritual while at the same time bearing their own load of responsibility toward God and others.

Paul, in several of his epistles, makes a point of noting that he has not taken advantage of his hosts by soliciting or expecting material rewards. However, verse 6 serves as an appeal to the generosity of the Galatians towards their teachers, not just in the sharing of material blessings (money, food, clothing, shelter) but in sharing spiritual blessings as well (lessons learned, insights gained, words of appreciation and encouragement).

“God is not mocked” (v. 7) could be paraphrased as: God cannot be fooled, outwitted or ignored.

The admonition to do good “especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (v. 10) does not imply an “us-versus-them” mentality. Instead, the idea is that it is important to build up the church through good works so that its ministry can expand and grow.

Exposition: Today’s lesson strikes a much more pastoral tone than, say, 1:8-9 in which Paul doubly-curses anyone who purports to preach another Gospel; 3:1 in which he calls the Galatians “foolish” and “bewitched”; and 5:12 in which he wishes that those of the circumcision party would “mutilate themselves.”

Living a life of liberty, rather than a life under the law, requires a constant walk in the Spirit as opposed to a self-righteous appraisal of compliance with specific do’s and don’ts. Paul recognizes that without a legalistic roadmap it is easy to be “overtaken in a fault,” particularly those who are relatively new to the faith. As a practical matter, the sort of gentle correction which Paul counsels does not seem to happen often in today’s churches. Should it? Have we – correctly or incorrectly – delegated that responsibility solely to the clergy? Certainly, we should be aware of the beam in our own eye before noting the mote in our brother’s eye (Matthew 7:3), but today’s lesson suggests that all members of a congregation – clergy and laity alike – have a role in keeping each other on the correct spiritual path.

Questions for Reflection: Do I consistently prove, or test, my work in Christ (v. 4)? When was the last time I did? Do I believe that in due season we shall reap, if we faint not (v. 9)?

Spiritual Resolve: _____

11 Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand. 12 As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. 13 For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh. 14 But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. 15 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. 16 And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God. 17 From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus. 18 Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

v. 12: *i.e.*, It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh that would compel you to be circumcised, and only in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. (RSV)

v. 16: *the Israel of God*: the company of true believers in Christ...the true sons of Abraham.

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Exegesis: As previously noted, Paul often dictated his letters to an amanuensis but wrote a brief passage in his own hand at the end of the letter to guarantee its authenticity. For some unknown reason, Paul draws attention in this epistle to just how large his writing is. Some have speculated that it has to do with an eye condition, vaguely suggested in 4:15. However, no one truly knows why he chose this particular language.

In verses 12 and 13, Paul reverts to his criticism of the Judaizers, complaining that they were pressing the Galatians to succumb to circumcision so that they (the Judaizers) could avoid criticism – or even persecution – by others. They “glory” in the fact of circumcision – which they seem to view as an almost talismanic condition – even though they are otherwise unable to keep the law.

Verse 17 recalls the passage in II Corinthians in which Paul recounts the horrific suffering he had endured, not to mention his “anxiety for all the churches,” which certainly included the Galatians (II Corinthians 11:21b-29)

Exposition: Paul’s epistle to the Galatians is a figurative roller-coaster ride of extreme emotions, intense argument and gentle persuasion. As was mentioned in the introduction, Paul knew that the churches were at a critical fork in the road. One wonders how he felt when he penned the final words of the letter in his own hand. Was he exhausted? Was he optimistic? How and when did he get any feedback on how his letter was received by the various churches?

We do know that the Judaizers did not win the day. Paul did. Although the flames of the circumcision controversy flared up throughout Paul’s ministry, this epistle seems to have put out the blaze.

Question for Reflection: What marks of Jesus do I bear (v. 17)?

Spiritual Resolve: _____

10 Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth. **11** And he said, A certain man had two sons: **12** And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. **13** And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. **14** And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. **15** And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. **16** And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. **17** And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! **18** I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, **19** And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. **20** And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. **21** And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. **22** But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: **23** And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: **24** For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry. **25** Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing. **26** And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. **27** And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. **28** And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him. **29** And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: **30** But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. **31** And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. **32** It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.

v. 15: *joined himself*: hired himself out

v. 16: *fain*: gladly

v. 32: *meet*: fitting

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Exegesis: The Parable of the Prodigal Son is straightforward, requiring no exegesis: just nearly endless contemplation. (See Questions for Reflection, below, for starters.)

Exposition: This is the last of three “lost” parables told by Jesus: The Lost Sheep (15:3-7); The Lost Coin (15:8-10); and The Prodigal Son (15:11-32). In each parable, the successful “searching” party throws a celebration when the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son are found. This idea of a loving God searching out sinners was a radical notion to the Jews of Jesus’ day:

No Pharisee had ever dreamed of a God like that. A great Jewish scholar has admitted that this is the one absolutely new thing which Jesus taught men about God – that he actually searched for men. The Jew might have agreed that if a man came crawling home to God in self-abasement and prayed for pity he might find it; but he would never have conceived of a God who went out to search for sinners. We believe in the seeking love of God, because we see that love incarnate in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who came to seek and to save that which was lost.

Barclay, *The Gospel of Luke* (rev. ed.), p. 203 (Westminster Press 1975)

Questions for Reflection: Have I given any angels joy this past week (v. 10)? What was the older son's sin (vv. 27-30)? Who am I most like – the younger brother, older brother, or the father?

Spiritual Resolve: _____

1 Paul called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, **2** Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours: **3** Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. **4** I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; **5** That in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; **6** Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: **7** So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: **8** Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. **9** God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. **10** Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. **11** For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. **12** Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. **13** Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul? **14** I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; **15** Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name. **16** And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other. **17** For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.

v. 7: *come behind in no gift*: are not lacking in any gift

v. 8: *confirm*: sustain

v. 12: *Now this I say*: What I mean is

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Exegesis: It is possible, although not certain, that the “Sosthenes” mentioned in verse 1 is the same Sosthenes – ruler of the synagogue – who was beaten in Corinth after Gallio determined that he would not hear the Jews’ complaint against Paul. (*See* Introduction to I Corinthians, p. 3.) Verses 4 through 9 allude to themes that will be developed more fully later in the letter.

Verse 10 launches into a lengthy discussion of the unfortunate divisions that had arisen in the church during Paul’s absence. (1:10-4:21) Nothing is known about Chloe or her “household” (v. 11), the source of Paul’s information about the divisions that had arisen. One inference that can be drawn, however, is that the Corinthian church must have been fairly large to support the several “factions” mentioned in verse 12. Nothing is known about what, precisely, precipitated the formation of certain groups which associated themselves with Paul, Apollos, Peter or even Christ. Possibly, each group had a personal preference for the preaching style or the personal characteristics of each evangelist. Paul, though, was having none of it, and his rhetorical questions in verse 13 underscore his indignation over this development. Somewhat surprisingly, despite Paul’s status as an apostle and as the founder of the church at Corinth, he baptized only two individuals and one small group: Crispus, Gaius and the “household of Stephanas” (v. 15). Paul’s primary mission was to preach (v.17), just as Jesus had called the original Twelve to do: “And he appointed twelve, to be with him, and to be sent out to preach. . .” (Mark 3:14)

Exposition: Although Paul must have been upset to learn of serious divisions among the Corinthians, he nevertheless assured them in verses 4-6 that he found it to be an occasion for thanksgiving that they demonstrated “enriched” speech and knowledge and that their changed lives demonstrated that the “testimony of Christ” had been confirmed in them. Despite the divisions, much good was also taking place at Corinth, and Paul wanted to encourage the Corinthians by letting them know he recognized this. How often, when we recognize significant fault in others, do we first take a moment to consider the significant good?

Verse 9 serves as a wonderful bookend to verse 1: just as Paul was “called” to be an apostle, so were the Corinthians “called” unto fellowship with Jesus Christ. Every believer’s “call” is no less divine than Paul’s call to be an apostle. Today’s Question for Reflection is *tough!* Perhaps Friday and Saturday’s lessons will help you formulate an answer.

Question for Reflection: Why did Paul say that the cross of Christ would be emptied of its power through his preaching the gospel via the wisdom of words (v. 17)?

Spiritual Resolve: _____

18 For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. **19** For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. **20** Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? **21** For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. **22** For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: **23** But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; **24** But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. **25** Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. **26** For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: **27** But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; **28** And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: **29** That no flesh should glory in his presence. **30** But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: **31** That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

v. 20: *disputer*: debater

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Exegesis: Paul’s reference to scripture in verse 19 (“it is written”) is a combination of Isaiah 29:14: “...and the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the discernment of their discerning men shall be hid”; and Psalm 33:10: “The Lord brings the counsel of the nations to nought; he frustrates the plans of the people.” His reference to the “wise,” the “scribe” and the “disputer [debater]” in verse 20 is intended to emphasize that even the most intelligent and learned people cannot begin to approach God’s wisdom.

As verse 22, points out, the Jews were largely impressed by signs and wonders such as the pillars of cloud and fire that guided the Israelites from Egyptian bondage (Exodus 13:21) and the parting of the Red Sea (Exodus 14:21-22) as signs of God’s presence and approval. The Jews demanded a sign from Jesus numerous times: Matthew 12:38; 16:1,4; Mark 8:11; John 6:30. The “Greeks,” on the other hand, preferred to be convinced by clever argument – like the Greeks in Athens who found Paul’s preaching interesting but largely unconvincing (Acts 17:32), largely because preaching a crucified and risen Messiah seemed scandalous to the Jews and almost ridiculous to the Greeks. The gospel seemed to be the epitome of “foolishness” to both groups. Paul’s point is that salvation comes only to those who believe, and only at that point does God impart true wisdom – the “hidden wisdom” (2:7) – to the believer.

Finally, Paul again turns to scripture in verse 31, which refers to Jeremiah 9:23-24: “Thus says the Lord: ‘Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord who practice steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth; for in these things I delight, says the Lord.’” Time and time again, Paul displayed a phenomenal command of scripture, which he used skillfully – and appropriately – to support his arguments.

Exposition: Paul makes it clear that salvation is available to everyone, not just to those who can understand secret or difficult mysteries or those of high rank. Accordingly, the church at Corinth was not populated by an abundance of the “wise,” “mighty,” or “noble” persons (v. 26). To be “in Christ Jesus” (v. 30) is an immersive, personal experience: “In him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28). It is also a corporate experience: “For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.” I Corinthians 12:12-13.

Questions for Reflection: Is the cross foolishness or God’s power, to me (v. 18)? In Paul’s day the Jews sought signs and the Greeks wisdom (v. 22). Do people still chase after such things? What do I seek most of the time?

Spiritual Resolve: _____

1 And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. 2 For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. 3 And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. 4 And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: 5 That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. 6 Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: 7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: 8 Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. 9 But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. 10 But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. 11 For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. 12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. 13 Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. 14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. 15 But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. 16 For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? but we have the mind of Christ.

v. 6: *Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect*: Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom

v. 13: *comparing spiritual things with spiritual*: interpreting spiritual truths to those who possess the Spirit

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Exegesis: Paul's reference to scripture in verse 9 ("as it is written") is actually a bit of a mystery, as there is no perfect match in the Old Testament. The closest match seems to be Isaiah 64:4: "From of old no one has heard or perceived by the ear, no eye has seen a God besides thee, who works for those who wait for him."

The fundamental point in verses 10-13 is that God's revelation comes to lowly or unsophisticated believers not because they have cleverly discovered God's plan and His designs but simply because they have believed. Such knowledge has been imparted by the Spirit, and it is "freely given" (v. 12).

When Paul says in verse 16 that "we have the mind of Christ," he is not implying that we possess all of the mental faculties of Christ himself but that we, through the Spirit, know Christ and see things from his viewpoint.

Exposition: Given Paul's status as a giant of the early church (not to mention today's church), and given his huge intellect and the confidence he had in his calling as an apostle, it seems hard to believe that he could have approached the Corinthians "in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling" (v.3), and with a delivery style that was less than appealing (v. 4). His prior "failures" in Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea and Athens might explain some of his discouragement and his lack of confidence. But, this is the same Paul who studied under Gamaliel and pursued "blasphemous" Christians with a vengeance. Even so, it does seem that Paul was not a particularly effective speaker: "For they say, 'His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech of no account.'" (II Corinthians 10:10) Paul's self-deprecating description does not smack of false modesty. Paul really must have been a less-than-compelling presence. But, in his mind, this underscored the power of the Gospel (v. 5) which, even when delivered as ineffectively as Paul claims he delivered it, still had the power to fundamentally change lives. One wonders how effective Paul would be in today's media environment where style seems to play such a predominant role over substance.

Questions for Reflection: Is my faith based on enticing words of man's wisdom, or in demonstration of the Spirit and of power (v. 4)? Which spirit have I received and possessed, most of the time – the spirit of the world, or of God (v. 12)?

Spiritual Resolve: _____

Appendix

Paul and the Supernatural

From the Acts of the Apostles

- Saul (Paul) is blinded by a vision of Jesus on the road to Damascus. (9:3-8; *see also*, 22:6-13; 26:13-18; and I Corinthians 15:8)
- Paul experiences a vision of Ananias coming to lay hands on him to restore his sight. (9:12)
- Ananias does, in fact, lay his hands on Paul and his sight is restored. (9:17-18)
- Certain “prophets of Antioch” – Barnabas, Simeon (a/k/a Niger), Lucius and Manaen – are instructed by the Holy Ghost to “separate” Barnabas and Paul for God’s work. They fast and pray and lay hands on Barnabas and Paul, who depart for Seleucia and Cyprus. (13:1-4)
- Paul temporarily blinds the sorcerer, Bar-Jesus. (13:6-11)
- Paul and Barnabas perform “signs and wonders” in Iconium. (14:3)
- Paul heals the man who had been lame from birth. (14:8-10)
- Barnabas and Paul tell the apostles and the elders in Jerusalem about the “miracles and wonders God had wrought” through them among the Gentiles. (15:12)
- Paul and Timothy are forbidden by the Holy Ghost to preach in Asia and Mysia. (16:6-7)
- Paul receives a vision of a man calling him to preach in Macedonia. (16:9)
- Paul casts out the spirit of divination from a slave girl in Philippi. (16:18)
- Paul and Silas are released from prison by an earthquake. (16:26)
- Paul is commanded in a vision to continue preaching in Corinth. (18:10)
- Paul lays his hands on twelve disciples at Ephesus, and they begin speaking in tongues and prophesying. (19:6)
- Paul performs “special miracles” in Asia, and when his “handkerchiefs or aprons” are taken to the sick or the possessed, they are healed. (19:11-12)
- The seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish priest, attempt to capitalize on Paul’s name by casting a demon out of a man, but the evil spirit savagely attacks the sons, recognizing their insincere motives. (19:13-16)
- Paul is convicted by the Holy Spirit to go to Jerusalem. (19:21)
- Paul restores Eutychus to life after he falls to his death from a window. (20:9-12)
- Paul says the Holy Ghost has informed him that “bonds and afflictions” await him. (20:23)
- Certain disciples in Tyre, through the Holy Spirit, urge Paul not to go to Jerusalem. (21:4)
- In Caesarea, the prophet Agabus warns Paul that he will be bound in Jerusalem and delivered to the Gentiles. (21:10-12)
- Paul recounts how he saw Jesus in a trance while worshipping in the temple in Jerusalem. (22:17)
- Jesus appears to Paul in person and reassures him that he will “bear witness also at Rome.” (27:10)
- In the middle of a great storm at sea, Paul – citing a vision from “the angel of God” – correctly predicts no loss of life despite their eventual shipwreck. (27:22-44)
- Paul, on Melita, is bitten by a poisonous snake but suffers no harm. (28:3-5)
- Paul, still on Melita, heals Publius’ father of a “bloody flux” and heals others of disease. (28:7-9)

From Paul’s Epistles

- “Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God...I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.” (Romans 15:19)
- Paul states that he speaks in tongues more than any of the Corinthians. (I Corinthians 14:18)
- Paul describes being “caught up to the third heaven,” where he “heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for man to utter.” (II Corinthians 12:3-4)
- Paul recounts how he worked “signs and wonders” and “mighty deeds” among the Corinthians. (II Corinthians 12:12)
- Paul says he went to Jerusalem “by revelation.” (Galatians 2:2)
- Paul claims to have been taught “the mystery of Christ” by revelation. (Ephesians 3:3)