

January 7, 2018
Grace and Arrogance
1 Corinthians 5:1-8

Introduction:

We return this morning to the Book of 1 Corinthians. We stepped away from this book during the Holidays to think about thankfulness and things that might keep us from gratitude. During the advent season we looked with expectation to the coming messiah and the themes of hope, love peace and joy all of which find their conception and perfection in Christ. Last week we were helped to understand the difference between the biblical understanding of light and darkness and how the the wisdom of man has thought about those topics. I hope that you were encouraged by the thought that Light came into the world in the person of Jesus Christ and he is in no way threatened by darkness.

Returning now to first Corinthians, the better for our brief respite, it is necessary now that we warm up the motors of our minds with a very brief review of the first four chapters of 1 Corinthians. This is necessary because chapter five does not appear alone out of a vacuum! It has a context and a background, and after six weeks of necessary diversion we are kidding ourselves if we think we can just pick it back up.

So what I am asking you to do in these next few minutes is to kill the urge to put your mind in neutral! I promise I will be brief but I need you to ask the Holy Spirit to help you engage your mind in memory. I'm asking you to think all the way back to the beginning of 1 Cor. and, as I walk us through, to revive the things that the Holy Spirit taught you over the course of our teaching through first for chapters. You need to do this. You must activate your mental faculties and think about the Word of God and what it has taught you. Psalm 1:2 - Blessed is the man who's . . . delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.

Would you meditate on the first four chapters with me for a moment

In chapter 1:

1. Paul identifies himself and his recipients and in so doing he identifies them as believers - sanctified (made holy) by Jesus Christ himself in the same way that all saints are sanctified - this though is expounded on a few verses later (4-9).
2. Paul then greets them with wishes of grace and peace. - from this we can conclude that everything that follows is meant to be a means of God's favor and blessing in the lives of the recipients and consequently in you and I.

3. We then come to verse 10 and the appeal of Paul that they all agree and that there be no fighting or division among them. This is the overarching theme of the letter.
4. Verse 11 talks of a report from Chloe's people, a report that appears to continue at least through chapter 6 and may even be the basis for every topic addressed in the letter.
5. What is reported is that people are claiming to adhere to the teaching of particular preachers and using that as a means to justify their actions, flaunt spiritual superiority, and discredit others.
6. Paul's response is to rebuke this kind of thinking based on the fact that only foolish message of the cross of Christ has the power save - not any man.
7. In Chapter 2 Paul addresses spiritual maturity (vs 6ff) and how it is the Spirit of God within us which teaches us because he knows the depths of God.
8. Paul also points out that the natural man (one **not** made alive in the spirit) cannot understand these things because they are spiritually discerned.
9. In chapter three Paul laments that there was more and deeper things that he wished to teach them about God but because of their immaturity he could not (vs 1ff) and all of this is because they are worried about what preacher they follow.
10. He then uses two metaphors to describe spiritual development and the centrality of the message of the cross to it. The first metaphor is of a seed which is the message of Christ Crucified - it can be planted by anyone and it can be watered by anyone but God is the one who causes it to grow. The second metaphor is of a foundation - this too is the gospel of Jesus Christ crucified. The foundation cannot change, however what is built on the foundation can take different forms - some of which are better than others. His admonishment is to seek to have a structure built on Christ that is solid and precious.
11. In chapter 4 Paul addresses the responsibility of those carrying the message of Christ pointing out that faithfulness is of the utmost importance and God is the one who will judge whether a steward is faithful.
12. The chapter concludes with Paul admonishing the Corinthians to follow him as he follows Christ pointing out that talk is cheap but it does not count in the kingdom because the kingdom consists in power.

All this leads us to chapters 5 and 6 and the addressing of more of the report which apparently includes a man from the Church who is shacking up with his stepmother, believers taking one another to pagan court and church members sexual involvement with prostitutes.

We will in time get to these issues but in our time remaining I want to address the attitude which is responsible for this man's conduct and Paul's response - Pride (vs 2, 6)

Do you notice that Paul says very little about the sin itself. His only comment is that it is so obviously wrong that even those who don't claim to know Christ don't tolerate such a practice.

I believe what Paul is confronting in the Church is a presumptive attitude. A thinking that says it is ok for us to sin because the grace of God offered in Jesus Christ will cover it. This is an arrogant point of view.

We are living in what is referred to as the age of Grace or the covenant of Grace. Jesus instituted this age with his sacrificial death in our place which will, we are told, be applied to us through faith alone. There is no more work - no more law keeping - that must take place for salvation. Under the old covenant grace was hard to come by. Under the New Covenant in Christ's blood, the tendency is to lean so heavily on grace that we begin to presume upon Grace. We become so comfortable with God's grace that we forget about God's holiness. Do we continue sinning that grace may abound? NO!! (Romans 6:1). We reason that because the Lord has not sent a lightning bolt from heaven that we can continue to live however we want or tolerate others living however they want.

This is the the result of a depraved mind. A mind that says I have no fear of God or his Judgment so I will not say anything to the man who says he follows Jesus and yet lives in such a way that even the Godless world looks at him in disgust. The Bible says this is arrogant.

Their arrogance is manifest in this way: "We're just going to love this guy." "The best place for him is in the Church around God's people."

So we must ask ourselves, SFBC, "Do we have any leaven among us?" "Where is *our* leaven." And if we have any are we so arrogant that we will not get rid of it.

James 4:6, 1 Peter 5:5 - "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

Think and Talk:

1. Is there sin in our lives? Have we repented?
2. Is there known, unrepentance among us?
3. What is our attitude toward sin? Are we arrogant?