Walk through the New Testament

Life B-P Church Sunday School, 7 November 2021
Lesson 3

The next three epistles:
- The Corinthian problem was Pagan Lawlessness.
- The Galatian problem was Jewish Legalism.
- The right position is Christian Liberty (2 Corinthians 3:17; Galatians 5:1).

V. THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS

A. Background

- Corinth was the capital of Achaia located on the isthmus of the southern part of Greece.
- It was a commercial city with a cosmopolitan population of about 400,000.
- It was the most important city in Greece, but also the most sinful: The Greeks used the term korinthiazomai to describe fornication.
- Its Temple of Aphrodite had a thousand cult prostitutes.
- Many in the church were saved from such corruption (6:11).
- Corinth was the venue of the Isthmian games (cf. 9:24,25; 5:10).
• Paul came to Corinth in his second missionary journey (51 AD) when Gallio was the Roman deputy of Achaia (Acts 18:12-17).
• During his 18-month stay there he brought many sinners to Christ.
• Most were from the lower classes of society (1:26).
• Paul supported himself with his own tent-making trade.
• Apollos and Peter also had some influence on this church.

B. Purposes

1. To reply to a letter that he had received from them with questions about marriage, food offered to idols and spiritual gifts. This letter from the Corinthians probably came after Paul had first written to them (5:9).

2. To deal with many problems that had emerged within the church – divisions, sin being tolerated, and the improper conduct of the Lord’s Supper and worship services.

3. To get them to start collecting offerings for needy brethren in Jerusalem. (16:1-2)

Note: 1 Corinthians was written at Ephesus and sent with Timothy.

C. Summary

• Key Verse: 3:16-17 – “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.”

• It has 16 chapters which can be summarised with the following acrostic:
  1. E xhortation to Christian unity
  2. R esponse of natural man
  3. R easons for Christian carnality
  4. O bservations on Paul’s ministry
  5. R ebuking immorality in church
  6. S ins against the body
  7. I nstructions for marriage partners
  8. N ever be a stumbling block
  9. B elievers must yield rights
  10. E xpect victory over temptation
  11. H ow to approach Communion
  12. A bilities within Christ’s body
  13. V irtues of true love
  14. I nstructions on using tongues
  15. O rder in the resurrections
  16. R eminders about spiritual helpers
• **Sections:**

1. **Divisions** (chapters 1-4)
   - There were at least four factions or cliques within the church, each trying to dominate the church (1:12).
   - Division and strife are symptoms of carnality.

2. **Disorders** (chapters 5-6)
   - Their toleration of gross immorality in the church – a member was co-habiting with his step-mother.
   - Their resorting to litigation in heathen courts to resolve disputes between church members.

3. **Difficulties** (chapters 7-10)
   - Paul answers the questions he was asked about:
     - Whether it is better to remain single or to be married (7:1-9).
     - Eating food that had been offered to idols (8:1-10).

4. **Disrespect** (chapters 11-14)
   - The veiling of women in worship.
   - The conduct of the Lord’s Supper (11:23-34).
   - The use of spiritual gifts - The chaos that resulted prompted Paul to write: 14:40 – “Let all things be done decently and in order.”

   In order to correct the wrong emphasis and abuse of spiritual gifts, he expounded on the subject of *agape* love (Chapter 13).

5. **Deviation** (chapters 15-16)
   - The denial of the bodily resurrection of Christ
   - Paul soundly refuted this deviant teaching (15:17,18).

**D. Result of this Epistle**

- The problems were not resolved immediately and Paul saw it necessary to go to Corinth.
- This trip turned out to be a most painful one (2 Corinthians 2:1,2; 13:1).
- Paul wrote a strong epistle to them (2:3,9; 7:8).
- Titus was tasked to follow up on the needed action.
- He came back with news that the majority had responded with godly sorrow and repentance.
- However there were still some who questioned Paul’s authority over them and his apostleship.
- This became the occasion for Paul’s writing of 2 Corinthians.
VI. THE SECOND EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS

A. Background

Differences from 1 Corinthians:


- Many personal glimpses into the life of Paul:
  - His near-death experience in Asia (1:8,9)
  - His vision of being caught up to the third heaven (12:1-4)
  - His personal struggle with the thorn in his flesh (12:7)
  - His unusual sufferings for the sake of the gospel (11:23-27)

B. Purpose

1. To express his joy at their good response – they had finally disciplined the sinful member of the church, and he had repented of his sin.

2. To remind the Corinthians to make the collection of offerings for the needy brethren in Jerusalem.

3. To defend Paul’s apostleship and authority.

C. Summary

It has 13 chapters which can be summarised in the following acrostic:

1. T eimony to Paul’s sincerity
2. H eaviness of Paul’s heart
3. E xcellence of new covenant
4. T emporal versus eternal ministry
5. R econciliation offered to all
6. U nion with unbelievers forbidden
7. E xhortation to perfect holiness
8. G enerosity of the Macedonians
9. O pportunity for cheerful giving
10. S piritual authority of Paul
11. P aul’s boastings in Christ
12. E xperience of Paul’s thorn
13. L ives that stand the test

Note: Apostolic authority is one of the key themes of 2 Corinthians.

- Key verse - 1:1 – “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia.”
• **Sections:**

1. **The Apostle's Comfort** (chapters 1-2)
   - He was very tenderhearted, full of compassion and sympathy.
   - He pleaded with them not to be too severe in punishing the offender in their midst but to love and forgive him (2:7,8).

2. **The Apostle’s Ministry** (chapters 3-5)
   - A ministry of changed lives (3:18)
   - A ministry of the spirit and not of the letter (3:6)
   - A ministry of life through death (4:10)
   - A ministry of reconciliation (5:18)

3. **The Apostle’s Exhortations** (chapters 6-7)
   - Not to receive the grace of God in vain (6:1)
   - Not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers (6:14)
   - To be open toward Him (6:13; 7:2)

4. **The Apostle’s Teaching on Giving** (chapters 8-9)
   - The principles, purposes, policies and promises of giving to God.

5. **The Apostle’s Authority** (10-13)
   - The *origin* of his apostleship (10:8,13,18)
   - The *marks* of his apostleship (11:5)
   - The *revelations* of his apostleship (12:1-4)
   - The *miracles* of his apostleship (12:12)
   - The *exercise* of his apostleship (13:2,10)
VII. THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS

- It was written to the churches in a group of cities in Galatia (1:2).

- It included the churches at Iconium, Derbe, Lystra, and Antioch in Pisidia.

A. Background

- The churches were composed of both Jews and Gentiles.

- They were infiltrated by false teachers who claimed that:
  - Paul had taught them an incomplete gospel.
  - They needed to be circumcised and do all the works of the Law in order to be saved.
  - Paul was not an apostle.

B. Purpose

To enable the Galatians to understand that:

1. Salvation is accomplished through justification by faith plus nothing.
2. Sanctification is accomplished through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Paul's approaches to refuting the Galatian heresy:

1. A personal approach
2. A doctrinal approach
C. Summary

It has 6 chapters which can be summarised with the following acronym:

1. T urning from the true gospel
2. H ypocrisy found in Peter
3. E xample of Abraham’s faith
4. L aw versus true liberty
5. A ttitudes from the Spirit’s leading
6. W in back erring believers

Note: The word ‘law’ occurs 32 times.

• **Key verse**: 5:1 – “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.”

• **Sections**:

1. **The Personal Defence** (1-2)
   - He immediately launches into the matter (1:6-7).
   - The false teachers gave them a different gospel which is perverted.
   - He relates the history of his conversion, his calling to apostleship, and of the gospel message he preached, to show that:
     - It was directly revealed to him by Jesus Christ Himself (1:12).
     - It was accepted and approved by the Church (2:1-2,9).
     - Peter stood corrected by him for contradicting the Gospel.

2. **The Polemical Explanation** (3-4)
   - He rebukes the Galatians for foolishly following the false teachers.
   - Arguments to show that the Law cannot save:
     - Abraham’s saving faith (3:6).
     - The Law is like a schoolmaster, leading sinners to put their trust in Christ (3:24).
     - They were freed from bondage by the Gospel, but if they turn to the Law they will be under bondage again.
     - The illustration of Hagar who represents the Law, and Sarah who represents the Gospel.
3. The Practical Application (5-6)

- The Gospel’s approach to dealing with sin:
  - Not by imposing laws that the believer is unable to keep.
  - But by empowering him to love (5:6), which fulfills all the requirements of the Law.
- This love results from walking in the Holy Spirit.
- The Spirit-filled life is much better than the Law-keeping life!
- Love will enable the Galatians to:
  - Restore a brother who has fallen into sin (6:1)
  - Bear one another’s burden (6:2)
  - Bear their own burdens (6:5)
  - Keep doing good to others (6:9)
- The Spirit-filled life is emphasized again in 6:8.
- The real motives of the false teachers – to glorify themselves! (v.13).

Note: Martin Luther loved this book so much that he said, “The epistle to the Galatians is my epistle. I have betrothed myself to it. It is my wife.”