

Notes on the Greek New Testament Day 218 – August 6th – 1 Corinthians 2:6-3:4

Works frequently referenced in these notes on 1 Corinthians

John Drane	<i>Paul</i> , Lion Publishing, Berkhamstead, 1976
Leon Morris	<i>The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians</i> , Tyndale New Testament Commentary, 2 nd Ed., IVP, Leicester, 1985
Anthony C Thistleton	<i>The First Epistle to the Corinthians</i> , The New International Greek Testament Commentary, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 2000

Verses 6-16

Paul is taking up catchwords that were being bandied about at Corinth and is seeking to redefine them and reclaim them for the gospel. This is certainly the case with σοφία and may also be true of τελειος and πνευματικος (v.11).

Verse 6

Σοφίαν δὲ λαλοῦμεν ἐν τοῖς τελείοις, σοφίαν δὲ οὐ τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου οὐδὲ τῶν ἀρχόντων τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου τῶν καταργουμένων·

"In the tradition of Proverbs this [wisdom] denotes habits of judgment applicable to life. It concerns the formation of a Christian mind, which issues in a right action... Paul associates the use of the term at Corinth with what amounts to a self-centred, at times childish, attempt to manipulate things to one's own advantage. True wisdom from God, however, is sought by those who are sufficiently adult (τελειος) to exercise it responsibly for the good of all." Thistleton

λαλεω speak, talk

τελειος, α, ον complete, perfect, mature

"Paul recognises that not all Christians have full understanding. There are 'babes' among them (3:1), but the wisdom of which he speaks is appreciated by those who are mature in faith. To them he can impart 'all the counsel of God' (Acts 20:27)." Morris

Thistleton thinks τελειος is used by Paul to mean those who are 'spiritual adults' as opposed to those who behave as spiritual children. "Spiritual adulthood entails perceiving that wisdom comes from God as a gift in Christ (1:30) which enables the self to live responsibly and wisely for others and for the good of the whole community."

αἰων, αἰωνος m age, world order, eternity

οὐδε neither, nor

ἀρχων, οντος m ruler, official, authority

Thistleton includes an extended discussion of the various views of τῶν ἀρχόντων. He first considers the following three:

- i) Demonic powers;
 - ii) Earthly political rulers;
 - iii) Rulers as angelic custodians of nations – both supernatural and political.
- He favours a fourth interpretation, namely:
- iv) Rulers of this world order as socio-political powers in a structural collectivity that transcends given human individuals.

In developing this view in contrast with the others he says, "Of the three interpretations considered above, the second has most to commend it, but the resonances of the third cannot simply be swept aside as irrelevant. Paul stands closer to Jewish apocalyptic than to Western individualism... Humankind is more than a collection of individual entities or agents, but a corporeity within which evil and evil forces become endemic and structural. Moreover, Jesus Christ, for Paul, was not crucified simply by Pilate or Herod or individual leaders, but as a cosmic event on which God addressed all forces of evil from which liberation could subsequently come (Rom 8:38-39)."

καταργεω render ineffective, cancel, do away with

Verse 7

ἀλλὰ λαλοῦμεν θεοῦ σοφίαν ἐν μυστηρίῳ, τὴν ἀποκεκρυμμένην, ἣν προώρισεν ὁ θεὸς πρὸ τῶν αἰώνων εἰς δόξαν ἡμῶν·

λαλεω speak, talk

μυστηριον see v.1

"It does not signify a puzzle which man finds difficult to solve. It signifies a secret which man is wholly unable to penetrate. But it is a secret which God has now revealed." Morris
God's wisdom is Christ crucified (vv. 7b & 8). It stands apart from all human wisdom and is unattainable by unassisted human reason.

ἀποκεκρυμμένην Verb, perf pass ptc, f acc s
ἀποκρυπτω hide, keep secret

προοριζω foreordain, decide from the beginning, decide beforehand

"... It stresses the plan of God and the sovereignty of God." Morris

δοξα, ης f glory

δοξα may be another one of the Corinthian catchphrases. Paul links δοξα with the cross. The glory of God is manifest "in his free, sovereign, choice (προωρισεν, he marked out beforehand) to give himself in mercy and love in the revealed mystery of the cross of the Christ. But this 'being for others' (Bonhoeffer, Jungel) results in believers sharing in the having-died-with and being-raised-with Christ, as sharing in the radiance of his self-giving." Thistleton

Verse 8

ἦν οὐδείς τῶν ἀρχόντων τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου ἔγνωκεν, εἰ γὰρ ἔγνωσαν, οὐκ ἂν τὸν κύριον τῆς δόξης ἐσταύρωσαν·

οὐδεις, οὐδεμα, οὐδεν no one, nothing
ἀρχων see v.5

ἔγνωσαν Verb, aor act indic, 3 pl γινωσκω
ἂν particle indicating contingency
σταυρωω crucify

The proper background to an understanding of this verse is Jewish apocalyptic with its contrast between this age and the age to come. The 'Lord of glory' is an apocalyptic figure who has brought in the age to come, the age of glory, by his death. "The cross is a triumph which manifests Jesus as Lord of glory, for through the cross he absorbed and draws out the sting of death and of the powers (1 Cor 15:55). The Son is glorified, Stauffer urges, 'on Good Friday itself.'" Thistleton. Cf. Col 2:15.

Verse 9

ἀλλὰ καθὼς γέγραπται· Ἄ ὀφθαλμὸς οὐκ εἶδεν
καὶ οὐκ ἤκουσεν καὶ ἐπὶ καρδίαν
ἀνθρώπου οὐκ ἀνέβη, ὅσα ἠτοίμασεν ὁ θεὸς
τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν αὐτόν.

The syntax of this verse is difficult, lacking a main verb. Frid suggests that *ἀλλὰ* introduces a contrast with the ignorance of the powers and introduces an implied contrast, 'but we know.' Thistleton prefers to understand the second *ἀ* as functionally equivalent to *ὅσα* 'such great things.' I.e. 'Things which eye has not seen, ear has not heard and no heart imagined, such great things has God prepared for those who love him.'

γέγραπται Verb, perf pass indic, 3 s γραφω

The quotation is probably a "rather free citation of Is 64:4 with reminiscences of other scriptural passages." Morris. Cf. Is 65:17 also Jer 3:16.

εἶδεν Verb, aor act indic, 3 s ὁραω trans see,
observe, perceive, recognise; intrans
make sure, see to

οὐς, ὠτος n ear, hearing

ἀνέβη Verb, aor act indic, 3 s ἀναβαινω
ἐτοιμαζω prepare, make ready

Verses 10-16

"Verses 10-16 ... make up his [Paul's] first sustained reflection on the Spirit,' (Collins) especially as the source of revelation. This section sets a framework for later reflection on the Holy Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12-14 as well as in the resurrection chapter (15:42-57; cf. 15:12-28, 38-41). In all these passages the work of the Spirit remains inseparable from the work of God as revealed in Christ. By contrast, a wedge was driven by some at Corinth between 'spirituality' and Christ crucified." Thistleton

Verse 10

ἡμῖν γὰρ ἀπεκάλυπεν ὁ θεὸς διὰ τοῦ
πνεύματος, τὸ γὰρ πνεῦμα πάντα ἐραυνᾷ, καὶ
τὰ βάθη τοῦ θεοῦ.

The ἡμῖν is emphatic – perhaps an intended contrast with claims by "some inner esoteric circle of a privileged category within the church." Thistleton

ἀποκαλυπτω reveal, disclose

ἐραυνωω search, examine, try to find out

"The ... activity ascribed to God's Spirit by means of the verb ἐραυνωω (third present indicative ἐραυνᾷ, the Alexandrian spelling of the classical ἐρευνωω, ἐρευνᾷ) does not mean searching to discover here, but the activity of exploring God's purposes thoroughly in order to reveal them." Thistleton

βαθος, ους n depth, greatness

The depths of God's own self – his mind, purpose and plan. 'God's inmost heart.'

Verse 11

τίς γὰρ οἶδεν ἀνθρώπων τὰ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου εἰ
μὴ τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ ἀνθρώπου τὸ ἐν αὐτῷ;
οὕτως καὶ τὰ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐδείς ἔγνωκεν εἰ μὴ τὸ
πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ.

οἶδα (verb perf in form but with present
meaning) know, understand

ἀνθρώπων must be construed with τις 'who
among human persons...'

οὐδεις, οὐδεμα, οὐδεν no one, nothing
ἔγνωκεν Verb, perf act indic, 3 s γινωσκω

Thistleton argues that Paul is here not talking about components of a person (body, spirit etc.) – this does not fit the analogy with God. "The spirit is within not in the sense of location, but in the sense of partly hidden stances of which an outsider or another human person may be unaware unless the person concerned chooses to reveal them by word, gesture or action. The point of analogy does not turn on human spirit within/ divine spirit within, but on the possession of an exclusive initiative to reveal one's thoughts, counsels, stance, attitudes, intentions, or whatever else is 'within' in the sense of hidden from the public domain, not in the sense of location... The logic of Paul's thought is that if, by analogy, one person cannot know the least accessible aspects of another human being unless that person is willing to place them in the public domain, even so we cannot expect that God's own thoughts, God's own purposes, God's own qualities, or God's own self could be open to scrutiny unless his Spirit makes them accessible by an act of unveiling them."

Verse 12

ἡμεῖς δὲ οὐ τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ κόσμου ἐλάβομεν ἀλλὰ τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ, ἵνα εἰδῶμεν τὰ ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ χαρισθέντα ἡμῖν·

ἐλάβομεν Verb, aor act indic, 1 pl λαμβανῶ

'spirit of the world' – spirit of worldly wisdom that Paul was dealing with above.

"This is the essential difference between the Stoa and Paul. The former thinks of an innate and inborn divine nature; the latter, of a divine, supernatural equipment given... He who possesses the Spirit of God can really and truly know God." Weiss, cited by Thistleton. Weiss thinks that the phrase πνεῦμα του κοσμου should be read against this background and that it means 'world spirit' – the world conceived as an organic whole, animated by a rational force called 'spirit.'

Theissen, again, cited by Thistleton, "perceives a parallel between the rulers of this present world order (2:6) and the spirit of the world (2:12). Both stand in contrast to the tradition of the wisdom of God as that which escapes the powerful, the influential, and the experts of the world order who shape the world to be what it is: 'wisdom is withdrawn from the "wise and understanding" (Matt 11:25), from the "educated, powerful and well-born" (1 Cor 1:26)... It is scarcely a coincidence that wisdom and anti-wisdom are confronted ... in the epistle of James. The community ... behind James also counts itself among the poor (James 2:5-7); in 3:15-17 it also opposes ... "wisdom which is earthly, unspiritual, devilish ... where jealousy and selfish ambition exist ... disorder ... But the wisdom from above is first pure, peaceable, gentle, open to reason..."'

εἰδῶμεν Verb, perf act subj, 1 pl οἶδα
χαρισθέντα Verb, aor pass ptc, n nom/acc pl
χαρίζομαι grant, give, give freely

The Spirit has been given us to enable us to know and understand and enter into all that God has given us through Christ and the cross. This, adjusting slightly the words of Hering, is 'the great charter for Christian theology.'

Verse 13

ἃ καὶ λαλοῦμεν οὐκ ἐν διδακτοῖς ἀνθρωπίνης σοφίας λόγοις, ἀλλ' ἐν διδακτοῖς πνεύματος, πνευματικοῖς πνευματικὰ συγκρίνοντες.

λαλεῶ speak, talk

διδάκτος, η, ον taught, imparted

ἀνθρωπίνος, η, ον human, characteristic of mankind

σοφία, ας f wisdom, insight, intelligence

Not learned philosophical discourse.

πνευματικός, η, ον spiritual, pertaining to the spirit

συγκρίνοντες Verb, pres act ptc, m nom pl

συγκρινῶ compare, interpret, explain

What is the gender of πνευματικός? It could be neuter, 'explaining spiritual things by spiritual means', or masculine, 'explaining spiritual things to spiritual people.'

Robertson and Plummer list the following alternatives:

- i) Taking πνευματικός as neuter:
 - a. Combining spiritual things (words) with spiritual things (subject matter)
 - b. Interpreting (explaining) spiritual things by spiritual things, meaning:
 - (i) Interpreting OT types by NT themes
 - (ii) Interpreting spiritual truths by spiritual language
 - (iii) Interpreting spiritual truths by spiritual faculties.

- ii) Taking πνευματικοί as masculine:
 a. Suiting (matching, fitting) spiritual matters to spiritual hearers
 b. Interpreting spiritual truths to spiritual hearers.

The NIV translates it as, "expressing spiritual things in spiritual words."

Thistleton says that πνευματικός must be understood as meaning 'of the Spirit (of God)' and not as the more bland 'spiritual'. He translates the phrase 'interpreting things of the Spirit to people of the Spirit' and says, "Paul not only interprets whatever the Holy Spirit of God has revealed to those in whose lives the Spirit is co-working in applying the revelation; Paul also matches 'what they are ready to take,' or 'words which they can hear without misconstrual' to their state of readiness."

Verse 14

Ψυχικός δὲ ἄνθρωπος οὐ δέχεται τὰ τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ θεοῦ, μωρία γὰρ αὐτῷ ἐστίν, καὶ οὐ δύναται γινῶναι, ὅτι πνευματικῶς ἀνακρίνεται·

ψυχικός, η, ον natural, physical, unspiritual

The contrast is with πνευματικός. The meaning is therefore 'the natural person', i.e. the person without the Spirit, the person with merely human capabilities – 'the person who lives on an entirely human level.'

μωρία, ας f foolishness

Cf. 1:23.

γινῶναι "(second aorist infinitive active) is used as an ingressive aorist to mean to get to know, to acquire a knowledge of." Thistleton

πνευματικῶς spiritually, by means of the Spirit

ἀνακρίνω examine, judge, evaluate

Verse 15

ὁ δὲ πνευματικὸς ἀνακρίνει τὰ πάντα, αὐτὸς δὲ ὑπ' οὐδενὸς ἀνακρίνεται.

πνευματικός see v.13

οὐδεὶς, οὐδεμία, οὐδεν see v.11

Thistleton thinks v.15 may be Paul repeating a quotation or catchphrase from a group at Corinth, "although this by no means implies that Paul necessarily dissents from it, provided that it is contextualised within his wider theology of the Holy Spirit and the Christian life... As 'spiritual people,' many at Corinth saw themselves 'judging everything' but as 'being judged by no one.'... The phrase αὐτὸς δὲ ὑπ' οὐδενὸς ἀνακρίνεται would thus be understood differently by Paul than some at Corinth. In the view of some at Corinth, it would signify a certain immunity or invulnerability from correction and critique. For Paul, however, it signifies at the very least that there are depths and dimensions to life in the Spirit which the person who lives on an entirely human level (v.14) simply cannot fathom. Aspects of Christian existence remain an enigma, unless others share the same insight of the Spirit of God."

Verse 16

τίς γὰρ ἔγνω νοῦν κυρίου, ὃς συμβιβάσει αὐτόν; ἡμεῖς δὲ νοῦν Χριστοῦ ἔχομεν.

Cf. Is 40:13.

ἔγνω Verb, aor act indic, 3 s γινωσκω
 νοῦς, νοος, νοί, νοῦν m mind, thought,
 purpose
 συμβιβάζω advise, instruct

The indwelling Spirit makes Christ known. Cf. Rom 8:9. On the 'mind of Christ' cf. Phil 2:5. It is to possess the 'mode of thought' or 'mind set' displayed in Christ crucified. This is what it means to know God, to be 'spiritual.'

1 Corinthians 3:1

Κἀγώ, ἀδελφοί, οὐκ ἠδυνήθην λαλῆσαι ὑμῖν ὡς πνευματικοῖς ἀλλ' ὡς σαρκίνοις, ὡς νηπίοις ἐν Χριστῷ.

ἠδυνήθην Verb, aor pass dep indic, 1 s
 δυναμαι

λαλεω speak, talk

πνευματικός see v.13

"For Paul the test of whether people are truly 'of the Spirit' is whether the Spirit has formed within them the mind-set of Christ (2:16)."
 Thistleton

σαρκινός, η, ον fleshly, belonging to this world

'people moved by entirely human drives'
 Thistleton

νηπίος, α, ον baby, infant, child

Thistleton argues that Paul is here not speaking of them as 'babes in Christ' needing to go on and grow but as those who, though in Christ, are behaving in a childish manner. He cites Francis "We shall argue that Paul is rebuking his readers not because they are babes still, and have not progressed further, but because they were in fact being childish, a condition contrary to being spiritual." Thistleton comments, "If this argument fits Paul's thought, as we believe that it does, the practical point for believers today is not so much a call to maturity (although this may well be an implicate of these verses), but a warning that the self-centred competitive naiveté which characterises young children who have not yet learned to respect the interests of the Other will lead to misjudgements about the quality and required methods of Christian proclamation and teaching. A 'childish' mind-set may, e.g., place undue value on the style of a chat-show host, or alternatively the pseudo-learning of a long display of rhetorical theatricals, above gospel content. To be spiritually minded is to bring different criteria to the role and style of preachers and teachers."

Verse 2

γάλα ὑμᾶς ἐπότισα, οὐ βρῶμα, οὐπὼ γὰρ ἐδύνασθε. ἀλλ' οὐδὲ ἔτι νῦν δύνασθε,

γάλα, γαλακτος n milk

ποτιζω give to drink

βρῶμα, τος n food, solid food

οὐπὼ not yet

Refers back to Paul's earliest arrival and proclamation – as in 2:1-5.

οὐδὲ neither, nor

ἔτι still, yet, moreover

"They ought to have made progress by this time. It was all very well for the Corinthians to have been in the position of *babes* when they actually were *babes*, but they should have outgrown that stage long ago." Morris. Thistleton, following Hooker and Fee, argues that the emphasis is not on a need for change in direction but change in perspective. Paul has come under accusation by some that his preaching is mere milk and water stuff compared with the rhetoric of others or the rhetoric they seek. Paul's point is that this is precisely what they need for their nurture.

Verse 3

ἔτι γὰρ σαρκικοί ἐστε. ὅπου γὰρ ἐν ὑμῖν ζήλος καὶ ἔρις, οὐχὶ σαρκικοί ἐστε καὶ κατὰ ἄνθρωπον περιπατεῖτε;

σαρκικός, η, ον belonging to this world

"The -ινος termination [v.13] signifies 'made of ...'; thus in 2 Cor 3:3 tablets 'made of stone', λιθινός, are contrasted with those 'made of flesh', σαρκινός. The -ικός ending rather means 'characterised by...'; we see it in ψυχικός of the 'natural' man and πνευματικός of the 'spiritual' man in 2:14f. The difference between σαρκινός and σαρκικός is like that between 'fleshy' and 'fleshly'. σαρκινός is the more thoroughgoing word, but there is no blame attaching to it as applied to those who are young in the faith. But σαρκικός, 'characterised by the flesh', when used of those who have been Christians for years, is blameworthy. The mature believer is πνευματικός, characterised by spirit'. To be characterised instead by flesh, as the Corinthians were, is the very opposite of what a Christian should be. 'Flesh', of course, as often in Paul, is used in an ethical and moral sense. It indicates the lower aspects of man's nature, as in Rom. 13:14; Gal. 5:13; Eph 2:3, etc." Morris

"What is at issue is the anomaly of Christians who are nominally or in principle focused on Christ but in practice and in stance still focused on the interests of the self." Thistleton

ὅπου adv. where, whereas, while

ζήλος, ου m, and ους n zeal, jealousy

ἔρις, ιδος f strife, rivalry

"Although the reading ἐρις καὶ διχοστασῖαι has early and diversified attestation, the absence of καὶ διχοστασῖαι from some early witnesses led the committee to suspect the intrusion of a Western gloss, derived perhaps from the list of vices in Gen 5:20. There being no sufficient reason to account for the omission, if the words were present originally, the shorter reading is to be preferred." Metzger

οὐχὶ (emphatic form of οὐ) not, no; used in questions expecting an affirmative answer.

περιπατεῶ walk, walk about, live

'Behaving like any merely human person'

Verse 4

ὅταν γὰρ λέγῃ τις· Ἐγὼ μὲν εἰμι Παύλου, ἕτερος δέ· Ἐγὼ Ἀπολλῶ, οὐκ ἄνθρωποι ἐστε;

ὅταν when, whenever, as often as

ἕτερος, α, ον other, another, different

'Are you not all too human?' REB.

"Christ and the Spirit have become decisive determinants for their lives, and yet they continue as if they had no horizon beyond the merely human. The anomaly is huge, and the addressees must now be disabused of some of the fallacious presuppositions about 'Paul,' 'Apollos,' and supposed routes to esteem and prestige on which their incongruous stance rests." Thistleton