



Part 34: Every Rose Has Its Thorn

Word ALIVE



Basket-case?



Background Notes -

PURPOSE: To present Paul's letters to the church in Corinth, a large metropolitan city famous for its debauchery. Paul defends his calling and clarifies different aspects of the new faith. In doing so he gives a good explanation of what makes an apostle.

AUTHOR: Paul, the great Apostle to the Gentiles.

DATE: Paul lived in Corinth when he founded the Church there around 50 - 52.

STYLE: In defending his authority and the authority of God's Word to the Corinthians, Paul writes in an apologetic and eloquent (but powerful) style.



Opening Quotes

“The builder will be saved, but only as through fire.” 1 Cor 3:15

“Because the loaf of bread is one, we, though many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.” 1 Cor 10:17

“Whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the Lord.” 1 Cor 11:27

“God has set each member of the body in the place he wanted it to be. The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I do not need you.’” 1 Cor 12:18

“Each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up.” 1 Cor 14:26

“If Christ was not raised, your faith is worthless. You are still in your sins.” 1 Cor 15:17

“O death, where is your victory?” 1 Cor 15:55

“We walk by faith, not by sight.” 2 Cor 5:7

“If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.” 2 Cor 5:17

“God, in Christ, was reconciling the world to himself, not counting men's transgressions against them.” 2 Cor 5:19

“For our sakes God made him who did not know sin to be sin, so that we might become the very holiness of God.” 2 Cor 5:21

the BIG PICTURE		LAW, History, Writings, Prophets		key covenants in our Father's plan	
12 Periods	Plot	Other books related to period		stories in each period	
BC	THE BEGINNINGS	GN 1-11	Ps 8, 104	Creation, Adam & Eve, Cain & Abel, Noah's ark, Tower of Babel	
1850	THE PATRIARCHS	GN 12-50		Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (Israel), Joseph, Melchizedek	
1250	EXODUS FROM EGYPT	EX		Moses, the burning bush, the plagues, passover, exodus	
1200	JOURNEY TO CANAAN	NM, Jos	LV, DT	Sinai desert, 10 commandments, Levites, Law, Joshua	
1100	THE JUDGE CYCLE	Jg	Ruth	12 tribes, Gideon, Samson, Ruth, Samuel	
1030	KINGS & PROPHETS	1 & 2 S	1 Ch, Ps, Prov	Saul, David, Solomon, Jerusalem, the Temple	
1000	THE DIVIDED KINGDOM	1 Kg	2 Ch, Prov,	Israel (N), Judah (S), Elijah & Elisha, Isaiah, Assyrian exile	
721 587	BABYLONIAN EXILE	2 Kg	2 Ch, Tob, Hos, Am, Hab, Is, Jer, Lam, Jl, Mic, Zp, Jon, Nah, Ob, Ez, Dan, Bar	Babylonians, "major" prophets, Isaiah (to Israel), Jeremiah (to Jerusalem), Ezekiel (to the Exiles)	
538	THE RESTORATION	Ezr, Neh	Est, Judith, Hag, Zech, Mal, Job, Ecc, Songs	Cyrus, 2nd temple, 2nd Law, "minor" prophets, new writings	
163 63	THE REPURIFICATION	1 Mac	Dn, 2Mac, Sirach, Wisdom	Greeks, Maccabean revolt, Hasmonean Dynasty, Romans, Jewish sects (Pharisees, Saducees, Zealots, Essenes)	
AD	JESUS CHRIST	LK	MT, MK, JN	Incarnation, Good News, New Law, Cross & Resurrection	
33 70	APOSTOLIC CHURCH	Acts	Rm, 1&2Co, Ga, Ep, Phil, Col, 1&2Th, 1&2 Tm, Ti, Phm, Hb, Ja, 1P, 2P, 1,2&3J, Jd, Rv	Pentecost, council, journeys, epistles, Body/Bride of Christ	



The Story of Part 34: Every Rose Has Its Thorn



In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul talked about the body in three unique senses. In one sense, the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, making sexual sins particularly harmful, in that the very being of a person is involved. In the second sense of the word “body”, the bread of the Eucharist is the body of Christ, just as the wine of the Eucharist is his blood. And in a third sense of the word “body”, the Church herself is the mystical Body of Christ, made of living members.

Although newly converted Christians were allowed to eat foods formerly considered unclean, Paul exhorts them not to do so in front of other people who may be scandalized by it. In doing so, he reminds us that we have no right to disrespect others’ religious sensitivities.

Paul then utilizes the analogy of the body to make clear that different people play different roles within the Church, and all are important and necessary, just as different organs in the body are necessary. Some are prophets, others healers, others teachers, others endowed with remarkable faith, others able to speak in tongues, others able to interpret those tongues, others are assistants or administrators, but all of these are gifts of the one Holy Spirit. For instance, what use would speaking in tongues be if there were no one there to interpret? To think that one part of the Body of Christ was any more important than the other is like an eye telling a hand, “I don’t need you.” All were baptized into one body. The Spirit desires unity, not uniformity.

Likewise, if one part of the body suffers, the whole body suffers. And if one member is honored, the whole body is honored. In many of his letters, Paul addressed the Christians as communities of “saints”, as if they were already perfected, when obviously they weren’t. Paul wrote that they (and we) are *called* to perfect holiness, and that “the Day” is coming when each member’s work will be tested as if by fire. Using the analogy of a builder, Paul teaches that with a foundation of faith, even if some of the “builder’s work” gets burned up, the builder will be saved, but only through fire. The Church teaches us today that those who die in faith, even if not perfectly detached from every last remnant of sin, are still saved, after being purified, or “purged” (hence the term “Purgatory”). In the meanwhile, we are all saints in the making, and are in communion not only with those around us, but also with those who have gone before us. This unity in the mystical Body of Christ is called the “Communion of Saints.”


Although other Christians disagree with this teaching, there is one teaching that, once denied, would nullify anyone’s claim to be a Christian. And that teaching is the Resurrection. If Jesus was not really raised from the dead, then his victory over death would be a pretense, and there would be no Good News – we would not have that perfect sacrifice which atones for all our sins. Those who have “fallen asleep” in Christ would be the deadest

of the dead. But as it is, Christ has been raised, and death and sin have been conquered!

All of God’s promises are fulfilled in Jesus Christ. He is our “Amen” to God! Paul taught that all authority had been handed to Christ, and that Christ would then subject himself to the Father so that he could be “all in all”. This led to the question of what our bodies would be like at the resurrection. Paul tackled this mystery by revealing two truths about our resurrected bodies. The first is that we will all have one thing in common at the resurrection: we will be given incorruptible bodies. Our current bodies, in fact, are like seeds that will give way to these eternal, spiritual bodies. Secondly, we will receive God’s glory proportionate to the good we did on earth. While all will be filled to capacity with God’s glory, some of us will have a greater capacity than others.

Paul also had to defend his authority when certain Judaizing Corinthians questioned it. Although he was not “in Christ” when the original apostles were spreading the good news (in fact he persecuted them!), Jesus himself appeared to Paul, as if he was an apostle out of time. “You Corinthians, in fact, are my letter of recommendation to God!” While defending himself (“I’ve worked harder than the others”) he gave all the glory to God alone – “It is not that we are entitled of ourselves to take credit for anything.” Because of the apostles’ great confidence in Christ, Paul explains, they were able to proclaim the truth openly, commending themselves to every man’s conscience before God.

He then spoke of visions and revelations. Speaking in the third person, he mentioned visions that he himself had which sounded like out-of-body experiences. But, he made clear, in case he got all caught up in some sort of “spiritual high,” Paul mentioned that God had permitted a “thorn in his side,” a “messenger of Satan,” something he begged the Lord to take away from him. But the Lord only responded, “My grace is enough for you.” It was as if God allowed Paul to experience something he could not conquer, giving him no way out but to abandon himself to God’s grace. Whether this thorn was the pain of being persecuted, a physical ailment, or perhaps even a sin he could not conquer (as in Rom 7:14 ff), Paul concluded that all the boasting he could do was “in the Lord.” When he was weakest, when he leaned the most on God, he was the strongest. This is what it meant to walk by faith, not by sight.

Paul’s confident words address us today, as we are called to be apostles in our own right. Paul implored all to be reconciled with God, for God had given them (the apostles) a ministry of reconciliation, making them “ambassadors for Christ.” Now is the time to be reconciled! 



Defending the Faith: Visionaries

"Why doesn't the Church believe in fortune-tellers, psychics, palm-readers, tarots, ghosts, seances, or anything supernatural? What about faith-healers and speaking in tongues, which are core biblical practices?"

Firstly, to say the Church does not believe in faith-healings or tongues is to be ignorant of healing Masses and charismatic Catholic services with speaking in tongues. This is not to mention the healing miracles that have occurred at Lourdes and other sites approved by the Church. The Catholic Church is not as public about these things as are Evangelistic and Pentecostal Churches for the reason that faith-healings and speaking in tongues are not "core" biblical practices. The mission of the Church, above all else, according to Jesus, is to baptize, teach all that he commanded, and forgive sins. Healings are secondary to this purpose. As Paul said, let all things be done for building up the body [the Church] (1 Cor 4:26).

Paul clearly said that not all would be healers (1 Cor 12:8-10). It is sad that many believe in a church based on its healing ministry and not on the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:18). But which is greater – postponing a temporal illness (after which the body dies anyway), or securing eternal salvation through the forgiveness of sins?

With regard to other practices and beliefs, some clarification is in order. The Church has never pronounced that there are no such things as ghosts, or real spirits that can be summoned in seances, or that no one has psychic abilities. But while the Church does not pronounce whether this or that occultist is authentic, she pronounces firmly that their practices are to be avoided. Why? Not because they cannot be real, but because they *can* be real, and not of God. In Leviticus 20, God absolutely condemns the man or woman who claims to have a "divining spirit" – not very comforting for the modern medium. See also Isaiah 8:19.

What good can come of trying to ascertain the future without trusting God? None of these practices do a thing for the forgiveness of our sins. "Call me now and I'll tell you your future!" *What for, if I've already been let in on eternity?* "Let me read you these cards to help you with your finances!" *At the cost of my soul? No*

thanks! "I see a strong life-line in your palm. Let me tell you what else I see." *The future is in God's hands, not mine (See Rom 2:28).* "I know this guy who can move objects with his mind!" *Can he raise people from the dead? Or wipe sin from my soul?*

"What's wrong if someone has a visionary gift?" Nothing. Many of the saints were mystics. But they weren't saints because of it. Their visions never contradicted the teachings of the Church. St. Catherine of Siena had a vision in which Christ told her to respect priests by telling her they were his: "Don't touch my Christs!" St. Teresa of Avila, when thrown into a mud puddle on her way to feed the poor, asked God "Why did you let this happen?" God answered her, "I treat all my friends this way." She responded, "Then no wonder, Lord, that you have so few." We Catholics don't have to look far for mystic visionaries. We have so many in our own backyard!

"Then why should someone believe Medjugorje and not Miss Cleo?" Actually, the Church has not officially approved Medjugorje as of this writing. Of all the apparitions that the Church has approved (Fatima and Lourdes, for instance), the Church does not say that anyone *must* believe in them, but that they *can* be believed reliably. Beyond this, the Church gets constantly barraged by reports of visions and miracles. Fortunately, God left us the Church, led by the Holy Spirit, to protect us from false teachings that inevitably arise (Mt 24:11, 24).

"What's wrong with trying to discern the future?" There's a difference between prudent planning and pursuing certain knowledge of future events. "Don't worry about tomorrow," Christ taught us (Mt 6:34).

The Psychic Hotline advertises: "Looking for answers to life's most important questions? Live psychics are waiting to talk to you." The Bible proclaims: "Looking for the answer to life's single most important question? ("How can I be saved?") The risen Lord is waiting to forgive you."



Expressing the Faith: One Bread, One Body

Inspired by Paul's words to the Corinthians.

***One bread, one body, one Lord of all
One cup of blessing which we bless
And we, though many, throughout the earth,
We are one body in this one Lord.***

*Gentile or Jew, servant or free,
Woman or man, no more.*

*Many the gifts, many the works,
One in the Lord of all.*

*Grain for the fields, scattered and grown,
Gathered to one, for all.*

↗ **Next time: "Paul Stands Tall"** ↖