

THE TALE OF TWO CHURCHES
Messages in 1st Corinthians
1st Co. 1:10-20

Introduction

Scripture is complete with contrast. The book of Genesis, which records the origin of all things, is contrasted with the book of Revelation, which records the end of all things. The apostle Paul's problem with the sin nature in Romans chapter 7 is contrasted with his maturity in Philippians chapter 3. So it is with the contrast of the church at Thessalonica and the church of Corinth. No two churches could be as dissimilar as these two churches. On the one hand, the church at Thessalonica embodied all one would hope for in a local church. They had a great witness; knowledge of essential doctrines; manifestations of the fruit of the Spirit and a reciprocal appreciation between the saints and the apostle Paul. On the other hand, the Corinthians, for the most part, were carnal; allowing open sin in the church; wrought with divisions in the church; not directing love and held contempt for the apostle Paul. Even still, we will find the two churches shared one thing in common, in spite of their differences -- a shared position in Christ.

- I. THE CHURCH AT THESSALONICA IS SEEN AS AN IDEA CHURCH IN SCRIPTURE.
 - A. The culture of the city of Thessalonica was similar with a couple of exceptions.
 1. The city had a prominent deity that was served.
 - a) The Cabiri cult was prominent.
 - b) The cult was "***A group of minor deities of Greek origin. The name appears to be of Semitic origin, signifying the "great gods," and the Cabiri seem to have been connected in some manner with the sea, protecting sailors and vessels.***" -- Encyclopedia.com
 - c) The Thessalonians overcame this worship at salvation. 1st Thess. 1:9
 2. Some had a problem with working. 2 Thess. 3:7-8
 - B. The church was founded upon Paul's second apostolic journey. Acts 17:1-10
 1. Paul was there three sabbath days. Acts 17:2
 2. Paul reasoned with them from the Old Testament Scriptures. Acts 17:2
 - a) "Reasoned" is *dialogomai* which means to "conduct a discussion". Acts 18:4 cf. Heb. 12:5
 - b) "Scriptures" is seen in the New Testament as the Old Testament. Cf. John 5:39 (Jesus prodded the Jews to search); Acts 18:24 (Apollos had a handle on)
 - C. They were growing spiritually.
 1. They were manifested parts of the fruit of the Spirit.

- a) Faith and love. 1st Thess. 1:2; 2 Thess. 1:3
- b) They directed joy in afflictions. 1st Thess. 1:6
- 2. They received the word in the midst of afflictions. 1st Thess. 2:13

D. They had a great opinion of Paul.

- 1. They had a “great remembrance of him. 1st Thess. 3:6
- 2. They craved to see him again. 1st Thess. 3:6

II. THE SIN NATURE WAS PROMINENT AT CORINTH.

A. The culture of Corinth played a major role in the problems in the church.

- 1. History records that Corinth was “***an important port city of industry and commerce founded by Julius Caesar in 44 B.C. Greek philosophy and Hellenistic culture permeated the cosmopolitan center that lay on a strategic four-mile isthmus. The pool of people from which Paul found converts had been raised as Greeks and were already hellenized. With this hellenization came an inappropriate emphasis on educational opportunities. Greeks boasted of being taught at the feet self-proclaimed intellectuals and then espoused these mentors’ teachings.***”
- 2. The Corinthian believers were enamored with the trappings of the World System.

- a) Paul reminded them of the expected response from unbeliever to the gospel was foolishness. 1st Co. 1:18

- b) Paul reminded them that the world had a wisdom not pleasing to God. 1st Co. 1:19 cf. 3:18

- (1) Paul quotes Isaiah 29:14 concerning God’s future dealings with Israel.

- (2) God promised to do the wise of Israel.

- (a) “Wisdom” is the Hebrew word *chokmah* which denotes having “***technical skill, aptitude***” -- Holladay lexicon cf. 1st Kings 7:14 (used of Hiram of Tyre)

- (b) “Understanding” is *benah* -- “insight” -- Holladay lexicon cf. Deut. 6:4 (the Septuagint translates the Greek word *sunesis* - a natural intellectual faculty; comprehension -- Friberg lexicon)

B. The Corinthians had a difficult time with the apostle Paul.

- 1. Paul was under persistent attack from the Corinthians.

- a) They criticized for his presence and speech 2 Co. 10:10

- b) Was in persistent defense of his ministry to the Corinthians.
 - (1) He had to defend his motives. 1st Co. 4:1-5
 - (2) Accused of misusing his authority. 1st Co. 9:1-15
 - (3) He had to defend his apostleship. 2 Co. 11- 12
 - (4) He had to defend his preaching. 2 Co. 4:1-4
- 2. The Corinthians didn't reciprocate love towards Paul. 2 Co. 12:15
 - a) Paul was loving them. Vs. 15 (first class condition -- present act. ind.)
 - b) His love was not being reciprocated. (pres. Pass. ind.)

CONCLUSION