

1 Corinthians

Paul and Apollos

Interpreting the Text:

1. Are there any clues in the first four chapters of 1 Corinthians about what might have been dividing the Corinthian factions from each other—in addition to, or in relation to their loyalty to particular leaders?
2. What is the image of future judgment that Paul is creating by giving a warning to the Corinthians, especially in 3:10-15?
3. How do these verses relate to the traditional Protestant interpretation of Paul as one who insists on salvation by faith and not by good works when thinking about salvation and judgement?
4. Professors Bartlett and Attridge describe Paul as being a sort of parental figure to the early churches by both loving them and reprimanding them. What is the implication of Paul's reminder to the Corinthians that they are still infants in Christ? Are there other places where Paul makes remarks of this nature in chapters 3 and 4?

Applying the Text:

1. What are the divisions we find in our own churches — around leaders, doctrines, disputes about acceptable behavior? Does Paul's insistence that the church is not defined by its leaders but by its belonging help us in thinking about our own situation? How does his framing of himself and Apollos as collaborators rather than competitors help us to think about the relationship between modern Christian denominations?
2. In looking at 4:8 we realize that in important ways Paul's words speak to an affluent society: "Already we have all you (could reasonably) want! Already you are (relatively) rich." Should we as modern readers hear this as permission to accumulate wealth, or is this meant to be a condemnation?
3. Do we get any clues from these chapters about what we might appropriately learn from Paul about what to expect from church leaders—ordained and lay? And do those of us who are leaders learn anything about the appropriate style, strategies, and grounds of our leadership?

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