

This is the first sermon in a series on 1 Corinthians. It's a long letter so we may not cover all of it.

1. People give themselves away by what they speak about most. Some of us can easily be characterised by their favourite subject. 'Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks', the proverb says. In the case of Paul, it is remarkable that in each verse of this passage he mentions Jesus! That's a total of nine times. Paul's heart is full of his Lord! What do we talk about? At the recent church lunch, did we speak about Jesus at all?

This passage is very full; I could easily make three sermons on it. In this sermon we will only take some cherries from the cake:

2. A contemporary letter by a pagan author would sing the praises of the glorious city of Corinth – Paul rather praises God, and as I said, in each verse here he mentions Jesus. Other authors in Paul's time would go on about how bad the times were and how the young people were misbehaving. Not so Paul. He is entirely positive.

3. Corinth was a Roman colony, rebuilt in the year 46 BC by Julius Caesar no less. It existed to promote Roman values and to glorify the Roman emperor. Yet the Christians to whom Paul is writing called on Jesus as Lord. They accept Jesus, not Caesar, as Lord. They belong to Him, their allegiance is to Him, and they are [trying to] obey Him! Jesus is the Master; they are the servants. That is a huge change for these people, who only six years ago were gentiles. Now their 'grace and peace' come from God and Jesus. An enormous shift for them, a conversion. How's that with us? Who is our Lord? Does it show?

4. Paul doesn't mention the love of the Corinthians. There clearly wasn't much love in the church. You can be rich and gifted (verse 5) but still carnal. That is a sobering thought. The emphasis is on what God does – not on the qualities of the readers.

5. Verse 5 does indicate that in Jesus they were enriched in every way. We too are rich as Christians. We have all the spiritual blessings and gifts we need. Many modern people are dissatisfied and moan much about what they miss. Yet what would satisfy their hearts is not a bit more money, but more grace and peace. And these things God gives us.

6. Verse 7 might suggest that the Corinthians have arrived – but there is more to come when Christ returns. The same is true for us. God has already given us much, but the return of Jesus will bring even more. What a great hope for the future!

7. The Jew Paul now has Jesus central in his life. The former gentiles in Corinth now have Jesus central in their lives. We should follow them. Who is Lord over what you do on Tuesday morning and Friday night?