

✠ 1 Corinthians 3:1-23 ✠

IN NOMINE IESU

If Paul, the great apostle, and Apollos, the great preacher, are nothing, what does that make us? If Paul, who saw Jesus face to face and received from Him revelation and apostleship, is counted as nothing, then how dare we consider ourselves worthy of any honor.

Yet jealousy is a harlot that will not go when paid. Rather, she stays and seduces her prey again and again. When we are jealous of another then we have been seduced by the sirens of pride and self-glory. For what else is jealousy than the vanity of men trying to convince themselves that they are greater or deserve better than they are or have.

Those in Corinth thought highly of themselves. Some thought that naming themselves followers of Paul would be a better benefit than those who thought to call themselves followers of Cephas or Apollos. One would expect that Paul would commend the Corinthians who called themselves followers of Christ, but he does not. Instead he strikes at the heart of the matter: jealousy.

For even those who said, "We follow Christ," thought themselves better than those who claimed to follow Christ's apostle. What nonsense! Indeed the Corinthian church was boasting the wisdom of the world while they were starving from the lack of godly wisdom. How can one who follows the teachings of Paul not follow Christ? Or how can one who follows Christ not see that they also follow Paul? Or is Christ divided? Does Christ say to follow Him is different than following the one to whom He gives His Spirit? By no means!

Rather, Christ says of those He sends with His Spirit, "As the Father sent me, so I am sending you," (John 20:21) and also, "Whoever hears you hears me" (Luke 10:16). What then of heresy and schisms? Do not heretics also boast in the Lord? Do they not claim to follow the teaching of Christ and His apostles? Of course. But then, the wise will be caught in their own wisdom. For all heresies, all schisms are born of diminishing Christ and elevating man.

That is why the apostle calls himself nothing. He is nothing compared to the glory and majesty of Christ. But those in Corinth thought themselves something and so needed to prove it and so latched on to one teacher or another. They should have said, "Paul is a great gift, Apollos too, Cephas is a god-send, but our thanks and praise belongs to Christ Jesus who has given to us all good things." Then they would have avoided jealousy and her diseases of strife and division.

We would do well to take to heart the troubles of our brothers and sisters in Corinth and the pastoral correction given by St. Paul. For how often do we read of these ancient Christians and think, "Fools, it is a good thing we are not like them." Ah, but we are. One says, "I follow Luther," and another, "I follow the LC-MS" and yet another, "I follow my own studies and ponderings," and still another, "I follow what makes sense to me." Indeed, the rotten ilk that makes up the church has fared no better with the passing of time.

Paul's words should sting us as they surely stung his children in Corinth. "While there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way?" But we are God's building, not our own. We did not create our own faith and we do not sustain

it now. God is the builder and craftsman of His Church. The foundation that has been laid is Jesus. He is the chief cornerstone and the bedrock of faith. If what is built on Him is made of wood or straw it will be consumed in the fire of judgment, but the foundation will remain.

Let us then check ourselves and pay heed to the spirits as they attack us with every wind of doctrine from man and the devil. If any of us think ourselves wise let us take Paul's advice and become fools, speaking and thinking nothing but the wisdom of God: the Cross of Christ. For there is no other foundation that has been laid. Our faith stands on nothing else but Christ crucified for our sins and raised for our justification (Romans 4:25).

Or do you not know that you who have been baptized have been baptized into Christ's death, having been buried with Him, and were also raised with Him in the Spirit? And is it not our Lord's body and blood that He gives to us as He incorporates us into His body and life? And are they not our Lord's words that we hear as our sins are forgiven and our lives made new by the Spirit of God?

Therefore let no one boast in men for men are fickle and full of jealousy and strife. Rather let us boast in the Lord for He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom and our righteousness and sanctification and redemption.

Glory to God in the highest.

In the name of the FATHER and of the ✠ SON and of the HOLY SPIRIT.

✠ AMEN ✠