



## Parish of Finchampstead and California

# THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

## 25-30 January 2021

### INTRODUCTION

This week we continue with readings from Paul's first letter to the church at Corinth. As usual the Thoughts will be based principally on the text in bold type.

### MONDAY - 1 Corinthians 9:15-27

<sup>15</sup> But I have made no use of any of these rights, nor am I writing this so that they may be applied in my case. Indeed, I would rather die than that—no one will deprive me of my ground for boasting. <sup>16</sup> If I proclaim the gospel, this gives me no ground for boasting, for an obligation is laid on me, and woe betide me if I do not proclaim the gospel. <sup>17</sup> For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward; but if not of my own will, I am entrusted with a commission. <sup>18</sup> What then is my reward? Just this: that in my proclamation I may make the gospel free of charge, so as not to make full use of my rights in the gospel.

<sup>19</sup> For though I am free with respect to all, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I might win more of them. <sup>20</sup> To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though I myself am not under the law) so that I might win those under the law. <sup>21</sup> To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law) so that I might win those outside the law. **<sup>22</sup> To the weak I became weak, so that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, so that I might by any means save some. <sup>23</sup> I do it all for the sake of the gospel, so that I may share in its blessings.**

<sup>24</sup> Do you not know that in a race the runners all compete, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win it. <sup>25</sup> Athletes exercise self-control in all things; they do it to receive a perishable garland, but we an imperishable one. <sup>26</sup> So I do not run aimlessly, nor do I box as though beating the air; <sup>27</sup> but I punish my body and enslave it, so that after proclaiming to others I myself should not be disqualified.

### ***Thought for the day***

*In writing, 'I have become all things to all people' (v22), is Paul implying that he has no principles? I don't think so. His over-riding aim is surely to save people by leading them to the good news about Jesus (v23). To achieve this he will do all he can to share their starting point and preconceptions (v19-21). We know from this and his other letters that Paul was never afraid of plain speaking, but he could also entice by flattery and encouragement (see for example his encounters at Athens in Acts 17:16-34). In today's crowded market-place of ideas, how can Christians persuade others of that unchanged good news about Jesus?*

### TUESDAY - 1 Corinthians 10:1-13

<sup>1</sup> I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, <sup>2</sup> and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, <sup>3</sup> and all ate the same spiritual food, <sup>4</sup> and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ. <sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them, and they were struck down in the wilderness.

<sup>6</sup> Now these things occurred as examples for us, so that we might not desire evil as they did. <sup>7</sup> Do not become idolaters as some of them did; as it is written, 'The people sat down to eat and drink, and they rose up to play.' <sup>8</sup> We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. <sup>9</sup> We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did, and were destroyed by serpents. <sup>10</sup> And do not complain as some of them did, and were

destroyed by the destroyer. <sup>11</sup> These things happened to them to serve as an example, and they were written down to instruct us, on whom the ends of the ages have come. <sup>12</sup> So if you think you are standing, watch out that you do not fall. <sup>13</sup> No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. **God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it.**

## ***Thought for the day***

*The Jewish scriptures contain many instances of the people's faithlessness towards God, and Paul alludes to some of them in verses 1 to 10. In the Lord's Prayer one of our petitions is 'lead us not into temptation'. Some scholars prefer the translation 'Do not bring us to the time of trial'. The implication of this, made explicit by Paul in the first part of verse 13, is that we will all be tested, and many of us know how true that is. But he goes on to write of God's faithfulness in his support for us. Many of us know how true that is also.*

## **WEDNESDAY - 1 Corinthians 10:14-11:1**

<sup>14</sup> Therefore, my dear friends, flee from the worship of idols. <sup>15</sup> I speak as to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. <sup>16</sup> **The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? <sup>17</sup> Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.**

<sup>18</sup> Consider the people of Israel; are not those who eat the sacrifices partners in the altar? <sup>19</sup> What do I imply then? That food sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? <sup>20</sup> No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be partners with demons. <sup>21</sup> You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. <sup>22</sup> Or are we provoking the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?

<sup>23</sup> 'All things are lawful', but not all things are beneficial. 'All things are lawful', but not all things build up. <sup>24</sup> Do not seek your own advantage, but that of others. <sup>25</sup> Eat whatever is sold in the meat market without raising any question on the ground of conscience, <sup>26</sup> for 'the earth and its fullness are the Lord's.' <sup>27</sup> If an unbeliever invites you to a meal and you are disposed to go, eat whatever is set before you without raising any question on the ground of conscience. <sup>28</sup> But if someone says to you, 'This has been offered in sacrifice', then do not eat it, out of consideration for the one who informed you, and for the sake of conscience— <sup>29</sup> I mean the other's conscience, not your own. For why should my liberty be subject to the judgement of someone else's conscience? <sup>30</sup> If I partake with thankfulness, why should I be denounced because of that for which I give thanks?

<sup>31</sup> So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God. <sup>32</sup> Give no offence to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God, <sup>33</sup> just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, so that they may be saved. <sup>11.1</sup> Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.

## ***Thought for the day***

*The sharp-eyed will note how Paul weaves into this passage (v23-30) further reflections on 'all things are lawful', first mentioned in 6:12, and on food sacrificed to idols - see 8:1-13. Idol worship, whatever form it takes (false gods, false priorities, false hopes), cannot help us (v14). But Christ can. Verses 16 and 17 remind us, in words used in many services of Holy Communion, that once we commit ourselves to Christ we share not only in his life-giving death but also in the fellowship of all believers. Holding onto this truth we will find it easier to 'do everything for the glory of God' (v31).*

## **THURSDAY - 1 Corinthians 11:2-16**

<sup>2</sup> I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions just as I handed them on to you. <sup>3</sup> But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the husband is the head of his wife, and God is the head of Christ. <sup>4</sup> Any man who prays or prophesies with something on his head disgraces his head, <sup>5</sup> but any woman who prays or prophesies with her head unveiled disgraces her head—it is one and the same thing as having her head shaved. <sup>6</sup> For if a woman will not veil herself, then she should cut off her hair; but if it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut off or to be shaved, she should wear a veil. <sup>7</sup> For a man ought not to have his head veiled, since he is the image and reflection of God; but woman is the reflection of man. <sup>8</sup> Indeed, man was not made from woman, but woman from man. <sup>9</sup> Neither was

man created for the sake of woman, but woman for the sake of man. <sup>10</sup> For this reason a woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels. <sup>11</sup> **Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man or man independent of woman.** <sup>12</sup> **For just as woman came from man, so man comes through woman; but all things come from God.** <sup>13</sup> Judge for yourselves: is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head unveiled? <sup>14</sup> Does not nature itself teach you that if a man wears long hair, it is degrading to him, <sup>15</sup> but if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For her hair is given to her for a covering. <sup>16</sup> But if anyone is disposed to be contentious—we have no such custom, nor do the churches of God.

### ***Thought for the day***

*Paul seems here to be wrestling with a specific question he has been asked, presumably about the need for women to cover their hair in church. The important thing for him seems to be the Jewish tradition, adopted by other Christian churches, which requires it. The rest of the passage provides a number of arguments to support this position. For most societies from Paul's time onwards this would have been unexceptional. Only recently, and then only in some cultures, do phrases like 'the husband is the head of the wife' (v3) and 'woman is the reflection of man' (v7) upset us. This whole line of argument is clearly based on the account of creation in Genesis 2:21-22. I've highlighted verses 11 and 12 because here Paul reverts to the more evenly balanced position he took in 7:1-16.*

### **FRIDAY - 1 Corinthians 11:17-34**

<sup>17</sup> Now in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. <sup>18</sup> For, to begin with, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you; and to some extent I believe it. <sup>19</sup> Indeed, there have to be factions among you, for only so will it become clear who among you are genuine. <sup>20</sup> When you come together, it is not really to eat the Lord's supper. <sup>21</sup> For when the time comes to eat, each of you goes ahead with your own supper, and one goes hungry and another becomes drunk. <sup>22</sup> What! Do you not have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you show contempt for the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What should I say to you? Should I commend you? In this matter I do not commend you.

<sup>23</sup> **For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, <sup>24</sup> and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.'** <sup>25</sup> **In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.'** <sup>26</sup> **For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.**

<sup>27</sup> Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be answerable for the body and blood of the Lord. <sup>28</sup> Examine yourselves, and only then eat of the bread and drink of the cup. <sup>29</sup> For all who eat and drink without discerning the body, eat and drink judgement against themselves. <sup>30</sup> For this reason many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. <sup>31</sup> But if we judged ourselves, we would not be judged. <sup>32</sup> But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.

<sup>33</sup> So then, my brothers and sisters, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. <sup>34</sup> If you are hungry, eat at home, so that when you come together, it will not be for your condemnation. About the other things I will give instructions when I come.

### ***Thought for the day***

*As well as answering questions from Corinth, Paul continues to respond to information received. The celebration of the Lord's supper ought to have been a communal meal - a bring and share where even those who brought nothing would get something to eat. But it seems to have degenerated into a selfish 'bring your own' where some overindulged and others went hungry (v17-22). Paul roots his criticism of this behaviour firmly in the earliest account we have of the Last Supper (v23-26), with the emphasis on sharing bread and wine and thereby sharing in the proclamation of Jesus' death. This sharing was, and is, sacred, and not to be done inconsiderately or unworthily (v27-29).*

### **SATURDAY - 1 Corinthians 12:1-11**

<sup>1</sup> Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. <sup>2</sup> You know that when you were pagans, you were enticed and led astray to idols that could not speak.

<sup>3</sup> Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says 'Let Jesus be cursed!' and no one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit.

**<sup>4</sup> Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; <sup>5</sup> and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; <sup>6</sup> and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. <sup>7</sup> To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. <sup>8</sup> To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, <sup>9</sup> to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, <sup>10</sup> to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. <sup>11</sup> All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.**

### ***Thought for the day***

*Each of us has different abilities. However diverse they are, they come from one and the same Spirit, in the name of our Lord and God - see how Paul emphasises this point time and time again in this passage (v4,5,6,8,9,11). The diversity is itself a manifestation of God's generosity, and there is no order of precedence; each attribute has its special place in the life of the church. If only we could all believe that our gifts are just as important as those we see in others, then perhaps we might do together things as a church that as individuals we could only dream of.*

JRE / 3.1.21