



## Parish of Finchampstead and California

# THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

## 8-13 February 2021

### INTRODUCTION

This week we conclude readings from Paul's first letter to the church at Corinth. As last week, we diverge from the lectionary readings for Morning Prayer in order not to miss any of this important letter. As usual the Thoughts will be based principally on the text in bold type.

### MONDAY - 1 Corinthians 15:20-28

<sup>20</sup> But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died. <sup>21</sup> **For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being;** <sup>22</sup> **for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ.** <sup>23</sup> But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. <sup>24</sup> Then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after he has destroyed every ruler and every authority and power. <sup>25</sup> For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. <sup>26</sup> The last enemy to be destroyed is death. <sup>27</sup> For 'God has put all things in subjection under his feet.' But when it says, 'All things are put in subjection', it is plain that this does not include the one who put all things in subjection under him. <sup>28</sup> When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to the one who put all things in subjection under him, so that God may be all in all.

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

*Some in the church at Corinth had argued that there could be no general resurrection of the dead. Paul now argues that the resurrection of Jesus is a fact and is the precursor (first-fruits) of his followers' resurrection (v20,23). He then contrasts the death of Adam, following his sin, with the 'making alive' of Christ after his sin-banishing death (v21-22). The final resolution of all things comes when Jesus achieves God's aim of destroying death itself (v26) and hands the purified creation back to God (v24) who is 'all in all' (v28). This short passage is teeming with ideas, some of them easier to understand and accept than others. How do you react to it?*

### TUESDAY - 1 Corinthians 15:29-34

<sup>29</sup> Otherwise, what will those people do who receive baptism on behalf of the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized on their behalf? <sup>30</sup> And why are we putting ourselves in danger every hour? <sup>31</sup> I die every day! That is as certain, brothers and sisters, as my boasting of you—a boast that I make in Christ Jesus our Lord. <sup>32</sup> If with merely human hopes I fought with wild animals at Ephesus, what would I have gained by it? **If the dead are not raised, 'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.'** <sup>33</sup> Do not be deceived: 'Bad company ruins good morals.' <sup>34</sup> Come to a sober and right mind, and sin no more; for some people have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame.

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

*After a long section of theological thinking about resurrection, Paul throws in two additional reasons for its reality. It seems that some Christians were being baptized on behalf of those who had already died (v29), a ritual that Paul finds acceptable, but which has no point if there is no resurrection for such proxy-Christians to share in. And then he writes, in effect, why should he, or anyone else, risk their lives if there is no resurrection reward (v30-33)? It's interesting to speculate how many of an average Christian's actions or thoughts are motivated by a real future resurrection hope.*

## **WEDNESDAY - 1 Corinthians 15:35-50**

<sup>35</sup> But someone will ask, 'How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?' <sup>36</sup> Fool! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. <sup>37</sup> And as for what you sow, you do not sow the body that is to be, but a bare seed, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. <sup>38</sup> But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body. <sup>39</sup> Not all flesh is alike, but there is one flesh for human beings, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish. <sup>40</sup> There are both heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is one thing, and that of the earthly is another. <sup>41</sup> There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; indeed, star differs from star in glory.

**<sup>42</sup> So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. <sup>43</sup> It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. <sup>44</sup> It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body.** <sup>45</sup> Thus it is written, 'The first man, Adam, became a living being'; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. <sup>46</sup> But it is not the spiritual that is first, but the physical, and then the spiritual. <sup>47</sup> The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. <sup>48</sup> As was the man of dust, so are those who are of the dust; and as is the man of heaven, so are those who are of heaven. <sup>49</sup> Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we will also bear the image of the man of heaven.

<sup>50</sup> What I am saying, brothers and sisters, is this: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

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

*When Jesus was questioned by the Sadducees about the post-resurrection life, part of his response was to say how different it would be from earthly life - in particular that there would be no marrying and that those raised would be 'like the angels in heaven' (Mark 12:18-27). In today's passage, Paul makes his own attempt to compare the two states of being - earthly and heavenly bodies (v40). In verses 42 to 44, he makes the following comparisons: perishable / imperishable; dishonour / glory; weakness / power; physical / spiritual. It is the resurrection that converts the first to the second in each case. The most difficult of these contrasts is the last - physical / spiritual - because physical might imply the absence of a spiritual element, and spiritual might imply an absence of bodily substance, as in a ghost. Nuance may be lost in translation or it may be that Paul does not quite explain what he means fully enough. It's less snappy but perhaps a more accurate contrast would be: a body constrained by its physical attributes (decay and death) / a body released to freedom by the Spirit's power (pure and eternal). Many of us find it hard to understand these things - Paul has done his best to explain, and I have written the longest Thought for the Day - but each of us can pray to be shown what God needs us to know.*

## **THURSDAY - 1 Corinthians 15:51-58**

<sup>51</sup> Listen, I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die, but we will all be changed, <sup>52</sup> in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. <sup>53</sup> For this perishable body must put on imperishability, and this mortal body must put on immortality. <sup>54</sup> When this perishable body puts on imperishability, and this mortal body puts on immortality, then the saying that is written will be fulfilled: 'Death has been swallowed up in victory.' <sup>55</sup> **'Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?'** <sup>56</sup> **The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. <sup>57</sup> But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.**

<sup>58</sup> Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labour is not in vain.

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

*After the long and tricky passage yesterday, today's stays with the same theme of the transformation of earthly bodies into heavenly ones (v52-53). But the emphasis is on the triumph of Christ at the end of time in accordance with God's will (v57), heralded by the last trumpet (v52). Paul blends brief quotations from Isaiah and Hosea to make his point that Christ's victory is over sin and death (v52-53). At last we reach firm ground on the mountain-top of sublime rhetoric.*

## **FRIDAY - 1 Corinthians 16:1-9**

<sup>1</sup> Now concerning the collection for the saints: you should follow the directions I gave to the churches of Galatia. <sup>2</sup> **On the first day of every week, each of you is to put aside and save whatever extra you earn, so that collections need not be taken when I come.** <sup>3</sup> And when I arrive, I will send any whom you approve with letters to take your gift to Jerusalem. <sup>4</sup> If it seems advisable that I should go also, they will accompany me.

<sup>5</sup> I will visit you after passing through Macedonia—for I intend to pass through Macedonia— <sup>6</sup> and perhaps I will stay with you or even spend the winter, so that you may send me on my way, wherever I go. <sup>7</sup> I do not want to see you now just in passing, for I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits. <sup>8</sup> But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, <sup>9</sup> for a wide door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.

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

*'The collection for the saints' was a project dear to Paul's heart - raising funds for the impoverished churches in Judea. There is much more about this in 2 Corinthians 9. But here in verse 2 Paul sets down important principles of Christian giving - it is to be regular, every Sunday, and it is to reflect income. For most of us weekly giving has been replaced by monthly, reflecting the way much of our lives are arranged. If we give in advance of a specific need arising, we should be able to concentrate better on other aspects of our faith, with our agenda not determined by finance.*

## **SATURDAY - 1 Corinthians 16:10-24**

<sup>10</sup> If Timothy comes, see that he has nothing to fear among you, for he is doing the work of the Lord just as I am; <sup>11</sup> therefore let no one despise him. Send him on his way in peace, so that he may come to me; for I am expecting him with the brothers.

<sup>12</sup> Now concerning our brother Apollos, I strongly urged him to visit you with the other brothers, but he was not at all willing to come now. He will come when he has the opportunity.

<sup>13</sup> Keep alert, stand firm in your faith, be courageous, be strong. <sup>14</sup> Let all that you do be done in love.

<sup>15</sup> Now, brothers and sisters, you know that members of the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints; <sup>16</sup> I urge you to put yourselves at the service of such people, and of everyone who works and toils with them. <sup>17</sup> I rejoice at the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus, because they have made up for your absence; <sup>18</sup> for they refreshed my spirit as well as yours. So give recognition to such people.

<sup>19</sup> The churches of Asia send greetings. Aquila and Prisca, together with the church in their house, greet you warmly in the Lord. <sup>20</sup> All the brothers and sisters send greetings. Greet one another with a holy kiss.

<sup>21</sup> **I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand.** <sup>22</sup> **Let anyone be accursed who has no love for the Lord. Our Lord, come!** <sup>23</sup> **The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you.** <sup>24</sup> **My love be with all of you in Christ Jesus.**

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

*Paul dictated his letters but it's delightful when, as here (v21-24), he adds a postscript in his own handwriting. Presumably these are the points he wants his readers to be left with: the horror of those who have heard about Jesus but don't respond in love; desperation for Jesus to return (v22); Jesus' grace to be with each member of the church (v23); even Paul's own love rooted in Jesus (v24). Jesus or Lord mentioned four times in four short sentences. But Paul hardly needs to emphasise the centrality of Jesus in his life. Do we?*