

Saint Michael and All Angels Parish Church, Bramcote



Thursday, January 14th, 2021

Bible Readings: [Psalm 21; Amos 4; 1 Corinthians 3](#)
(Each reading may be viewed at www.biblegateway.com)

Reflection: ⑨

"What then is Apollos? What, now, is Paul? Servants through whom you came to faith, even as the Lord assigned the role to each" (1 Corinthians 3:5)

As we have noted in the studies this week, Paul has in the opening chapters of 1 Corinthians concentrated on the cross of Christ and the place and work of the Holy Spirit. In Chapter 3 he applies these criteria to Church and Ministry.

Christians in Corinth seem to have been seeking to identify themselves with certain 'big' names in the Church of their time, rather than focussing on Christ. These Christians in Corinth seem to have been trying to gain status or acquire prestige for themselves by a bid to share in the reflected glory of the big 'names', hanging on to the coattails of recognised or rising 'stars'. The same danger exists in the Christian community today. Paul sets out a strategy that attacks this problem on two fronts.

First, against those who make too much of the 'names' of local leaders he attacks too high a view of Christian ministers. What (Greek neuter, not "who") is Paul – simply a servant?

Second, against those who try to bypass the leadership of ministers he attacks too low a view of Christian ministers. Their role is indispensable for growth, "I planted, Apollos watered, but God went on giving the increase" (*cf.* verse 6).

If the status of ministers is exaggerated the Church suffers, falling victim to the cult of personalities. To exalt one minister at the expense of another is to suggest that the less favoured minister and ministry is of little or no significance. Paul attacks both views equally. One minister may plant, and another may water, but it is God who gives the increase, while ministers come and go.

This passage prompts questions upon which we may wish to reflect:

1. On having too high a view or too low a view of ministers and ministry: Which is more harmful for the church and its ministers? Is flattery or lack of appreciation the more damaging a burden for a minister?
2. On ministerial 'personalities', What happens when congregations make 'personalities' out of their leaders. When might this lead to division? How might it distract from Christ and the gospel?

Prayer:

Lord Christ, everlasting Son of the Father, who for our sake humbled himself and took the form of a servant: give to all ministers of the gospel the spirit of lowly service and self-denying love; and make them to know that in ministering to others they are serving you, their only Master, for the glory of your name. Amen. (*Frank Colquhoun*)

"Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you." 1 Peter 5.7