

# Bible Study # 8

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# 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians

1-10

# 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 7 (Cont)

- **1<sup>st</sup> Cor 7:12-14** *“To the rest I say, not the Lord, that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her.... Otherwise, your children would be unclean, but as it is they are holy.”*
  - Here Paul is addressing a **non- sacramental marriage** between a Christian and a pagan
    - Prior to this ( 1<sup>st</sup> Cor 7:10-11) Paul was discussing two Christians within a marriage
    - In this case Paul suggests that this should only happen when two pagans are married to each other and one decides to become a Christian

# 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 7 (Cont)

- In this situation Paul sees the children from a mixed marriage receiving a special blessing because one of their parents is a Christian
- Also, Paul indicates that a Christian spouse cannot use the fact that their pagan spouse does not become a Christian as a reason to justify divorce

# 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 7 (Cont)

- **1<sup>st</sup> Cor 7:15-24** *“but if the unbelieving partner desires to separate, let it be so; in such a case **a brother or sister** is not bound...”*
  - This is not a case where a brother and sister were married to each other
  - Instead it refers to a male Christian married to a female Christian
  - In summary he is saying that:
    - Two Christians should not divorce
    - Those in a mixed (non-sacramental) marriage should try to work out their differences, however, if the pagan spouse is keeping the Christian spouse and their children from practicing their faith they should get divorced
  - Source of the “Pauline Privilege” in the annulment process
  - 2/3 of population of Corinth were slaves
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# 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 7 (Cont)

- **1<sup>st</sup> Cor 7:25-26** *“Now concerning the unmarried,...I think that in view of the **impending distress** it is well for a person to remain as he is.”*
  - Now Paul is addressing the unmarried as he says that although this is not something that Jesus commented on he has decided to give them his understanding on this matter
  - The **impending distress** could be about:
    - The anticipated destruction of Jerusalem that Jesus predicted would come within approximately 40 years (70 A.D.)
    - An anticipation of Jesus’ second coming
    - The pending persecution of the Christians under Nero

# 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 7 (Cont)

- **1<sup>st</sup> Cor 7:27** *“Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be free. Are you free from a wife? Do not seek marriage.”*
  - Paul is asking them not to keep worrying about the little things but instead to focus on “the gospel” which is the big picture

# 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 7 (Cont)

- **1<sup>st</sup> Cor 7:32-35** *“I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to please the Lord; but the married man is anxious about worldly affairs, how to please his wife, and his interests are divided.... But to promote good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord.”*
  - Again, Paul is dealing with his missionary status were there is a great deal of persecution against the Christians
  - He does not believe that he could do this work if he were married
  - Jeremiah was not married when he prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem
  - Paul sees parallels in his life with that of Jeremiah

# 1<sup>ST</sup> Corinthians 8

# 1<sup>ST</sup> Corinthians 8

- **1<sup>st</sup> Cor 8:1-3** *“Now concerning food offered to idols; we know that ‘all of us possess knowledge.’ ‘Knowledge’ puffs up, but love builds up. He is probably alluding to something he has written in one of his letters – oh we are all so smart! If any one imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know. But if one loves God, one is known by him.”*

Here Paul deals with the **question of eating meat offered to idols**

The question he is asking is whether the Christian lived for themselves or for others

Were they living like a billiard table bouncing off each other or a cluster of grapes clinging together on a vine

# 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians (Cont)

Many of the Jewish converts were shocked that Christians would ever accept an invitation to eat at a non-believer's house since they usually served meat offered to an idol

Paul was accused of doing this very thing

Again, he does not attack the argument head on

The Corinthians argue that since *Zeus* is not god, they should be able to eat meat offered to him

Paul asks what they are relying on to come to this conclusion

They respond that it is based on their "knowledge"

Then, Paul tells them that "love" is more important and urgent than this issue

# 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 8 (Cont)

**1<sup>st</sup> Cor 8:4-6** *“Hence, as to the eating food offered to idols, we know that ‘an idol has no real existence,’ and that there is no God but one.’... and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom we exist.”*

Paul shows them that he is aware of their argument

He points out that they are still not aware of the argument that he is going to make

# 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 8 (Cont)

**1<sup>st</sup> Cor 8:7** *“However, not all possess this knowledge. You smart Corinthians. But some, through being hitherto accustomed to idols, eat food as really offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled.”*

- Paul begins by agreeing with them that many are very smart
- However, he points out that some among them are weak and do not have the same “knowledge” as the smart ones and they may slip back into polytheism after seeing their friends eating meat from the temple

# 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 8 (Cont)

• **1<sup>st</sup> Cor 8:8-10** *“Food will not commend us to God....For if anyone sees you, a man of knowledge, at a table in an idols temple, might he not be encouraged, if his conscience is weak, to eat food offered to idols?”*

- Paul asks those who are smart and understand that *Zeus* is just a piece of stone, but what about their friends?
- What if one of them who is weak (newly converted from paganism) falls back into polytheism because of something they do?
- So Paul reminds them:

# 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 8 (Cont)

**1<sup>st</sup> Cor 8:11-13** “And so by your knowledge this weak man is destroyed, the brother fellow Christian, for whom Christ died.... Therefore, if food is a cause for my brothers failing, I will never eat meat, lest I cause my brother to fall.”

- So Paul tells them that if it come down to a situation like that he will never eat another piece of meat again
- Nor will he ever walk into a pagan temple because he holds in high regard the salvation of his brother Christian who is in Christ is more important than any thing he puts in his stomach

# 1<sup>ST</sup> Corinthians 9

# 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 9

- **1<sup>st</sup> Cor 9:1-2** *“Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are not you my workmanship in the Lord? If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you; for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.”*
  - Paul will use this same argument in his 2<sup>nd</sup> letter to the Corinthians where he says that if they don't think that he is a real apostle then they are not real Christians since he baptized some of them and he brought the holy spirit to them all
  - He reminds them that they are a product of his workmanship as he founded the Church in *Corinth*

# 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 9 (Cont)

• **1<sup>st</sup> Cor 9:3-6** *“This is my defense to those who would examine me.... Do we not have the right to be accompanied by a wife? ....I who have no right from working for a living?”*

- This reference is directly related to *Cephas* (Peter) who was married
- Some believe that Peter’s wife was dead
- Peter’s wife must have been living since in that culture if a mother-in-law was living with them and the wife died, the mother-in-law would return to live with the rest of her family
- The English word “wife” here is translated from the **Greek phrase “sister-wife”**
- Some say that Peter’s wife was living with him like a “sister”

# 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 9 (Cont)

- But in Greek “sister-wife” does not mean blood relative but **“Christian wife”**
- Also, Paul has just said that a husband should not withhold conjugal rights from his wife (1<sup>st</sup> Cor 7)
- Paul also speaks about his right to be supported by the faithful among whom and for whom he works
- Yet, Paul took no money from these congregations and made his living as a tent maker

# 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 9 (Cont)

- He did this because he did not want it to appear that he was “selling the gospel” or the “Holy Spirit”
- Remember Peter’s response to Simon Magus who wanted to purchase the “Holy Spirit” (Acts 8:18-24)
  - So what Paul is saying is that he has chosen not to travel with a wife, ask for food and drink, or pay from the people he is evangelizing even though he has a right to do so as the other apostles have done
  - Why did he say this?

# 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 9 (Cont)

- **1<sup>st</sup> Cor 9:6-12** *“Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working for a living? Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? ... but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ.”*
  - It sounds like the “false apostles” may have been living off the goods of the local community as proof that they are true apostles
  - The Corinthians may be saying that Paul did not do this when he established our Church
  - The false apostles may have respond that he acted in that fashion because he knew that he did not have a right to do that since he was not an apostle
  - They are using Paul’s charity against him
  - Yet, Paul would sacrifice anything that could rightly be sacrificed to gain new converts for Christ

# 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 9 (Cont)

- **1<sup>st</sup> Cor 9: 13-14** *“Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the Temple,... In the same way, the Lord commanded those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.”*
  - Here is the climatic and definitive argument that the Lord proclaimed, “those who preach the gospel should live the gospel”

# 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 9 (Cont)

- **1<sup>st</sup> Cor 9: 15-23** *“But I have made no use of any of these rights, nor am I writing this to secure any such provision....I do all for the sake of the gospel.”*
  - Why does Paul bring in “the weak” at this point?
  - He slips this in because it is the Corinthian problem
  - They have most likely followed him in his argument up to this point but now he touches on the major issue as the “weak” are those who could be led into sin by the swashbuckling, bull-in-the-china shop activity of those who know that an idol is nothing

# 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 9 (Cont)

- **1<sup>st</sup> Cor 9: 24-27** *“Do you not know that in a race all the runners compete,...lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.”*
  - So Paul introduces a new facet of his ministry hoping that it will inspire the Corinthians to take the high road of sacrificing for others
  - He uses the sports metaphors where complacency means defeat, to prepare them for the next section of the letter where he will show the same lesson from Israel’s desert experience

# 1<sup>ST</sup> Corinthians 10

# 1<sup>ST</sup> Corinthians 10

- In this section Paul brings out the big gun – “**scripture**”, “**God’s word**”
- To support his argument he goes to the central act of God in the history of Israel – **the Exodus**
- He does this to show the *Corinthians* that they are about to fall into the same “**sin of presumption**” as their spiritual ancestors who after being freed from slavery, fell back into idolatry (The Golden Calf incident)
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# 1<sup>ST</sup> Corinthians 10 (Cont)

- **1<sup>st</sup> Cor 10: 1-3** *“I want you to know, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud... and all ate the same supernatural food and all drank the same supernatural drink ”*
  - Our fathers refer to their fathers in faith, the true Israelites
  - The cloud refers to the *Shekinah*, the Glory Cloud which is a classic Old Testament symbol for the presence of God
  - Paul is saying that the *Corinthians* were baptized into *Moses*
  - Here he is speaking metaphorically concerning the cloud and in the sea- the spirit and the water of Baptism
  - The Corinthians were baptized, chrismated and sanctified and becoming children of God just like Israel
  - They ate and drank the supernatural food which they received in communion

# 1<sup>ST</sup> Corinthians 10 (Cont)

- **1<sup>st</sup> Cor 10:4- 5** *“For they drank from the supernatural Rock which followed them, and the rock was Christ. Nevertheless with most of them God was not pleased; for they were overthrown in the wilderness.”*
  - Again, Paul is using allegory for in the text Moses was speaking of a real rock in the desert which he struck with his staff
  - Only Joshua and Caleb entered the Promised Land out of all those who were 20 years of age or older when they departed Egypt
  - The trip from Egypt to the Promised Land was only a couple of days journey
  - But God required them to wander in the wilderness until all the adults who murmured died
  - The Hebrew people were brought out of Egypt, out of paganism, baptized into Moses in the water and the cloud
  - But they turned back into idolaters

# 1<sup>ST</sup> Corinthians 10 (Cont)

- The Corinthians were baptized into Jesus by water and the Holy Spirit
- They Hebrews ate the supernatural food from heaven (manna) and the flesh of the quail and drank the supernatural water that flowed from the rock which Paul says was the Christ
- The Corinthians are doing the same thing and Paul is warning them that they too could be overthrown in the wilderness for they too have not as yet made it into the Promised Land (heaven)

# 1<sup>ST</sup> Corinthians 10 (Cont)

- **1<sup>st</sup> Cor 10: 6** *“Now these things were warnings”*
  - A better translation should be “types” as in “typology”
    - Type in Greek means “image”
    - The Anti-type pushes against the image
    - Jesus is the cause of the images that were before him such as:
      - Christian baptism caused the crossing of the Red Sea
      - Descent of the Holy Spirit after baptism caused the “glory cloud” to overshadow the people
      - Communion caused the Manna and quail to fall from the sky
      - The water of Baptism caused the waters of the Red Sea to part

# 1<sup>ST</sup> Corinthians 10 (Cont)

- The early church understood everything in the New Testament was seen by them as reality while the Old Testament stories were a foreshadowing of what would come in the New Testament
- Jesus is the "cause" of the New Testament images that were before them
- These happened because God is the author of history

# 1<sup>ST</sup> Corinthians 10 (Cont)

- **1<sup>st</sup> Cor 10: 6-8** *“Now these things were warnings for us, not to desire evil as they did. Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, ‘the people sat down to eat and drink and **rose up to dance.**’*
  - This was the dance around the “golden calf”
  - Shortly after receiving the Law on Mt Sinai the Israelites fell back into idolatry with the Golden Calf (the cult of Apse) resulting in the death of 3000 men

# 1<sup>ST</sup> Corinthians 10 (Cont)

- Another historic incident in the life of Israel included:
  - The inability of the hired prophet Balaam to curse Israel for Balak the King of Moab
  - This resulted in the sons of Israel allowing the daughters of Moab to enter their camp, play the harlot and entice them to sacrifice to their gods
  - God responded by sending a plague that killed 24,000 Israelites (Nu 25)

# 1<sup>ST</sup> Corinthians 10 (Cont)

- **1<sup>st</sup> Cor 10: 9-13** *“We must not put the Lord to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents; ....that you may be able to endure it.”*
  - Look at Nu 22 for another test to the Israelites
  - So, what is Paul talking about here?
  - Imagine how strong a temptation it was for the Corinthians who were walking down the street of Corinth on their way to work and they smelled the perfume from the Temple of Delilah and the prime ribs from the Temple of Zeus

# 1<sup>ST</sup> Corinthians 10 (Cont)

- Think of how hard it is for people today to give up smoking and suddenly get a whiff of cigarette smoke
- Paul is telling them that they have been given sufficient graces to withstand those tests and be able to walk right past those temples
- With the graces from God they can even turn their heads the other way and not yield to these temptations

# 1<sup>ST</sup> Corinthians 10 (Cont)

- **1<sup>st</sup> Cor 10:14-23** *“Therefore, my beloved, shun the worship of idols. I speak as to sensible men; ...All things are lawful, ‘but not all things build up.’”*
  - Obviously these are rhetorical questions and the answer to each of them is “yes”
  - We can also see that Paul is anticipating their affirmative answer to these questions, but then add that his argument does not hold up since Zeus is no god
  - Paul is pointing out that behind *Zeus* and all pagan gods is a demonic personality

# 1<sup>ST</sup> Corinthians 10 (Cont)

- So, he is telling them that if they enter a pagan temple, they are not just offering incense to a stone statue in the image of a god, but they are participating in a pagan cult that has demons crawling all over it
- Paul is reminding them that they cannot drink from the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons
- How would the Corinthians respond to this message?
  - They might say that if they can't go to the temple any more where will they go to get meat?

# 1<sup>ST</sup> Corinthians 10 (Cont)

- **1<sup>st</sup> Cor 10:24-26** *“Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor....For the earth is the Lord’s and everything in it.”*
  - Paul tells them they should buy their meat in the marketplace without asking questions as to where it came from
  - If you ask and the merchant says that it came from the temple then they would be confronted with a conscience issue
  - So, Paul says just buy the meat in the market and take it home for it is all from the Lord

# 1<sup>ST</sup> Corinthians 10 (Cont)

- **1<sup>st</sup> Cor 10:27-28** *“If one of the unbelievers invite you to dinner and you are disposed to go, eat whatever is set before you without raising any question on the ground of conscience. (But if someone says to you, this has been offered in sacrifice, then out of consideration for the man who informed you and for conscience sake - I mean his conscience, not yours- do not eat it.) For why should my liberty be determined by another man’s scruples? “*
  - Paul is telling the Corinthians that
    - If their neighbor invites them to dinner they should go, eat what is put before them and not ask any questions

# 1<sup>ST</sup> Corinthians 10 (Cont)

- But if someone suddenly announces that the meat was from the temple of Zeus, then they should not eat it so as not to give the impression that they are falling back into polytheism
- It seems as though some scrupulous members of the community had criticized Paul on this point so he is attempting to avoid scandalizing the weak
- Today we may find ourselves in the same circumstances as the Corinthians as we face perplexing decisions such as attending the wedding of a Catholic relative who is getting married outside of the church