

1st Corinthians

1-10

God's Divine Providence

The *Economia* Lk 13:18-19

- The Tent of Meeting – the center of the camp
- The Temple in Jerusalem – the center of the nation
- The 12 Apostles – to the ends of the earth
- St. Paul and followers – to the Roman Empire (development of doctrines)
- Missionaries – to the ends of the New Worlds
- You and me – to our families, friends, neighbors, fellow workers (St Anthony Claret)
- **The spreading of the truth in love not the imposition of a religion by conquering** – Pope Benedict the 18th

Bible Study # 7

10 27 15

1st Corinthians

Paul in writing to the Corinthians

- Begins with thanksgiving and a “battering up”
- Refers to the importance of “grace”
- Begins by attacking the divisiveness within the church (factions, cliques based on baptisms)
- Points out that his mission was to preach the Gospel with emphasis on the death and resurrection of Christ (not baptize)
- Explains why he speaks to the plainly and without rhetoric or philosophy

Paul in writing to the Corinthians

- Presents the gospel as the secret of God's heart and far surpasses human (secret) wisdom
- Expresses surprise at their spiritual immaturity after five plus years
- Preaches the resurrection of the spiritual man after Baptism which they seem not to understand as they continued to fight against each other
- Discusses the foundation he established at Corinth and how others will build upon it and warns them about the false prophets from Jerusalem

Paul in writing to the Corinthians

- Presents the shocking concept of their becoming a temple of God after Baptism
- Is debating via a letter in an attempt to draw the Corinthians away from the false prophets who are sitting on the other side of the room
- Introduces the sacraments as the mysteries of the Kingdom of God
- Reminds them of how well off they are in contrast to the rest of the Church

Paul in writing to the Corinthians

- Points the characteristics of the Apostles
- Concludes this section by promising that he is coming to them soon

1ST Corinthians 5

1st Corinthians 5

- **1st Cor 5:1** *“It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and of a kind that is not found even among pagans;”*
 - Paul is finished defending himself so he tells the Corinthians to look in a mirror at themselves
 - He is saying to that for all their attacks on him they should first look at themselves
 - He understands that there is some serious immorality *pornea* (sin) among them that is infecting some in the Church of Corinth
 - A man living with his father’s wife (concubine or 2nd or 3rd wife)
 - Sins against **consanguinity**
 - These are some of the sins of **Pornea** (Greek for immorality) in Acts 15
 - He is using hyperbole in declaring them worse than the pagans

1st Corinthians 5 (Cont)

- He is saying that as far as sin is concerned a case of incest is worse than the factualism addressed in 1st Cor 1-4, as *pornea* actually calls for excommunication
- Among the prohibitions of incest in **Lev 18:8** the prohibition of intercourse with your father's wife is exactly what Paul is accusing them of doing
 - Leviticus call for anyone doing these abominations to be cut off from the people

1st Corinthians 5 (Cont)

- **1st Cor 5:2-3** *“And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn?...For though absent in body I am present in spirit, and as if present, I have already pronounced judgment, “*
 - He is calling them arrogant because they are nitpicking him for not speaking with rhetoric and philosophy while they are living in serious sin
 - Paul pulls the rug out from under the false apostles who are claiming that he is not there (in Corinth) by saying that he is there in spirit and therefore he has pronounced judgment on the man who must be removed from the church

1st Corinthians 5 (Cont)

- He does this to test them to see if they are going to listen to him and if they do, he will be able to ascertain how much control he still has over them even from a distance
- If they disregard this letter then he will know what he must be prepared to do when he gets there

1st Corinthians 5 (Cont)

- **1st Cor 5:4** *“When you are assembled, and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus,”*
 - Cleo’s people leave Paul, get in a boat back to Corinth, gather the church together and read Paul’s letter to them
 - So, Paul says, the next time you gather together (they are assembled and reading this letter) this is what you are to do
 - Can you imagine what the false apostles must have thought as they listened to this letter?
 - Paul tells them to:

1st Corinthians 5 (Cont)

- **1st Cor 5:4-5** *“you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.”*
 - Paul directs that the man be excommunicated, removed from the congregation and not let him return until he repents
 - This remedy is the destruction of the flesh and the salvation of the soul
 - If the man has chosen to step outside the Church, you must physically put him outside the Church

1st Corinthians 5 (Cont)

- Once he is outside then he will realize that spiritually he is outside and will want to come back
- So, as mentioned above, excommunication is about mercy
- Father Sebastian added that when the Church does not excommunicate some politicians who everyone knows should be excommunicated, they are not being merciful to the politician or anyone else
- It is especially not merciful when the person is a public sinner

1st Corinthians 5 (Cont)

- **1st Cor 5:6-8** *“Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Cleanse out the old leaven that you may not be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Paschal Lamb, has been sacrificed...bread of sincerity and truth.”*
 - Paul is stating that this is not just a problem for this individual but is a problem for the entire church since this act is infectious
 - A little leaven leavens the whole loaf
 - So if this man is not removed everyone will eventually start to crumble and fall back into immorality (remember the introduction to the city of Corinth)

1st Corinthians 5 (Cont)

- **1st Cor 5:9** *“I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with immoral men;”*
 - Scholars are once again not sure what Paul means by “I wrote to you in my letter”
 - It sounds like Paul has already written another letter before this one which has been lost
 - Scholars are aware of three letters written by Paul to the Corinthians
 - Some believe that the three letters have been combined into two letters with the first and second letter becoming 1st Corinthians
 - These are the letters we continue to read in the Church today because that is exactly what the early church did as a part of their lectionary cycle

1st Corinthians 5 (Cont)

- **1st Cor 5:9-13** *“I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with immoral men;....’Drive out the wicked person from among you”*
 - Here, Paul reminds the people that he had told them not to associate with immoral people but that did not mean that they should not go out into the world
 - Paul wants them to spend time among the prostitutes and pagans and try to bring them into the Church
 - But any one in the Church of Corinth who is doing these things must be removed from the Church

1ST Corinthians 6

1st Corinthians 6

- **1st Cor 6:1-8** *“When one of you has a grievance against a brother, does he dare go to law before the unrighteous instead of the saints?But you yourselves wrong and defraud, and that even your own brethren”*
 - Paul presents **another topic** raised by Cleo’s people concerning the Corinthians practice of **taking each other to a pagan public court!**
 - He asks why can’t they resolve their conflicts among themselves, or at least find a Christian judge
 - He reminds them that a brother should not be fighting with a another brother (brothers and saints means fellow Christians)

1st Corinthians 6 (Cont)

- Paul is upset with the Corinthians because within the Roman court system the:
 - Wealthy could buy a favorable outcome
 - Poor had little chance for justice

1st Corinthians 6 (Cont)

- **1st Cor 6:9-11** *“Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?... But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the spirit of our God.”*
 - Here, Paul begins addressing a misunderstanding of the **Corinthians who believed that they no longer had to abide by the Law (Torah)**
 - Earlier Paul had taught that they did not have to be circumcised or obey the Kosher laws (Council of Jerusalem)
 - But that did not mean that “anything goes” or that once a person is baptized he can do anything
 - Unfortunately, this is one of Martin Luther’s misunderstandings of Paul’s teaching as he proclaimed that once you are baptized you are justified and you can do whatever you want (once saved always saved)

1st Corinthians 6 (Cont)

- **1st Cor 6:12** *“All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be enslaved by anything.”*
 - It sounds like Paul is teaching that once Baptized the Corinthians could still go to the temple of Zeus for some prime rib since that was only forbidden by the Torah
 - It appears that they thought he is saying there are “no laws” for the Christian
 - He corrects this misunderstanding by pointing out that not all things are helpful
 - He also appeals to their charity
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1st Corinthians 6 (Cont)

- **1st Cor 6:13-20** *“Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food....Glorify God in your body.”*
 - Next, Paul addresses the **issue of prostitution** (porneia) which appears to have become a major problem within the church of Corinth
 - His earlier catechesis was new moral grounds for the Gentiles who had no censure for extramarital activities
 - For them their wives were to bear legitimate children and be faithful housekeepers

1ST Corinthians 6 (Cont)

- Paul is teaching that porneia is not an indifferent matter but is an outrage to Christ and the Holy Spirit
- Sexual satisfaction is subject to the principle that it involves the whole body and thus the whole person
- The body is not made for sexual satisfaction in the way that the stomach is made for food

1ST Corinthians 7

1st Corinthians 7

- **1st Cor 7:1** *“Now concerning the **matters** about which you wrote. It is well for **a man not to touch a woman.**”*
 - As we remember, Cleo had sent a couple of men from Corinth with a letter containing questions for Paul from the leaders of the church in Corinth (this is the letter that has been lost)
 - These “**matters**” are obviously the **questions from that letter**
 - Why would they be asking a question about a man not “touching a woman”?
 - Looking back at the Corinthian culture we remember that many were Gnostic pagans who believed that sexual relations between a man and woman were evil because they depressed the spirit and strengthened the flesh
 - Sanctification for a Gnostic was anything that weakened the flesh

1st Corinthians 7 (Cont)

- **1st Cor 7:1-5** *Now concerning the matters about which you wrote. It is well for a man not to touch a woman. But because of the temptation of immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband.... For the sake of prayer.”*
 - Paul is responding that marriage and sexual relations within marriage are good things
 - He is also saying that refusing each other, except for a brief moment for prayer, is a bad thing

1st Corinthians 7 (Cont)

- **1st Cor 7:5-7** *“but then come together again, less Satan tempt you through lack of self-control.... One kind and one of another.”*
 - Paul is suggesting that he wished that they, like him, had no wife
 - His argument was not because he was against marriage
 - He did not believe that the flesh or sexual relations were evil
 - But, he understood how difficult it was for a married man with a wife and family in tow to do the things required of one who, like him, was serving as a missionary for Christ
 - After all, Peter was married and he only wrote two epistles and established perhaps two churches (Antioch and Rome)
 - James may have been married and he only wrote one epistle and did not found any churches

1st Corinthians 7 (Cont)

- Paul, on the other hand, wrote 14 Epistles which make up almost half of the New Testament and he founded many churches
- This understanding is important for apologetics as:
 - Many Protestants point out that Peter (as our 1st Pope) was married, so why do Catholics believe in a celibate priesthood?
 - Our response is based in part on our understanding of Paul's view of the importance of a missionary for Christ being free to devote his life to his mission
 - Celibacy in both the Old and New Testament was primary the vocation of missionaries
- This was the basis of its acceptance in the early church
- Paul speaks of celibacy as “a gift from God”, or a “grace”

1st Corinthians 7 (Cont)

- **1st Cor 7:8-9** *“To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is well for them to remain single as I do.*
 - So Paul argues that if one was not married that was a good thing
 - Also, that if one was a widow that is fine and she should not, if possible, get married again
 - But, if one cannot exercise self-control then one should marry for it is better to marry than to be aflame with passion

1st Corinthians 7 (Cont)

- **1st Cor 7:10-11** *“To the married I give charge, not I but the Lord, Here he gives what has become part of the Tradition and it comes before the gospels were written, that the wife should not separate from her husband (but if she does, let her remain single or else be reconciled to her husband) – and that the husband should not divorce his wife.”*
 - You can find this same message in **Mt 5** and **Mt 19**
 - Paul is addressing this issue of marriage based on his understanding of Jesus’ prohibition on divorce in **Mt 19**