

2020-2021 Bible Study

#20

2/16/21

Review of our Last Class

- Last week, we were introduced to a letter given to Paul by *Chloe* who came from *Corinth* to *Ephesus* to make Paul aware of the heretical problems within the Church concerning temple prostitution and eating meat offered to idols
- Paul pointed out that the members of the church at *Corinth* were not under the law, but some things were still bad for the community
- Father discussed the *Gnostic* views on the body that related to their situation
- Also, we saw Paul's explanation of the religious basis for **priestly celibacy** and Paul's role in it

Review of our Last Class (Cont)

- Then, Paul presented more details concerning the dangers of immoral sexual relationships (temple prostitution) and eating meat offered to an idol
- He also warned them that if they failed to heed his teaching, they like Israel, could be denied entry into the Promised Land (Heaven) because of their actions

Early Christian Time Line

- **33-37 A.D. Saul's persecution of the Church and his conversion (Acts 8:2-9:30) Saul:**
 - Began persecuting the early Church in Jerusalem and was given a letter from the Sanhedrin to persecute the believers in ***Damascus***
 - Was struck down and blinded on the Road to ***Damascus***
 - Regained his sight by the laying on of the hands of *Ananias*
 - Was baptized
 - Had to flee after the Jews plotted against him
 - Spent **3 years** on a sojourn and meditation in ***Arabia***
 - Returned to ***Damascus*** where the Jews plotted to kill him
 - Fled by night to ***Jerusalem***
 - Was supported by Barnabas before the Church of Jerusalem
 - Was moved to ***Caesarea*** and then on to ***Tarsus*** (Acts 9:1-30)

Paul's First Journey

- 45-49 Paul's 1st Missionary Journey (Acts 13:4-14:28)
 - Cyprus
 - Antioch in Pisidia
 - Iconium
 - Lystra
 - Derbe
 - Antioch in Syria

Paul's Second Journey

- 49-52 Paul's 2nd Missionary Journey (Acts 15:36-18:22)
 - Galatia
 - Philippi
 - Thessalonica
 - Berea
 - Athens
 - Corinth
 - Ephesus
 - Caesarea
 - Jerusalem
 - Antioch

Paul's Third Journey

- 53-58 Paul's 3rd Missionary Journey (Acts 18:23 – 21:16)
 - Antioch
 - Galatia and Phrygia
 - Ephesus
 - Philippi
 - Corinth
 - Troas
 - Assos
 - Miletus (Ephesus)
 - Tyre
 - Caesarea
 - Jerusalem

1st Corinthians 11

1st Corinthians 11

- **1st Corinthians 11:2** *“I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions even as I have delivered them to you”*
 - Next, Paul identified two other problems that had been plaguing the *Corinthian* church:
 - **First, the men had let their hair grow very long**
 - **Second, the women were appearing in public without a veil on their heads**
 - Father asked what was the problem with these situations?
 - In the *Corinthian* society, men wearing long hair meant that they were educated in rhetoric and philosophy
 - In the Jewish tradition, it indicated that they could be effeminate or sodomites

1st Corinthians 11 (Cont)

- But, for the *Corinthians*, it was done to show how smart they were
- In that same *Corinthian* culture, women did not put veils on their heads when they went out in public
- Yet, the wearing of a veil in public was part of the Jewish tradition as an outward sign that a woman was married
- This contradiction led to the confusing problem for some one who visited the church in *Corinth*, and observed that all the men had long hair and the women did not wear veils
- These acts became disastrous to the *Corinthian* church

1st Corinthians 11 (Cont)

- Thus, Paul said that the women who were married should wear a head covering even though it was not part of the *Corinthian* traditions
- And the men should not have long hair (that is beyond their shoulders) to avoid confusion
- Even though Jesus was reported to have long hair, most likely, it never went below his shoulders

1st Corinthians 11 (Cont)

- **1st Corinthians 11:17-19** *“But in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse...in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized”*
 - In this section, Paul admonishes them about **abuses in the Eucharistic celebration**
 - Father said that one thing the Greeks really knew how to do was to eat and drink at a party
 - The center of the Christian life was the (eucharistic) “meal,” in which one was expected to eat the bread and drink the wine (the body and blood of Christ)

1st Corinthians 11 (Cont)

- Father pointed out how difficult these concepts were for the Greeks who may have been asking what would the newly converted Christians to do after they had been baptized
- The Christians might have replied that they would get together and eat and drink wine!
- The Greek convert might respond that that was a wonderful thing as he was an expert in doing that
- Thus, it would appear that the *Corinthian* church, gathering for worship were turning into giant Greek parties

1st Corinthians 11 (Cont)

- Paul told them that if they wanted to eat a big meal and get drunk, they should do it at home
- What the church was supposed to be offering was the “Last Supper,” in which one would partake of the body and blood of Jesus
- He warned them not to mess around with this celebration, or they could get very sick and die

1st Corinthians 12-16

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- Father summarized the rest of 1st Corinthians as follows:
 - **1st Corinthians 12** presented the idea that they were **all members of Christ's body**
 - **1st Corinthians 13** discussed **the attributes of love (Jn 21:15-18)**
 - **1st Corinthians 14** discussed their **speaking in tongues** (meaning languages as revealed at Pentecost)
 - **1st Corinthians 15** discussed their apparent rejection of the resurrection of Jesus because of their dualist views, causing Paul to **reaffirm the resurrection of Jesus** and how important it was for Jesus and for them

Four Types of Love in Biblical Greek

- **Storge** – familial love, empathy bond.
- **Philia** – brotherly love, friend bond.
- **Eros** – sensual, romantic love.
- **Agape** – unconditional "God" love.

2nd Corinthians

2nd Corinthians

- Father said that Paul had to write *2nd Corinthians* because the people of the *Corinthian* church failed to listen to what he said in *1st Corinthians*
- Paul went north to **Troas**, crossed over the *Aegean Sea* to *Macedonia*, and then stopped in **Philippi** while on the way to **Corinth**
- Most likely, he was only a couple of weeks away from *Corinth*, when he wrote this second letter to the *Corinthians*
- While in *Philippi*, he received a message from the *Corinthians*, seeking corrections to some of the problems discussed in the first letter (since the false apostles were still there and other problems had arisen)
- The false apostles in *Corinth* were talking against Paul to the members of the church

2nd Corinthians (Cont)

- By the time Paul wrote this letter, the community in *Corinth* was further threatened by these outside intruders (false apostles) who claimed to be legitimate apostles
- They had moved to *Corinth* during the time between his founding of the church on his second missionary journey and late into his third missionary journey
- They were successful in turning members of the Church against Paul by claiming that he was fickle, inarticulate, and unqualified to be a messenger of Christ
- They created tension between Paul and the *Corinthians* that eventually reached a point of crisis

2nd Corinthians (Cont) (move up)

- It is speculated that Paul may have made an earlier brief emergency visit to *Corinth* to set things straight, but was unexpectedly attacked by unnamed offenders when he arrived (**2nd Cor 5; 7:12**)
- To Paul's distress, most of the congregation failed to defend him against this outspoken opponent
- Only later, did the majority of them repent of their guilty stance, and once again give Paul their full allegiance

2nd Corinthians (Cont)

- Father said that it appears that Paul's 1st Letter to the *Corinthians* was well received by the members of the Church in Corinth
- However, some were still unsure of his authority, refused to submit to his teaching, and continued to oppose him
- They accused him of being "all talk," and "no show," since he had promised to visit many times, but had not as then shown up
- *Titus* found Paul in *Macedonia* (probably in *Philippi*) and informed him of the situation in *Corinth* leading him to write *2nd Corinthians* (57-59 A.D.)
- Unlike 1st Corinthians, which seemed to meander in and out of topics, 2nd Corinthians is more structured

2nd Corinthians (Cont)

- Father pointed out that we can feel the frustrated emotion in this letter
- As mentioned, he was most likely in *Philippi*, among a people he loved, when he wrote this letter
- The *Philippians* never gave Paul any problems
- The letter contained a great deal of threats and warnings of what he would do when he arrived in *Corinth*
- Based on the fact that we believe he wrote his *Letter to the Romans* from *Corinth*, it appears that he spent several months in *Corinth*

2nd Corinthians (Cont)

- The letter is a bit harsh because the community did not listen to much of what he had said in his first letter
- In this second letter, he sent a stern warning directed mainly against the false apostles rather than the community at large
- Again, its purpose was to prepare them for his immanent arrival
- Father indicated, that once we understand the situation, the letter should not be confusing

2nd Corinthians (Cont)

- The gist of the letter was that he was almost there and they had better fix things quickly
- Also, that he would personally deal with the false apostles after he got there
- In summary, *2nd Corinthians* was a warning that he was coming and was primarily a counterattack against the false apostles
- Paul will write his most important letter (the Letter to the Romans) after he got to *Corinth*

2nd Corinthians (Cont)

- The letter is basically a long counterattack against the arguments of the false apostles
- It was a warning to the church in *Corinth*, while Paul was nearby in *Macedonia*, that he is almost there, and he will take care of the false apostles when he arrived, and the members of the church had better get things in order
- Apparently, even though by the time he arrived in *Corinth* the false apostles had left the city, he stayed there for quite some time

2nd Corinthians (Cont)

- Five reasons for Paul writing this letter:
 - He hoped to strengthen his relationship with loyal supporters in Corinth and prevent them from falling prey to the groundless claims of the “false apostles” who were infiltrating the Church and attacking his integrity
 - To assert and defend his apostolic authority against those who doubted or denied it
 - To resume his collection efforts for the poor Christians in Jerusalem
 - To confront the “false apostles” and their Corinthian followers
 - To inform the Corinthians of his plan to visit them for a third time

2nd Corinthians (Cont)*

- **2nd Corinthians 1-7**

- Paul **defended his apostolic authority** and provided the New Testament with his most detailed teaching on the nature of the apostolic office

- **2nd Corinthians 8-9**

- Paul, once again, discussed the **need to take up a collection for the Church in Jerusalem**

- **2nd Corinthians 10-13**

- Next, he gave a **defense of his own behavior and person**, which had apparently been the object of much attack by those who opposed him in *Corinth*
- This letter provides a detailed picture of his personality

Background for Paul's 2nd Letter to the Corinthians

Intro to 2nd Corinthians

- As discussed, Paul's First Letter to the *Corinthians* basically responded to the problems discussed in a letter from *Chloe* who was a member of the *Corinthian* church
- *As we have seen, 2nd Corinthians* is actually the **4th letter Paul has written** to the *Corinthians* after his initial visit (when he established the *Corinthian* Church in 52 AD)
- The *Catholic Commentary of Sacred Scriptures: Second Corinthians* presents the Historical Context of 2nd *Corinthians* in the following **seven stages**:

Stage 1

- **Paul founded the Church in Corinth in 51 AD**
 - Acts indicates that Paul spent 18 months in *Corinth* during his founding visit and succeeded in establishing a community of believers consisting of Gentiles (the majority) and Jews
 - This church proved to be a vibrant, but perplexing community which seemed to have a penchant for misunderstanding Paul

Stage 2

- **Paul sends his first letter to *Corinth* between 51 and 53 AD**
 - We learn from **1st Cor 5:9** that Paul had most likely written **an earlier letter (which was lost)** in which Paul urged the *Corinthians* not to associate with immoral people
 - Apparently, some in the community misconstrued his words to mean that they were to avoid contact with outsiders
 - This may have been the source of the question about whether or not to divorce unbelievers (**1 Cor 7:12-16**)

Stage 3

- **Paul sends the 1st Corinthians letter from *Ephesus* via his delegate Timothy in the spring of 54**
 - Sometime after this, Paul wrote his **second letter** which is presently **known as the canonical First Corinthians**
 - In this letter, Paul responds to oral reports about divisions (**1 Cor 1:11**) and scandalous behavior within the community (**1 Cor 1:1-6:20; 11:2-34**)
 - It also responds to the issues raised in a letter from *Cleo*
 - He wrote this letter from *Ephesus* to exhort the Church in *Corinth* to strive for unity (**1 Cor 1:10**); to become one of the members of the one body of Christ (**1 Cor 12:12-27**)

Stage 3 (Cont)

- He also sent *Timothy* to *Corinth* to remind the community of all he had previously taught them (**1 Cor 4:17; 16:10**)
- Unfortunately, this did not resolve the issues
- Most likely, *Timothy* quickly came back to *Ephesus* with some sobering news which we cannot adequately reconstruct

Stage 4

- **Paul makes an emergency visit to *Corinth* in early summer of 54 AD**
 - This was a **visit** he later describes as “**painful**” (**2 Cor 2:1**)
 - That this visit was urgent and unexpected is suggested by the fact that he **changed the travel plans** which he had discussed in **1 Cor 16:5-7**
 - Instead, he decided to go directly to *Corinth* from *Ephesus*
 - This **second visit** ended in an **unpleasant incident** with a person he later refers to as “the one who did the wrong” (**2 Cor 7:12**)

Stage 4 (Cont)

- Again, we are left guessing what happened
- The most common scholarly opinion is that a member of the community slandered Paul, calling his apostolic authority into question
- Paul abruptly left *Corinth* and returned by sea directly to *Ephesus*

Stage 5

- **Paul sends a tearful letter via Titus in late summer 54 AD**
 - Upon returning to *Ephesus*, Paul decides **to send another letter** to the *Corinthians*
 - This letter was penned out of much affliction and anguish of heart and many tears (**2 Cor 2:4**)
 - Again, this **third piece of correspondence**, known as the **“tearful letter,”** is no longer in existence
 - We know the gist of it from various references to it in **2nd Corinthians**
 - In it, Paul expresses his love and concern for the community as well as to convey his sense of pain as he was upset that the *Corinthians* had not come to his defense at the time of the nasty incident

Stage 5 (Cont)

- He entrusted the delivery of this letter to *Titus* and charged him with gauging the community's response
- Upon hearing this letter, the *Corinthians* were cut to the heart and many of them meted out a severe punishment (ostracism) to the person who had offended Paul (**2 Cor 2:6; 7:11**)
- They also grieved and hoped to see Paul again (**2 Cor 7:7**)
- Paul had directed *Titus* to return to him via a circuitous northern land route (probably because he planned to leave *Ephesus* and move north to *Troas*)
 - This departure is discussed in Acts 19:13-20:3

Stage 5 (Cont)

- Paul was anxious to receive news from *Titus*, so he decided to cross over to *Macedonia* to meet him along the way (2 Cor 2:12-13)
- The two found each other somewhere in *Macedonia*, perhaps in *Philippi*, before the winter of 54-55 AD
- There, *Titus* relayed the *Corinthians* heartfelt response to Paul's letter, which brought great joy and consolation to Paul (**2 Cor 7:6-7;13**)

Stage 6

- ***Titus* reports new problems in the winter of 54-55 AD**
 - *Titus'* report was **not all positive** and sunny
 - A few ominous clouds still remained
 - Apparently, not all the members of the community agreed with the punishment imposed on the “offender”
 - *Titus* also, most likely, informed Paul of the arrival of other “missionaries” who criticized Paul’s appearance and lack of eloquence
 - They accused Paul of hiding behind the “severe and forceful” letters he wrote (**2 Cor 10:10**)

Stage 6 (Cont)

- Some in the community also claimed to have superior apostolic credentials than Paul as they brought with them “letters of recommendation” (**2 Cor 3:1**)
- They also boasted of their pedigree and spectacular exploits such as visionary experience (**2 Cor 11:22-12:6**)
- They contrasted this with Paul’s way of life as marked by suffering; his preaching focused on the cross (**1 Cor 2:2**); and they asked how such a lifestyle and gospel show forth the power of the resurrection
- *Titus* also told Paul that the community participated in a collection for the *Church in Jerusalem*

Stage 7

- **Paul sends 2nd Corinthians via Titus in the spring of 55 AD**
 - Paul sends his **fourth letter** to the Church of *Corinth* known as canonical ***Second Corinthians***
 - After spending the winter of 54 -55 AD in *Macedonia*, Paul came to *Corinth* for his **third visit**
 - Before his arrival, he needed to accomplish several things:
 - He decided to clear the air over recent events by explaining his change in travel plans and reasons for sending the tearful letter
 - He sought to defend his way of being an apostle, a new way marked by self-giving love patterned after the love embodied by Jesus

Stage 7 (Cont)

- He also wanted to convey his joy over the response of the Corinthians **to his third letter**
- He ended by offering to forgive the offending member and encouraged the community to reach out to this person and receive him back
- Paul felt confident about the *Corinthians'* renewed enthusiasm for him
- He also decided to go on the attack against the intruding missionaries whom he dubbed as “super-apostles” by exposing the foolishness of their boasting

Stage 7 (Cont)

- Finally, he wanted to warn those who persisted in their sinful ways so that he could deal with them severely
- He sought to exhort the members of the community to attend to their own character rather than challenging his
- From this letter, (*2nd Corinthians*) we can see that Paul **bases his own self-defense on the character of Jesus**, whose entire life was marked by faithful obedience to God in giving himself in love for the sake of others