

THE FIRST LETTER OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS

Collect Prayer for Advent

Collect is to be repeated every day, with the other Collects in Advent, until Christmas-day.

ALMIGHTY God, give us grace that we may cast away *This* the works of darkness, and put upon us the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which thy Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the quick and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal, through him who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, now and ever. *Amen.*

Questions or Comments from the last session? For those of you following online you may email Fr. Bart at frfryanssc@frontiernet.net

What is the issue that Paul is addressing?

We have or will talk about marriage, sex, food the relationship between men and women...What is he trying to get us to consider?

How is the Christian to live in a pluralistic world?

Do we celebrate Halloween or All Hallows Eve - Christmas or the Christ Mass - Do we teach our children about Santa Claus or St. Nicholas?

1 Corinthians 8

¹Now concerning food offered to idols: we know that "all of us possess knowledge." "Knowledge" puffs up, but love builds up. ²If any one imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know. ³But if one loves God, one is known by him.

I. The abrupt shift from sex to food

- A. Suggests that this was also a topic of a letter written to Paul
- B. The complaint to Paul about food covers the real issue (knowledge)

- 1. Everyone knows - Paul is directing his comments who think they know (The Gnostics in Corinth)
- 2. Paul states that everyone in Corinth has knowledge the question is what kind - Paul makes four points

- 1. Not some but all the Christian in Corinth have knowledge
- 2. Knowledge is to be distinguished from love
 - a. There is intellectual knowledge
 - b. There is a knowledge that proceeds and proceeds from love
- 3. Those who think they know something really don't - because they do not love
- 4. The knowledge of God is reciprocal

⁴Hence, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that “an idol has no real existence,” and that “there is no God but one.” ⁵For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many “gods” and many “lords”—⁶yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.

I. Paul moves from the General to the Specific as to knowledge

A. Two pieces of Specific knowledge

- 1. Idols do not really exist
- 2. There is only one God

B. This is thinking that is completely in line with the Jewish thought of the time - The *Shema*

II. "Many gods and many lords"

- A. He is appealing to what the Corinthian know (Synchronistic Culture)
- B. He neither approves or disapproves of the present cultural situation
- C. Paul's Differentiation - "so called gods - many gods and many lords"
 - 1. Human made deities - gods made of stone
 - 2. Natural gods (The Order seen in Creation)
 - a. Worship of sky, sea, sun and moon
 - b. Connection between seeing God's Ordering and Natural Law

We can apprehend in the Natural Order what God intended. We are incorrect to worship the natural things, however to attribute to the ordering of creation a reflection of the divine nature leads us to Natural Law.

D. Paul's use of the phrase, "many gods and many lords" as a contrast to One God and One Lord

III. One God and One Lord

- A. The Fatherhood of God
- B. Jesus Christ the exclusive agent of God the Father

This is incomplete Trinitarian Theology and was common in the Jewish/Christian community of the time. Reflecting the Shema and yet acknowledging the place of Jesus was yet to be fully developed.

⁷However, not all possess this knowledge. But some, through being hitherto accustomed to idols, eat food as really offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. ⁸Food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do. ⁹Only take care lest this liberty of yours somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. ¹⁰For if any one sees you, a man of knowledge, at table in an idol's temple, might he not be encouraged, if his conscience is weak, to eat food offered to idols? ¹¹And so by your knowledge this weak man is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died. ¹²Thus, sinning against your brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. ¹³Therefore, if food is a cause of my brother's falling, I will never eat meat, lest I cause my brother to fall.

I. From the Specific to Practical Advice

A. While Christians realize that there is one God and One Lord. The Corinthians live in a world that has many gods and many lords - which means there are people who do not know there is One God and One Lord.

B. Any meal does not guarantee access to God - not only does the surety of the ritual meals offered to idol come into question but even the Sacred Meal of the Christians - Paul develops this concept further later

C. Finally, Paul again points to himself as an example. He has knowledge, he has love and that love/knowledge leads him to discipline himself for that sake of unknowing or recent convert

1 Corinthians 9

¹Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are not you my workmanship in the Lord? ²If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you; for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

³This is my defense to those who would examine me. ⁴Do we not have the right to our food and drink? ⁵Do we not have the right to be accompanied by a wife, as the other apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas? ⁶Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working for a living? ⁷Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard without eating any of its fruit? Who tends a flock without getting some of the milk?

⁸Do I say this on human authority? Does not the law say the same? ⁹For it is written in the law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it is treading out the grain." Is it for oxen that God is concerned? ¹⁰Does he not speak entirely for our sake? It was written for our sake, because the plowman should plow in hope and the thresher thresh in hope of a share in the crop. ¹¹If we have sown spiritual good among you, is it too much if we reap your material benefits? ¹²If others share this rightful claim upon you, do not we still more?

Nevertheless, we have not made use of this right, but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ. ¹³Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings? ¹⁴In

the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.

I. Paul's *Apologia*- not an apology but a reaffirming of his authority

- A. To teach - as an apostle - (we get the definition)
- B. Why his conduct is an example

II. The Four Questions

A. Paul's Freedom

- 1. Roman Citizen
- 2. Freedom in Christ

B. Paul's Apostolate (Apostle - one who was sent)

- 1. He was sent by Jesus - his work has been blessed = results
- 2. He is talking about an Apostle as a vocation not a title

C. Paul's right to eat

He is reaffirming his arguments from the previous chapter and pointing again to his choice not to do things that could harm others. Harm is not only in leading people astray by action, but also in taking food or drink not earned by labor

D. Paul's rhetoric concerning other Apostles

- 1. Uses the term "brothers in the Lord"
- 2. He sees that his suffering makes him not inferior but superior to others as He notes his claim. Vs. 12

This entire argument has been to demonstrate he has apostolic rights, but choose not to exercise them so that he might be an example and so that he may not place an obstacle before that spread of the Gospel.

¹⁵But I have made no use of any of these rights, nor am I writing this to secure any such provision. For I would rather die than have any one deprive me of my ground for boasting. ¹⁶For if I preach the gospel, that gives me no

ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! ¹⁷For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward; but if not of my own will, I am entrusted with a commission. ¹⁸What then is my reward? Just this: that in my preaching I may make the gospel free of charge, not making full use of my right in the gospel.

I. Paul Continues with questions and examples to appeal to authority both the Law and the Lord

II. Paul's Slavery

A. Voluntary

B. His reward for this slavery - to be able to preach "free of charge" so all may hear

¹⁹For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more. ²⁰To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews; to those under the law I became as one under the law—though not being myself under the law—that I might win those under the law. ²¹To those outside the law I became as one outside the law—not being without law toward God but under the law of Christ—that I might win those outside the law. ²²To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. ²³I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.

I. Famous Passage - the method by which Paul's spread the Gospel

A. All things to all men - so that they might be able to hear and understand

B. Theology Connection - Anglican Evangelism

II. Paul's Eschatological Reward

A. To share in the promise

B. Each is called to his own work, mine is as an Apostle

²⁴Do you not know that in a race all the runners compete, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. ²⁵Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. ²⁶Well, I do not run aimlessly, I do not box as one beating the air; ²⁷but I pommel my body and subdue it, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

I. An old image the Corinthians know (Popular in Hellenistic Culture), The Games

II. To restate his conclusion above - why he does what he does and why he is an example to others

1 Corinthians 10

¹I want you to know, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, ²and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, ³and all ate the same supernatural^ε food ⁴and all drank the same supernatural^ε drink. For they drank from the supernatural^ε Rock which followed them, and the Rock was Christ. ⁵Nevertheless with most of them God was not pleased; for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

⁶Now these things are warnings for us, not to desire evil as they did. ⁷Do 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." ⁸We must not indulge in immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. ⁹We must not put the Lord^ε to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents; ¹⁰nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. ¹¹Now these things happened to them as a warning, but they were written down for our instruction, upon whom the end of the ages has come. ¹²Therefore let any one who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. ¹³No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

I. The Commentary on Numbers

A. Similarity of the situations - the Hebrews defied God in the desert by their actions; the Corinthians defy Christ by their actions

B. Explanation of the events recorded in Numbers - the Rock was Christ

The eating, drinking and idolatrous behavior of the Israelites would seem to have been as bad as any group of people could behave, until Paul confronts the Corinthians.

NOTE: the passage about temptation is often misquoted and just as often misunderstood. Consider what is actually written:

¹²Therefore let any one who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.

We can not depend upon our own strength - consider what we say as we examine those who will be Confirmed.

After they have heard again the Ten Commandments and explained their responsibilities to God and their neighbor the minister says to them:

KNOW this; that you are not able to do these things of yourself, nor to walk in the Commandments of God, and to serve him, without his special grace; which you must learn at all times to call for by diligent prayer.

¹³No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man.

Temptations come from man not God. It is within the human heart that sin is born and we are tempted. God does not tempt us, but He knows we will be tempted and so Paul says::

God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

It is also part of human nature that we are able to call upon God and receive His Grace to overcome the temptations of this life.

¹⁴Therefore, my beloved, shun the worship of idols. ¹⁵I speak as to sensible men; judge for yourselves what I say. ¹⁶The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation^ε in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation^ε in the body of Christ? ¹⁷Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. ¹⁸Consider the people of Israel;^ε are not those who eat the sacrifices partners in the altar? ¹⁹What do I imply then? That food offered to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? ²⁰No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be partners with demons. ²¹You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. ²²Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?

I. Theology of the Holy Eucharist

- A. True presence
- B. Holy Communion is with God and the whole church
- C. Partaking in the Lord's Holy Meal is exclusive
 - 1. Inclusiveness - accepting everything, everyone
 - 2. Exclusiveness - recognizing the differences

Our behavior is to be informed by our faith. Our actions then are to be ordered by what we know to be true. Embracing, accepting or enabling that which we know is wrong is wrong, because it may lead others to sin and we ourselves are sinning because we fail to teach or preach the truth by our actions.

²³“All things are lawful,” but not all things are helpful. “All things are lawful,” but not all things build up. ²⁴Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor. ²⁵Eat whatever is sold in the meat market without raising any question on the ground of conscience. ²⁶For “the earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it.” ²⁷If one of the unbelievers invites you to dinner and you are disposed to go, eat whatever is set before you without raising any question on the ground of conscience. ²⁸(But if some one says to you, “This has been offered in sacrifice,” then out of consideration for the man who informed you, and for conscience’ sake—²⁹I mean his conscience, not yours—do not eat it.)

For why should my liberty be determined by another man's scruples? ³⁰If I partake with thankfulness, why am I denounced because of that for which I give thanks?

³¹So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. ³²Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God, ³³just as I try to please all men in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved. 11:1Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.

I. The Living conditions of the Christians in Corinth

- A. Corinthians society was pluralistic
- B. Christians did not live in isolation (one area of the city)
- C. Christians had friends and relatives who were not Christians

II. The issues of Meat

- A. Private banquets and public dining halls
- B. The Issue is knowledge and the effect of that knowledge

Do you know that the meat was sacrificed to idols?

III. How are the Christians to respond?

- A. Imitate me as I imitate Christ
- B. Do nothing that could cause anyone to stumble (Build up and do nothing that may tear down)