

Letters from Paul – Session Nine

Dear Corinthians: It Ain't All About You!

1 Corinthians 10:14-33; 11:17-35

Corinth: The city was home to multiple Greek/Roman gods goddesses. Temples existed for Emperor worship and for Aphrodite, Zeus, Nike, Poseidon, and a least one dozen more. The Temple to Aphrodite featured 1,000 Temple prostitutes on duty 24/7. It was believed intimate relations with a Temple prostitute equaled communion with the god/goddess.

Corinth was also a wealthy and prosperous city for trade and commerce. Being a port city led to it being populated with people from across the known world.

Fact A: Corinth was a difficult place for the new church due to the multiple gods/goddesses and the multi-cultural nature of its citizens.

Fact B: All the false gods worship could potentially infiltrate the church, and it was seriously encroaching when Paul's letter arrived.

1 Corinthians 10: 14-22

Idol worship or any dabbling with the pagan ceremonies were having an effect.

VV 14:22 tells us to “flee” from any/all idol worship. Paul then interjects the body and blood of Christ to speak to the need for following Jesus solely.

He also covers the necessity to be spiritually focused when partaking of communion.

10: 23-31: Paul points out that while “all things are permissible not everything is beneficial.” All things are lawful, but not all activities/acts build up.”

His point is that Christians must never seek their own advantage. Ours is an “others-focused” faith.

He also speaks to non-believers and even young Christians who might take issue with meat sacrificed to idols. Idols do not exist, so sacrifice and prayer over meat is just that, meat. That said, if a mature believer is with a non-believer or young

and not-yet-mature Christian and the meat issue arises, do not eat the meat. Only maturing Christians could handle all those issues so be “others-sensitive.”

Fact C: Corinthian Christians were disrespecting the holy experience of communion (actually then it was the love feast or agape meal). In the beginning Jews, Greeks, men, women, slaves, slave owners would co-exist in what had to be the only home for equality in existence.

By the time of Paul’s letter the rich had separated from the poor, the Jews from the Gentles and so on and the Agape Meal was fully segregated. The process called for “shared” food and wine. The rich would/could bring more (think a super-sized potluck dinner) and anything/everything would be shared... until it wasn’t.

The rich would separate from the others and not share their food. The poor would literally go-without food at an event titled “Agape Feast.” To make it worse the rich were drinking too much and some where getting drunk AT CHURCH!

Paul again calls for unity, spiritual equality and an others-first-mentality, especially for communion.

Takeaways:

“Others-first” must be our operative practice. Also, communion is a holy and high experience. We must consider it so and personally prepare before we partake. And lastly, all of what we do must “build-up”, never “diminish” or tear down.

Amen and Amen

Dr. Michael McCullar
Formations Pastor
Johns Creek Baptist Church