



An Introduction to the 1st.Epistle of Corinthians (1) Code: 11/NT/2

1. General Aims of the unit

Better Understanding of the "word of God" to live according to its instructions

2. Special aims of the lesson

1. to have a brief about the church at Corinth, divisions among them, the different letters suggested.
2. to explore the main theme of the 1st.epistle " St. Paul answers to some questions and tackles some problems in the Church of Corinth."
3. to communicate the sub-themes of the epistle
 - 1) factionalism(1:10-3:23);
 - 2) civil lawsuit (4:1-21; 6:1-8);
 - 3) sexual immorality (5:1-31; 6:9-7:40);
 - 4) meat sacrificed to idols (8:1-9:27);
 - 5) Eucharistic theology and practice (10:1-11:43);
 - 6) Spiritual gifts (12:1-14:40); and
 - 7) Resurrection life (15:1-16:24).
4. To detail the teachings of the Apostle concerning the first three themes

3.Outcomes

By the end of this lesson the teens are able to:

1. Remember the problems at the church of Corinth, the efforts of St. Paul to solve them and the main theme of the epistle.
2. Summarize the vision of St. Paul about factions in the church , civil suits and sexual immoralities and debate differences and agreements of them with our society ideas.
3. Debate the reasons of factions in the church of Corinth and check if still the case up till now.
4. Debate the concept of “ our bodies are temples for the Holy Spirit” and how this concept direct our behavior in the society.

4. Verses:

1Co. 3:1-4 , 3:16-17 ; 4:1-15 ; 6:13-15 ,19

5. References: 1. Attached notes (used for the 2 lessons of 1st. Corinthians)
2. Any commentary about the 1st. Corinthians(Rev. Fr. Tadros Malaty ; Barbara Pappas)

THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS

1) The city of Corinth

It was an important city in Greece in the time of St. Paul, centre of worldwide commerce, degraded culture, and idolatrous religion. Its population was about 700,000, 2/3 of them were slaves. The city was famous of it's two seaports, so many small ships were rolled or dragged across to avoid dangerously voyage around southern Greek. The city was filled with shrines and temples. The famous temple was that of "Aphrodite" (goddess of love) where worshippers made free use of the 1,000 Hieroduli (consecrated prostitutes).

2)The church of Corinth

St. Paul founded the church in his second mission (acts 18:2-18) about 51-52 AD. He started preaching in the synagogue while he was working as a tent maker with Aquila and Priscilla. At this time he wrote the two epistles to Thessalonians. Then he moved the centre of ministry to the house of Titus Justus because of the Jewish opposition. He taught there 18 months. After his departure Apollo came from Ephesus and minister the church(acts 19:1), (1co 3:4-6)

3) Background information

1] While Saint. Paul was preaching in Ephesus during his third mission. He heard about the immorality in the Corinthian church and send them a letter, now lost. (5:9-11)

2] Saint Paul received two negative reports from Corinth. So, he wrote another letter ,the 1st.epistle to Corinthians. Chapters 1-6 reply to the first report (1:11), and chapters 7-16 reply to the second report (7:1). Also he sent Saint Timothy there (4:17, 16:10,11)

3] Saint Paul learned of further immorality and the defiance of his apostolic authority, he traveled there (2 Cor.2:1, 12:21-13:2),and exhorted them.

4] Returning to Ephesus, Saint Paul wrote a third letter (2 Cor.2:4-11, 7:8) . This letter delivered by Titos (2Cor. 7:6,7,13-15) , but unfortunately lost.

5] Titos reported back to St. Paul (2Cor. 2:9,7:15)

6] Saint Paul wrote a fourth letter, the 2nd. Epistle to Corinthians(A.D.57), to defend his Apostolic authority , and to request collection of alms for the church in Jerusalem

4) The aim of the epistle

The believers are created to have communion with God and with each other, but not with darkness. St. Paul answer the following problems and concerns of the church:

- 1) factionalism(1:10-3:23);
- 2) civil lawsuit (4:1-21; 6:1-8);
- 3) sexual immorality (5:1-31; 6:9-7:40);
- 4) meat sacrificed to idols (8:1-9:27);
- 5) Eucharistic theology and practice (10:1-11:43);
- 6 Spiritual gifts (12:1-14:40); and
- 7) Resurrection life (15:1-16:24).

5) The time of the epistle

About AD 56

6) Outline of the epistle

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|---|----------------|--|
| 1 | 1:1-9 | Introduction |
| 2 | Ch. 1:10-4 :21 | The division in the church and it's reason |
| | 1:18-2:16 | The earthly and the heavenly wisdom. |
| | 3:1-3:4 | The behaviour of the carnal |
| | 3:5-3:23 | The true understanding of the ministry. |
| | 4:1-4:21 | How St. Paul sees his ministry. |
| 3 | Ch.5, 6 | Answers to the letter |
| | 5:1-5:13 | Deliver fornication for discipline |
| | 6:1-6:11 | Litigation between believers. |
| | 6:12-6:20 | Warning against sexual immoralities. |
| 4 | Ch. 7 | Marriage, celibacy, divorce, and remarriage. |
| 5 | Ch. 8-10 | Things offered to idols |

8:1-8:13 Offering to idols
9:1-9:27 Paul's liberty in Christ
10:1-10:33 Warning against false liberty.

- 6 Ch. 11-14 Public worship
 11:2-11:16 Principles of public prayer
 11:17-11:34 Eucharist
 12:1-12:31 Spiritual gifts
 13: 1-13:13 Love
 14:1-14:40 Between prophecy and tongues
- 7 Ch. 15 Resurrection.
- 8 16:1-16:4 The collection for the poor
- 9 16:5-16:24 Conclusion.

PART ONE: INTRODUCTION CH.1:1-9

- 1) God is the only one who call the true servants.
- 2) Sosthenes was the ruler of the synagogue in Corinth (Acts 18:17),then converted to Christianity.
- 3) The believers are:
 - + Sanctified in Christ;
 - + Saints;
 - + enriched in all utterance and knowledge in Chris;
 - + confirmed in the testimony of Christ;
 - + complete in gifts and
 - + waiting the next coming of Christ
- 4) JESUS will ,through His grace and not through our deeds,:
 - + confirm us to the end; and
 - + make us blameless in the day of judgement.
- 5) Through the grace of our Lord, we reconciled with the Father and with our brethren (peace).

QUESTIONS:

- 1.What is the meaning of the word "saints"?

2.How the believers in Corinth are called saints although they have a lot of sins and problems?

PART TWO: THE DIVISION IN THE CHURCH CH. 1:10 - 4:20

1) Signs of division:

- + Quarrels: (1:10-11) { they were not speaking one thing, not perfectly jointed in the same mind and judgement.}
- + Envy, strive, and behaving as the carnal people(3:3)
- + Belonging to the people: (1:12-13 & 3:4){ I am of Paul,. I am of Apollo, . . . }

2) The people of the church may divided into:

1) SPIRITUAL PEOPLE

- + Have the same mind and judgement (1:10)
- + Wisdom of God (2:7)
- + Belong to Christ (1:31, 3:23)
- + Eat solid spiritual food (3:2)

2) CARNAL PEOPLE

- + Quarrels (1:17)
- + Wisdom of the world(1:17)
- + Belong to the people(1:12 –13 , 3:4)
- + Live on milk (3:3)

3) How to overcome divisions

- + Look at yourself as weak, foolish, unwise . . . (1:26-32)
- +Replace the wisdom of this world by the CROSS(1:18-25)
- + The cross is the power (1:18)
- + JESUS is the source of power and wisdom to all the people who are called. (1:23-25)

4) The PREACHING of the good news needs:

- + Demonstration of the SPIRIT and power(2:4,5)
- + The knowledge of CHRIST AND HIS CROSS only. (2:1)
- + The wisdom of GOD, not the excellence of speech. (2:1,7)

5) The role of the HOLY SPIRIT in the life of the servants

- + Reveals the mysteries of GOD (2:10), and the things that are given to us freely(2:11)
- + Reveals to us the thought of Christ. (2:16 & JO. 16:4)
- + Teach us the spiritual wisdom. (2:13)
- + Help us to make the right judgement. (2:15)

6) An overview of the service of the LORD

- + **THE LORD:** + The field [the people] are HIS. (3:9)
 - + HE is THE FOUNDATION (3:11)
 - + HE grows and increases the plants [people] (3:7).
- + **THE SERVANTS:** + All are the same (3:8)
 - + Each has his own gift according to the grace of the LORD (3:6)
 - + Each will have the reward according to his labour (3:8)
 - + The work of the servant in building the kingdom of GOD will be tested with the fire of persecutions and temptations. If the work endures, he will be rewarded, Otherwise he lose everything, but be saved as if with fire (3:12-15)
 - + The apostles and their descendants are the stewards of the mysteries of God (4:1)
 - + The servant is not only an instructor in the way of heaven but a **father** who begotten children in Christ. (4:14-15 & Gal.4:19).
 - + He Accepts to carry the cross of the service (4:9-13)
- + **THE PEOPLE:** + They are the temple of God, and they are holy (3: 16-17)
 - + Be wise in front of the Lord, and foolish in this world (3: 18-19)
 - + Do not boast in men (3: 21)

- + Do not judge before the coming of the Lord (4:5)
- + Do not be arrogant on behalf of one servant against the other(4:6-8)

QUESTIONS:

- 1.What is the controversy between the cross and the wisdom of this world?
- 2.Why our service and preaching now are not strong and effective as they were in the first church?
- 3.How we keep our temple holy?
- 4.What is the image of the servant of the Lord?

PART THREE: ANSWER TO THE LETTER CH. 5:1- 6:20

There were two major problems in the church of Corinth:

A] Sexual immorality:

- 1) The non-Christian behaviour is not acceptable among the brethren. It is spread like leaven in the dough (5:7).
- 2) The Church in the name and power of the Lord has the authority to judge, not only the faith but also the behaviour of the believers and ex-communicate the wrong doers to lead them to repentance.(5:3-5)
- 3) The Church is the congregation of the saints, and sinners struggling for their repentance. Sinners who live in sin are outside this congregation (6:13).
- 4) Sexual immorality is more dangerous and harmful to the body than any other sin, and the apostle advise us to flee from it (6:18).
- 5) My body is a temple of the Holy Spirit (6:19), and a member of Christ (6:15).God gives our bodies-through the resurrection of the body of Christ- the power to overcome the sin and its 21/08/99penalties.(6:14,15,19)
- 6) My body have to glorify the Lord who sacrifice Himself to rescue my life from death (6:19,20).
- 7) The believer have to have authority to stop not only the evil things in their lives, but also the lawful things which are not helpful, or edify to the other's well being (6:12, 10:23,24).

B] Lawsuits against Fellow-Christians

- 1) Disputes between the brethren ,is preferably settled by the members of the Church (saints) and not in the civil courts (6:1)..At least there will be one wise believer who is able to solve the disputes between the brethren (6:5).
- 2) The saints will judge the world, even the Angels(6:2-3 , Matt.19:28)
- 3) Love of litigation is a love of greed, hatred, and retaliation. Christians ought to be possessed by mercy, forgiveness, and generosity. So, they accept wrong ,and to be cheated, rather than doing wrong or cheat the others (6:6-8)
- 4) The Christians are washed in baptism , sanctified through the Holy Spirit in Miroon, and justified through faith(6:11)

QUESTIONS:

1. Is there any contradiction between "deliver the adulterer of Corinth to Satan for the destruction of his flesh..(5:5),(1Tim.1:20) and the order of the Lord " be merciful...(Lu.6:36)"?
2. What is the result of the loose behaviour in the Church.(Acts 5:1-11, Rev.2:20-23)?
3. What is the right way to solve disputes with a brethren (Matt.18:15-17)?

PART FOUR:MARRIAGE,CELIBACY,DIVORCE,AND REMARRIAGE

CH.7:1-40

A]Marriage and Celibacy:

- 1)Celibacy is a gift from the Lord, and not for every one (Mat. 19:12). It is preferable than marriage (7:1,7,38), because the unmarried person care to please the Lord ,but the married have to take care for his wife and family to please them (7:32-34).
- 2)Marriage is a great sacrament (Eph.5:32)
- 3) In marriage life , the authority over the body of each of them is given to the other partner (7:3-4). Temporary abstain from sexual relations (for married couples) is advisable for the sake of prayer and fasting. (7:5).

4) The believer and unbeliever partner are not obliged to continue their marriage life , but it is preferable if they do .(7:12-17)

B] Divorce and Remarriage

1) If the Christian couple cannot stay together , the two alternative are to remain unmarried , that is , separated , or to reconcile (7:10). Divorce is hated by God (Mal.2:16), and considered adultery by our Lord Jesus (Mat. 19:3-9) except for sexual immorality. St. Paul forbids marriage while the first spouse is still living (7:39)

2) For the virgins and widows , it is preferable if the continue as they are but if they marry they do not commit sin.(7:8, 25-29 , 35-38)

PART FIVE :THINGS OFFERED TO IDOLS

CHAPTER 8-10

A] Offering to idols (Ch.8) [The balance between Knowledge and love]

1) Throughout the Roman Empire , animals were sacrificed to pagan ‘gods’ at feasts and public occasions. Part of each offering was used in a ceremonial meal or went to the donor; the remainder was often sold in public meat markets. Christians had a dilemma. Should they eat meat which had been offered before idols? The Jews had prohibitions , but the Christians believed the idol is nothing .

2) Saint Paul agrees in principal as there is one God (8: 4-6) , but Christian must think about the other follow Christians’ conscience , specially who are weak (8:9 –10)

3) Saint Paul highlights this fact ‘ any sin or wound against the conscience of any weak (in faith) brethren , is a sin against Christ ’ (8:12 –13)

B] Paul’s liberty in Christ (Ch.9)

PART SIX : PUBLIC WORSHIP (CH 11:2 – 14:40)

A) Principles of public prayers (11:2 – 11:6)

1] The importance of keeping the traditions as they are delivered to them. [V. 1]
Remember the oral traditions and the written traditions (the holy Bible is part of it) .The traditions in the Orthodox concept is the life of the Church all over the history guided and renewed through the Holy Spirit . The tradition is dynamic to match the life of the Church (refer to the “ Tradition and Orthodoxy – Fr. Tadros Malaty “

2] The head covering during prayers and prophesying (11:2 – 11:16)

- a) For man : who cover his head dishonor it (V.4) , as he is the image and glory of God (V.7)
- b) For woman : she have to cover her head (V.5) , as she is the glory of man (V.7), from him (V.8) , and created for him (V.9). So, she have to have a symbol of authority over her head because of the angels . (V.10) . Long hair is given to her for covering (V.15)
- c) The main analogy , St. Paul put is that “.....the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.”(V3) . The head cover is a sign of the woman subjection to the man and obedience to the creation order..
- d) “the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels.” (V.10) may understood that in the presence of God the angels are there , so women must show subjection to the head of creation “Jesus”

B) Eucharist (11:17 –11:34)

- a) In the gatherings of the Church of Corinth there some problems :
 - divisions (V.18) , factions ‘heresies ‘ (V.19).
 - shift in practicing the ‘Agape’ meals , which at that time precede the ‘Lord’s supper’ . The tradition is every one bring food and they eat it together as a sign of share , love , and unity among the believers. At Corinth each one ate his/her own food as a matter of boasting . (V21-22)
 - They receive the Eucharist in an unworthy manner.
- b) St. Paul received from the Lord (through the Church) the Sacrament of Eucharist, and delivered to the Church (V. 22-26) . The Eucharist is the mystery of life of the Church .
Refer to the establishment of the sacrament of Eucharist by the Lord [Matt. 26:26-28 , Mark 14:22-24 , Luke 22:19-20] , Notice that St. Paul added verse 26 “*For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes*” as it was practiced at his time .
- c) Examination of our selves means spiritual readiness to receive the Lord in our lives through repentance and confession. Being ‘worthy’ does not mean being sinless , but being cleansed . It is a commitment to walk in righteousness before the Lord.
- d) ‘Remembrance’ (VV. 24,25) means ‘ Anamnesis’ which is far more than thinking back about something, it is participation in it.
- e) In Eucharist we celebrate the Christ’s invisible presence , though one day we will feast with Him face-to-face in His kingdom.

c) Spiritual Gifts (12:1 –12:31)

- The gifts of the Lord (which are the gifts of the Holy Spirit) are mainly to testify Jesus Christ as the Lord God (v.3) . This is the criteria to examine any gift or miracle . If it leads to glorification of our Lord Jesus Christ and the spread of the kingdom of heaven then it is from God , otherwise it is not from God .[refer to 1 John 4:1-3]
- There are diversities of gifts , ministries , and activities according to the same Spirit (V. 4-6) for the benefit and edification of the one body ‘the Church’ [refer to Eph. 4:11-12]
- St. Paul draws a similarity between the diversity of the gifts of the Spirit and members of the human body. The body is not able to survive with one member only . All the members eye , leg ,for example are equally essential . Non of them is superior than the others . (V. 12-27)
- St. Paul lists 9 gifts of the Spirit (V. 8-10)
 - a) word of wisdom .
 - b) word of knowledge
 - c) faith
 - d) healing powers
 - e) miracles
 - f) prophesy
 - g) discerning of spirits
 - h) different kinds of tongues
 - i) interpretation of tonguesIn the epistle to the Romans , St. Paul mentioned another 7 gifts of the Spirit (Rom. 12:6-8)
Refer also to the epistle to Ephesians 4:7-12 , and 1 Cor. 12:28 for extra gifts of the Spirit .
- Notice that some gifts of the Spirit are given only through the Church as all the orders of the priesthood . But other gifts are given directly through the Holy Spirit as ‘ miracles , healing, casting of demons ,...’
- The main aim of the members of the ‘Body of Christ’ is ‘love and unity’ [suffer together , rejoice together] (V.25-26)
- Love is an excellent way above all gifts (V. 31)

d) Love (13:1-13)

Extra resources

This sermon meditates on the passage found in 1 Corinthians 3:16 that describe our bodies as the temple of God.