

The first letter to the Corinthians

An epistle of St. Paul



Some quick questions...

- *How many epistles did St. Paul write?*

14

- *Which was his first epistle?*

Galatians

- *How many missionary journeys did St. Paul undertake?*

3

- *What did St. Paul do to earn a living while preaching?*

He was a tentmaker

Where exactly is Corinth?

- Ancient Corinth was a main city in Greece
- It was a key cross-road that acted as a merchant highway between East and West
- It was a very popular city for many reasons





CORINTH

- Corinth was a very cosmopolitan city with residents from Greece, Asia, Syria, Egypt and Italy
- Amongst its reputation for business, corinth was also infamous for its corruption.
- The main attraction of the city was the *temple of Aphrodite* (Greek goddess of fertility) in which there were thousands of temple prostitutes
- There was also a significant class distinction in society with the population made mostly of slaves.

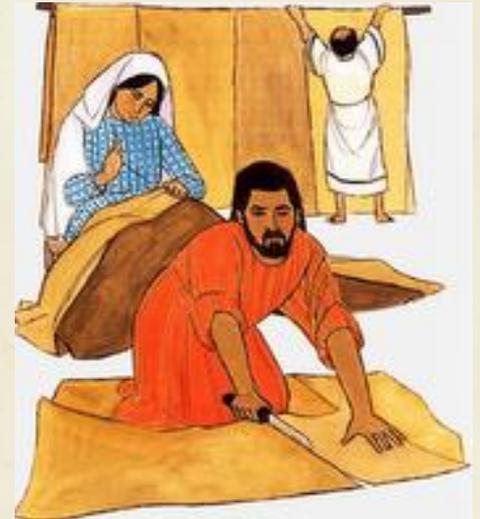
St. Paul and Corinth

- St. Paul visited Corinth on his *second* missionary journey
- He stayed there for *18 months* and established the church in the years 51-52AD
- He spent a lot of his time preaching in the *synagogues* persuading the Jews and Greeks
- After a while, he found that those in the synagogue were too stubborn to hear him, he then went to the *Gentiles*



Who did St. Paul stay with in Corinth?

- When he came to Corinth, St. Paul met a man named *Aquila* and his wife *Priscilla*
- They were Jews who had left Italy after a command by the governor for all Jews to leave. They were also *tentmakers*.
- Seeing they were of the same trade, St. Paul stayed with them.





Why the letter?

Why did St. Paul have to write a letter to the Corinthian church?

- After St. Paul left Corinth and continued on his journey, he heard several pieces of news about the church. Some good and some bad...
- St. Paul decided to respond to what he heard and to advice and encourage the congregation through a letter



What was happening in Corinth?

The problems in the church involved:

- Separations amongst the congregation
- Sexual immorality
- Rules of Marriage
- Law regarding food
- Inappropriate behaviour during the agape meal after the Eucharist
- Belief in the resurrection

SEPARATIONS

Divisions were forming amongst Christians who were converted by different people.



- Read 1 Corinthians 1:10-17
- *“Now I plead with you brethren by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing and that there are no divisions among you” (1 Cor 1:10)*



SEXUAL IMMORALITY

- Because of the surrounding people and environment , many of the congregation of the Corinthian church fell into the sexual immorality that was so normal around them.
- Read 1 Corinthians 5:1-8
- *“But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother who is sexually immoral or covetous or an idolater or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner- not even to eat with such a person”(1 Cor 5:11)*

RULES OF MARRIAGE

- Many of the new Christians in Corinth did not really understand what the Christian view was on marriage. Many left their partners thinking it was what was required and others engaged more in sexual immorality and adultery, thinking that they were free to do so.
- Read 1 Cor 7:1-16
- *“Nevertheless because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife and let each woman have her own husband” (1 Cor 7:3)*



LAW OF FOOD



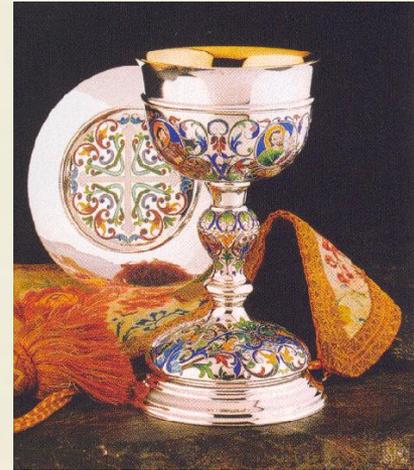
- Many of the idolaters in Corinth offered food offering to their gods (e.g. Meat) and then consumed this food or sold it. Many of the Christians were confused as to what they were to do if offered such foods
- Read 1 Cor 8:1-13
- *“Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make a brother stumble” (1 Cor 9:13)*

THE EUCHARIST

- The situation in the Corinthian church was that some people left for the agape meal early after the Eucharist and ate all the food and became drunk, often leaving the poorer of the congregation without food.

- Read 1 Cor 11:17-34

“Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord” (1 Cor 11:27)



THE RESURRECTION

- Some of the congregation of the Corinthians doubted the viability of the resurrection of the dead and the resurrection of Christ Himself. St. Paul spends a lot of time explaining the importance of the resurrection to the Christian faith. This reminds us how important it is to us also...
- Read 1 Cor 15:12-28

“And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins”

(1 Cor 15:17)



CONCLUSION

- St. Paul exhorts the congregation of Corinth to continue in good works and Faith regardless of any trials
- He concludes with an encouraging message: *“Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong. Let all you do be done with love”* (1 Cor 16:13-14)

To be continued...

- We will soon discuss the second letter to the Corinthians which St. Paul wrote to the congregation a short time later...