Bible Study 11

Wednesday, September 22nd, 2021

Corinthians

Chapter 4:

Paul instructs everyone not to judge. He warns them of how they are persecuted and set upon by Jew and Roman and that they must stay united. Paul reminds the Corinthians that he came among them as a simple man preaching the Gospel, but now there is division and confrontation with much argument. This must not happen, he tells them, for the Gospel is not about talking but about imitating Christ.

Chapter 5:

Paul talks about sexual morality. He finds it unbelievable that a man con be allowed to stay in the community after such an act. The law of Moses was strict enough among the Jews, but now in the new law, the choice of sin is unacceptable even to Paul.

Remember that these are the early days of the church with Christ expected to return. In 5:6 Paul refers to the yeast of the Passover, he speaks of the theology of Passover that Jesus is the Lamb that was sacrificed for our sins. The new yeast is the faith that must be allowed to rise with truth and sincerity not with malice or conflict.

Paul tells the Corinthians to disassociate from sinners and those who are sexually immoral. It is almost as if Paul is drawing a circle around the Christian community like a Shangri-la. Sinners were to be cast out, excommunicated from the church. Nowhere here is there any talk of forgiveness. As time progresses, the church leaders will have to find a way past these expulsions.

In Chapter 6 Paul brings up the question of legal disputes among the faithful. Can they be solved in-house or do they need to go before the pagan Roman authority? Notice the use of the word “SAINTS” to refer to members of the church. There is a clear division between “BELIEVERS” and the “UNBELIEVERS.”

Paul rails about those who bring lawsuits against their brother believers. Who will inherit the kingdom; not sinners is his answer. Only if you are washed in the blood of the lamb and justified can you be saved.

In 6:12 Paul goes into another rant over sexual immorality claiming that we are the Body of Christ and as members of Christ’s body we cannot indulge in immorality such as laying with prostitutes. He talks about the Body being a ‘Temple of the Holy Spirit’; he divides the person into Body and Spirit in a sort of Platonic Way of mind and matter.

Paul’s ideas on morality are really mixed up. He sees even marriage as a secondary state to celibacy. In Chapter 7, he begins to preach to married couples a morality that even he does not practice or know about. He wants people to be married so that they can’t be sinful. He is too influenced by Greek Philosophers who saw celibacy as an idealic state. Cf 7:8.

It is Paul the lawyer, Paul the Pharisee and Paul the Scribe of the Old Testament that is talking. As yet he does not understand the place of marriage as a higher calling or man’s call to be co-creators with the father.

The Christians are grabbling with the consequences of the New way, unbelievers married to unbelievers and what about divorce? This almost sounds like justice by Judge Judy. It is clear that Paul is replying to a flood of questions about marriage, relationships, virgins, divorce, separation. It is almost as if every question is up for grabs with this new community.

In time the community of the church will have its own rules and regulations, but for now they look to Paul to be the Judge and this is not ideal. Read to end of Chapter 7.