Bible Study 12

September 29th, 2021

1 Corinthians----Paul continues in Chapters 8 & 9 to examine the controversy that has been plaguing the young Christian Community of Corinth. Basically, they have been torn apart by in fighting. One group wants to be faithful to the teaching of Paul the founder, while another group hang on to many pagan practices related to food and the worship of the Greek Gods.

Paul is hurt that some have accused him of profiting from the faith Communities, living for free in their houses, added to this that he is not a ‘real’ Apostle. His response in Chapter 9, is to say: “What was here before we came to you? We did not seek any reward. Rather we worked with our hands to build the church in this place. We never stopped our trade as ‘Tent-Makers always working for our food and asking nothing from anyone. As for being an ‘Apostle’, did I not see Christ on the road; did he not speak to me; was I not commissioned just as the others were? You talk of Cephas and the rest, but did any of them work as we have worked, for we are Apostles too!”

Paul resents that anyone would say that he does not work for the food that he eats. He repeats that everything he has done has been for the Gospel of Christ. For that reason, he gave up everything though he is a free man. The Gospel has been everything to him. He cares not who he must preach to, Jew or Gentile he treats them all the same. He introduces and compares what he is doing to an athlete running a race. It is a good example as the Greeks had a long tradition of athletics. He compares himself to a race that must be run, and he will run it till the end with little hope of winning.

In Chapter 10 Paul tries to convince his readers that because of Christ everything has changed. Of old the Israelites played fast and loose with the law of Moses, worshipping Yahweh while participating in all the Pagan Rituals. Paul warns them: “It cannot be the same with you. You cannot go back to a life of sin now that you have received God’s grace. You cannot be sexually immoral and be faithful to Christ’s Gospel. Paul fears that there is a battle raging for the hearts and souls of his converts, tempted by the loose sexual morality of their Greek neighbors.

Paul goes on to talk about the ‘Lord’s Supper ‘and the breaking of bread. He asks the Christians if they know what it truly means. He compares it to the feasts of the pagans that they are so often invited to participate in. Eat what you want he tells them but not the food offered in sacrifice to their Gods. For there is only one God and that is the father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul invites the Christians to come to a ‘fork in the road’; a time of decision; a choice! Choose Christ and his Gospel or go with the pagans, their feasts, their temples; their lusts and wild immorality. For you cannot serve both.

In Chapter 11, Paul gets into difficulties in talking of the role and place of women in the family of the community. He takes most of his teaching straight from the Book of Genesis. His teaching states that woman is second to man in the order of things because of Creation and that woman came from man and serves man. There is a lot of discussion here about head coverings, who shall cover and who shall not. What length hair should be on a man or a woman.

Then in the middle of Chapter 11 Paul admonishes the church for using the ‘Breaking of Bread’ , the central act of copying the Lord’s supper, as an excuse to get drunk or over-indulge in eating. He tells again the story of that last Passover meal when Jesus took bread and broke it. He warns the Corinthians of the danger of eating and drinking the Lord’s Supper unworthily and bring down the wrath of the holy Spirit on such an unrighteous act.

Paul does not leave them in this low note but from Chapter 12 tries to build the Faithful up again after his punishing correction.