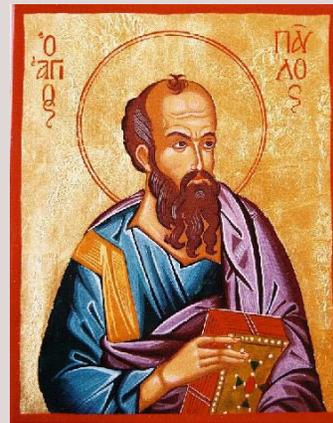


CRISIS AT CORINTH: AN IN DEPTH STUDY OF PAUL'S LETTER TO THE CORINTHIANS: 1 CORINTH 7:17-24

Sr. Christine Hernandez, SCTJM

November 25, 2013

"Only everyone should live as the Lord has assigned, just as God called each one. I give this order in all churches" (1 Cor 7:17). Saint Paul is very clear, one should live as God has revealed to each individual person. God touches each heart differently; He instills in each a particular desire, one that will ultimately draw that beloved creature back to its creator. For example, the desire to be married is a desire to give oneself totally to the other. This total self giving in an expression of God's love towards man and the love He wants back from man. In the same, God can instill a desire in a heart to consecrate oneself totally to Him through religious vows or the priesthood even consecrated single life. It is important to realize that when the Lord calls a person to a specific vocation He at the same time grants that person all the graces he/she will need to fully live his/her vocation.



Man should not be what He has not been called to be. For example, husbands and wives cannot be single men and women. Should he/she not choose to be or properly live what God has called them to live, sadly there will be consequences, in a case like marriage - possibly divorce. A man cannot be a boy and likewise a woman cannot be a girl, in other words there is a certain maturity required for each vocation and we must strive to reach it. A married woman cannot be a nun or a religious sister; a married man cannot be a priest or a monk. It is not proper of the vocation of marriage. Further on in the chapter, St. Paul explains, "an unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord. But a married man is anxious about the things of the world, how he may please his wife" (1 Cor 7:32-33). It is not healthy for a married man or woman to spend most of their time in Church and not at home with his/her family. God likes the company, but based on this Scripture one could venture to say that He would prefer for the person to be where they should be, in this case at home. He wants to be the center of our lives and He wants us to make it known to others, especially those closest to us but our actions. "For it is love that I desire, not sacrifice, and knowledge of God rather than holocausts" (Hos 6:6). God wants us to establish a relationship of love with Him, from this relationship charity towards others will stem. The more we know God, the more we can recognize Him dwelling in others - for we are all His beloved children. He would prefer little acts of kindness done out of love for Him, that great sacrifices done just because.

"Was someone called after he had been circumcised? He should not try to undo his circumcison. Was an uncircumcised person called? He should not be circumcised" (1 Cor 7:18). God calls all peoples, in different stages of life therefore not all are the same nor should all be the same. Some are called to live religious vows later in life, others are called to marry young but God calls just the same. A religious sister called later in life may have been raised in a non-Catholic home. The years in between could have been the journey God designed to prepare her heart to encounter Him in a more special way. For everything, God has a purpose and sometimes we don't get to see the whole picture - therein lies the trust and humbleness. Others may have been born and raised Catholic, may have encountered the Lord in their childhood and known their vocation early on. One is not better than the other but rather God prepares each heart with particular life experiences to better fulfill His designs of love.

"Circumcision means nothing, and uncircumcision means nothing; what matters is keeping God's commandments" (1 Cor 7:19). Often there are people who mean well but have it all wrong. They focus on the details, the shirt is too tight, jeans too short, wrong shoes forgot to bow, did not genuflect, worrying about the superficial instead of remembering God's love. These people forget the commandments of God. They distance people from God obsessing over the rubrics, forgetting to love their neighbor. It is true the Church has rules and regulations but first and foremost the Church is the love of God. Many are angry with the Church as a way to justify that they enjoy living sinfully, for it is easier to say that the Church has too many rules than to change a way of living. Each person as the temple of the Holy Spirit is the love of God. "Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" (1 Cor 3:16). They distance people from God obsessing over the rubrics, forgetting to love their neighbor. It is true the Church has rules and regulations but first and foremost the Church is the love of God. Each person as the temple of the Holy Spirit is the love of God. Possibly because we feel that our bodies are a product of biological factors and not a gift from God, we do not believe God could dwell in us. Our bodies with all their imperfections are a gift from God and we should care (not overly care) for them as such. "Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" (1 Cor 3:16).

"Were you a slave when you were called?" (1 Cor 7:21). We are all or should all be slaves of Christ, for we were purchased at a price - Jesus life. "You have been purchased at a price" (1 Cor 7: 23a). He died for us so that we might have life in Him. By our sins we are doomed, by are lack of repentance, our not turning

to God we cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven. In His infinite and unfathomable mercy Christ gave His life for the forgiveness of our past, present and future, therefore making us slaves of Love. St. Louis de Montfort explains that the best way to be slaves of Jesus is to be slaves of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Jesus Himself came into this world through Her, should we not return to Him through Her? Mary always points us toward her Son and as one grows in knowledge and love of God, one grows in knowledge and love of Our Lady. "We cannot begin to know her if we do not, first, have clear notions about Him - about God, His providence, and His dealings with His people" (Hail Holy Queen, 2001). When we know His ways, seeing how He trusts Her - we too begin to trust Her and allow Her to lead to Him. Many of the peoples in the first-century Greco-Roman world were slaves. "This type of servitude was the lot of a huge number of the population - estimates for Corinth are that one-third to two-thirds of the population were slaves" (First Corinthians, 2011). Paul was an intelligent man and knew that all those people could relate to what he was saying about slavery. To submit oneself to Christ is to acknowledge one's own weakness and at the same time recognize Him as master. Master of one's life, heart, mind, body...everything. Commonly, slaves do not trust their masters. The thought of slavery has a negative connotation; one in which the masters mistreated their slaves, abused and used them. However, during Paul's time, "slavery did not always mean an abject state of life. Some slaves were better educated than their masters, and sometimes selling oneself into slavery brought a betterment of status, especially is the master was a person of high social rank" (First Corinthians, 2011).

Paul explains "For the slave in the Lord is a freed person in the Lord, just as the free person who has been called is a slave of Christ" (1Cor 7:22). "There was a distinction between a freeborn person and a freed person. A freedman or freedwoman still retained a relation with the former master or mistress, who now was the free person's patron with reciprocal obligations" (First Corinthians, 2011). Paul explicitly refers to the "freed person," why? Simply, because man was enslaved by sin, man is enslaved by sin and He frees us from it, asking in return that we just love Him and others the way He loves us. He wants to establish and retain a relationship with each one of us and He will grant us our heart's desires. Many would ask how? Simple, by allowing Him into our hearts, allowing Him to mold and guide us, and acting and living in charity, we can be free to *love Him more deeply*. "The more one does what is good, the freer one becomes. There is no true freedom except in the service of what is good and just. The choice to disobey and do evil is an abuse of freedom and leads to 'slavery of sin'" (CCC 1733). Choosing not to do good tosses us back in that slavery Christ so generously freed us from.

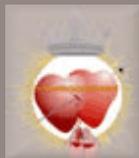
"Do not become slave to human beings" (1 Cor 7:23b). Paul could possibly be warning to us not to allow ourselves to be caught up in today's world, with the lures of the world becoming slaves of prestige, money and recognition. As followers of Christ, we should not allow ourselves to be drawn into the world, but rather bring the world closer to Him. Living in His light, in His love we should manifest this same love to others. When it is most difficult, we should turn to Him and say lend me your love - so that I can love like you love.

May the Lord bless you!

References

Catechism of the Catholic Church. New York: Doubleday, 1994.
First Corinthians. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011.
Hail, Holy Queen. New York: Doubleday Publishing Group, 2001.
The Holy Bible. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.

[Back to Main Page of Teachings of SCTJM...](#)



Return to main page
www.piercedhearts.org

This page is the work of the Servants of the Pierced Hearts of Jesus and Mary
Copyright © 2010 SCTJM