

1Corinthians 9:22 *To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.*

A little of the background of Corinth as the Apostle wrote this about 55AD. It is thought that at that time the population was about 250,000 and 400,000 slaves; its people were of Greek culture and placed a high premium on wisdom.

There were at least twelve temples there, though the situation in Paul's day is not known. It covered an area of roughly 2000 by 1500 metres. So no mean city.

Religion:-it contained at least 12 temples. One of the most infamous was a temple dedicated to Aphrodite-the goddess of love.

Worshippers practised religious prostitution. It is stated that it was the centre for unbridled immorality.

So that is the background of the city to which the apostle Paul as a Christian was writing to the ecclesia there. No wonder that there were initial problems as described in the early words of his epistle. We might think I view of the general background that there was no hope of maintaining an ecclesia of the True Faith there but we see this was not so and Paul was full of hope for them notwithstanding Paul had received information from several sources concerning moral irregularities existing in the ecclesia at Corinth from Cloe's household.

First of all there were divisions –1v11 which he addresses. Paul at that time had taken upon himself the care of all the ecclesias and he wrote this to the Corinth ecclesia. He had written before so my Zondervan Bible tells me but an earlier letter mentioned below has not been preserved for us:-

1Corinthians 5:9-13: *I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.*

This was quite different from the prevailing manner of this ecclesia where tolerance was the order of the day and even glorying in sin as seen here. In this chapter Paul goes on to show that with such defilement they cannot meet at the table. So the sinner must be separated from the ecclesia till he realises and confesses the sin appropriately. But v4 makes it clear that when true repentance is seen he may be restored.

This does not mean that we can commit adultery or fornication expecting to be restored because that would be wilful sin and cannot be forgiven. But it is possible to be overtaken in a fault as David was when as a king he took another man's wife and committed adultery. But then he sent the warrior husband to the front line where he would almost certainly be killed in taking the early barrage of the enemies arrows. He was sent Nathan the prophet to highlight the enormity of his sin 2Samuel 12.

Reverting to Paul we see his endeavour is to be "all things to all men". This he explains in v19 on-Unto the Jews he became a Jew. This would seem to be shown in Acts 16 where there was a young man who had a good reputation Timotheus who had a Greek father but a Jewish mother. Paul took him and circumcised him to break down any barriers that the Jews might have in accepting him.

It is interesting that when it came to Titus Paul did not have him circumcised his explanation:-

*Galatians 2:3-4 But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised: And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage.*

He chose not to circumcise him firstly because it was not necessary under Christ but also to make a stand against false brethren of what was right and not to waver to please man.

It is made clear that not all brethren there at that time were genuine but some existing brethren or perhaps sisters had allowed perhaps unwittingly, non-genuine people to be brought into the fold for their own ulterior motives –The Lord Jesus will judge all such at his appearing; they have lain in their graves now 2000 years or more (nothing of the perpetual fire of Catholics but all who have knowledge will stand before the Lord Jesus and must account for themselves Luke 12 v47-48) But the judgement will be eternal after they have faced Christ and given account of themselves Heb10v24-31

Well that was Paul at Galatia; but in him we have a remarkable example of constancy and it confirms his claim to be all things to all men.

Another situation that Paul felt he must deal with at Corinth-

*1Corinthians 8:1-3 Now as touching things offered unto idols, we I have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth. And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know. But if any man love God, the same is known of him.* This is an assurance to us as we strive to keep the faith in its purity. Thus we cannot be dismissive of these problems that went before. Indeed we know that it was a very recent problem in a body

then known as The Ecclesia of Christ and they decided that certain foods were not good to eat. But Paul says:

*1Co 10:23-31 All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not. Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth. Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, that eat, asking no question for conscience sake: For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof. If any of them that believe not bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake. But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof: Conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other: for why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience? For if I by grace be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks? Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.*

V 28 is crucial in this matter so that we do not give offence to another brother or sister. Under these circumstances we must explain that God does not forbid anything that is generally regarded as food. Some may be disinclined to eat snake or shrimps or blood and so we having explained the position would not partake in their presence if the other is offended still by our doing so

1Corinthians 10:32 Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God: 1Co 10:33 Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.

In the ecclesias in England, in these last days the stumbling block seems to have been 1Co 8:13 *Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.* But we do not read of Paul then becoming a vegetarian thus I would take it that Paul means in another's presence

and not what we do in the privacy of our homes for that is our affair. This then is an individual matter and not to be imposed on others

Paul also says

*1Co 10:23-33 All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not. Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth. Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, that eat, asking no question for conscience sake: For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof. If any of them that believe not bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake. But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof: Conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other: for why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience? For if I by grace be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks? Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God: Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.*

So we must have due regard to other brothers and sisters conscience in all things taking care not to offend

*See also Romans 15v1-7: We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.*

Galatians 6:1-2 Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

And Paul's example is seen 2Corinthians 11:29 *Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?*

We see the opposite of the correct attitude in the very first son born to Adam and Eve-Cain who said "Am I my brother's keeper?"

So Hebrews 4:1 *Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.*

Brotherly love to all in Christ

Ken