

Summary of Session 5: Three Thorny Ethical Questions

1. Introduction

- A. Understanding Paul's approach to ethics
- B. Freedom received from Christ
- C. Shows us as "Christian" in world

2. Instruction

- A. As coming from Paul
- B. But usually reflecting Jesus' words or teaching
 - 1) I Corinthians 7:10: "*not I, but the Lord...*"
 - 2) I Corinthians 7:12: "*...I say, not the Lord...*"
 - 3) Given in relation to Paul's communities

3. Three important issues

- A. Sexuality: Marriage
 - 1) Paul: a prude?
 - 2) I Corinthians 7: marriage & virginity at length
 - (a) Marriage: "*Do not deprive one another*"
 - (b) Strong patriarchal communities
 - (i) Duties of spouses delineated
 - (ii) Sexuality is a gift of God: use as good stewards
 - (iii) Paul, someone giving advice, not making rules
 - (iv) Control over bodies of one another?
 - 3) Norm of the day was to be married
 - (a) Paul married? Doubtful
 - (b) Norm: to be married
 - (c) Place of celibacy
 - (d) Stay as you are
- B. Homosexuality
 - 1) Thorny issue today
 - 2) In Paul's time
 - (a) Strongly spoken against
 - (b) Romans 1:24-28 Greek world
 - (i) Strong language
 - (ii) Worship of creatures, not God
 - (iii) Females & males on way to judgement
 - (c) Not part of natural order
 - (d) No condemnation of homosexual orientation, only of actions
 - (e) I Corinthians 6
 - (i) Idolaters not entering Kingdom of God
 - (ii) Lists of all kinds of idolatry
- C. Marriage, divorce, celibacy
 - 1) Remain as you are
 - 2) I Corinthians 7:1-40
 - (a) Remain as you are (end times coming!)
 - (b) Same message to all
 - (c) Marriage between believer & non-believer
 - (i) Acceptable
 - (ii) Exception in Matthew's Gospel

(iii) Matthew & Paul: sometimes human reality does not work out; divorce

4. Summary

- A. Ideal for Paul (& Jesus): Marriage monogamous & forever
- B. But ethical flexibility necessary
- C. Essentials
 - 1) Respect for sexuality
 - 2) Understand limits of sexuality
 - 3) Need to be flexible