



1 CORINTHIANS

1 CORINTHIANS 5:1-13

INTRODUCTION

First Corinthians is Paul's response both to reports he had heard about the church and to questions the church itself had sent him. Having addressed the report of divisions (1:10-4:21), he now turns to address reports of immorality within the church (5:1-6:20).

MAIN POINT

In order to be holy as God is holy, Christians must take sin seriously, knowing that unrepentant sin has far-reaching effects.

REFLECT

It's hard to miss Paul's shock as he turns to address a form of sexual sin that wasn't even tolerated by the culture this church was to be a light to: "a man has his father's wife." "Father's wife" probably means this man was having an immoral relationship with his step-mother. Beyond that the details are not clear (Was his father alive or dead? Were they divorced?).

At issue in this chapter though isn't the sin itself but in how the church has handled- or rather *failed* to handle- the situation. They should have mourned this man's sin like one mourns at a funeral. Instead, they were "arrogant". Possibly they were arrogant in the sense that as "spiritual" people they felt free to do as they wished (see 6:12). Or perhaps Paul is amazed at how they can possibly think they have "arrived" in their knowledge of God (see 4:8-13) when such blatant sin in their midst has gone unchecked.

Either way, Paul's reaction to the situation is far different than the church's. He uses the yeast metaphor to paint a somber picture: a little sin gone unchecked doesn't stay small. It grows until it consumes the sinner and eventually begins to affect the entire church.

And so out of love for the church and even for the offender himself, Paul commands them to “deliver [this man] to Satan”; that is, remove him from the church, which is the temple of God (3:16-17; see also Col. 1:13). The goal of such drastic measures is this man’s salvation. The hope was that by removing him from among them and treating him as a non-believer, he would taste the bitter consequences of his sin, repent of it, and be restored.

As he writes this, Paul has the Feast of Unleavened Bread in the back of his mind. In the Old Testament, this feast was a celebration of Israel’s deliverance from slavery by means of the Passover. So too, Paul says, Christians have been delivered from slavery to sin by means of Jesus, our Passover lamb. Our response should be to celebrate with our lives the God who rescued us. Because God has declared us righteous through the blood of Christ (“you really are unleavened”), we are to live righteous lives and forsake unrighteousness in ourselves and in the church (“Cleanse out the old leaven”). We are to become what we are, to live in a way consistent with what God has already declared us to be.

- What do you think of when you hear the term “church discipline”?
- In what way are Paul’s instructions an expression of love toward both the sinner and the Corinthian church?
- Why does Paul apply different standards to those within the church and those outside it (5:9-13)?
- How can we practically apply the principles of this chapter within our church? How does this chapter speak to the kind of relationships we should have with non-Christians?

MEMORIZE

1 Corinthians 5:7 – *“Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.”*