

First Corinthians
Chapter Five
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1Cor 5:1 “It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father's wife.”

The exact nature of the sin is not clarified except that it is shocking that such could exist among members of a church. The woman is probably not really the sinner's mother or Paul would have said so. The woman may have been an ex-wife, a concubine, or even the wife of his deceased father. Regardless of the exact relationship between the sinner and the woman this is a sexual sin and one that should have been condemned by the church.

1Cor 5:2 “And you have become arrogant, and have not mourned instead, in order that the one who had done this deed might be removed from your midst.”

Rather than condemning the sin the church was proud that the person had the maturity to know that he could now sin since he was a member of a church and exempt from being judged for his sin in this world! What an awful misunderstanding these people had developed about their relationship to Jesus!

**1Cor 5:3 “For I, on my part, though absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged him who has so committed this, as though I were present.
1Cor 5:4 In the name of our Lord Jesus, when you are assembled, and I with you in spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus,
1Cor 5:5 I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.”**

Even though Paul is not physically present with them he knows what to do and he has done it. Paul judges him as committing a sin against God and he pronounces his judgment on him. The “day of the Lord Jesus” is the judgment day that is to come for all of us. Paul decides to excommunicate the sinner so that such sin will not be within the church. Exactly what he means about the destruction of his flesh is not clear. He may even mean that he will physically die or he may mean that by being put out of the protection of the church and fully in the realm of Satan he might realize the awful nature of his sin and repent. In several verses the outside world is deemed to be in the control of Satan:

Col 1:13 “For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son,”

1John 5:19 “We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.”

Eph 2:12 “remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.”

Rev 2:13 “I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; and you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith, even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.”

Some people did become ill and even die because of sins associated with the communion service:

1Cor 11:28 “But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

1Cor 11:29 For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself, if he does not judge the body rightly.

1Cor 11:30 For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep.”

Regardless of what he meant, Paul recognizes the person as a Christian who has slipped into an awful sin. Sexual sin was rampant in this area so it is natural that such a sin could slip into the church but the church must quickly act to rid itself of such sin.

1Cor 5:6 “Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough?

1Cor 5:7 Clean out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed.

1Cor 5:8 Let us therefore celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”

Leaven is representative of sin. The people knew how leaven would permeate quickly throughout a loaf of bread and he used this comparison to help clarify their understanding of the seriousness of sin in the church. Church members are to be particularly alert to any sin that is appearing in the members and act quickly to deal with it so it does not affect more members.

1Cor 5:9 “I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people;

1Cor 5:10 I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters; for then you would have to go out of the world.

1Cor 5:11 But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he should be an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler-- not even to eat with such a one.

1Cor 5:12 For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church?

1Cor 5:13 But those who are outside, God judges. Remove the wicked man from among yourselves.”

Paul now clarifies an earlier teaching of his that we do not have. He had written to them to not associate with immoral people within the church. He was not telling them to become a monastery and not associate with evil people outside of the church. We are all to be a witness to those outside of the church but when we determine that a member of the church is involved in some sin he is to be removed from the church with the goal that he will repent and return to the fellowship. Paul repeated such a requirement in another letter to the Corinthians:

2Cor 6:14 “Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?”

We are not to have any form of fellowship with a church member who is immoral, covetous, an idolater, a reviler, a drunkard, or a swindler. Paul is not listing all possible sins here but he is listing some that we should readily recognize. A person who is practicing such sins would not even be a Christian and so he calls him a “so-called brother”. A real Christian can become involved in sinful activities but he will repent when he understands that such activity is not Christian behavior.

References

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3. “1&2 Corinthians”, Charles Hodge, The Banner of Truth Trust, 1974.
4. “The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, Volume 10, 1 Corinthians”, Regency Reference Library, 1976.