

1  “Truth to Transform a Worldly Church”

Studies in I Corinthians

“Sexual Immorality”

- I Corinthians 5:1-13 -

2 

- “As Christians, we are island dwellers surrounded by a polluted sea that continually beats upon our shores ...” [cf. Rom. 5:12; Gen. 6:5; Psa. 51:5; Psa. 58:3-4; Jer. 17:9; Romans 1 & II Tim. 3:1-5]
- “... How can we insulate ourselves from the world without isolating ourselves from people? How can we stay pure when the world’s contaminated water constantly laps upon the beaches of our lives?” - Charles Swindoll
- How should the church respond when some within the church begin to ‘test’ the waters of sin all around them?

3 

- In I Cor. 5, Paul condemns the church at Corinth for being too complacent and passive toward the encroachment of sin within the church. However, he also warns of the danger of overreaction and imbalance in the church’s response to such sin within the church [cf. I Cor. 10:12 and Gal. 6:1].

4 

- In II Cor. 2:6-8 - *“The punishment inflicted on him by the majority is sufficient for him. Now instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. I urge you, therefore, to reaffirm your love for him.”*
- verse 11 - *“... in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.”*

5 

The Danger of Imbalance

Examples from Church history

- The Inquisition
- The Anabaptists
- The Puritan “Witch Trials” in New England [Salem Mass.]

6 

Immorality in the church

- *“It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans: A man has his father’s wife.”* - I Cor. 5:1
- The Greek word translated ‘sexual immorality’ here is ‘porneia.’
- This word is used in Ephesians 5:3, in a passage which speaks of the Christian’s responsibility to stay clear of such things and to expose them as the deeds of darkness
- Gal. 5:19 - *“Porneia”* is also listed as one of the *“works of the flesh.”*

7 

The important point

- Both Jews and Christians had an entirely different standard regarding sex than the Romans and the Greeks. - And Paul was reminding them that this distinction

was very important and needed to be carefully maintained!!!

8 **Why is this so???**

- It is God who is the Sovereign Creator of all things and human sexuality was His idea! He is also the sovereign ruler of the universe to Whom all mankind rightfully owes allegiance.
- He has revealed to us that He has established certain limits, or boundaries, within which sex is good and acceptable in His sight.

9

- However, the violation of those limits constitutes sin, and sin has harmful and destructive consequences!
- God's people are those who believe in God and acknowledge His right to set such boundaries. They are called to respect those limits and abide by them in the midst of a world which refuses to do so!!!

10

11 **Rejection of Traditional Ethics**

- The people in the Corinthian church thought they knew a better way to handle sexuality
- They viewed the existing standards as “overly strict” and confining

12 **Rejection of Traditional Ethics**

- They viewed the teaching of Scripture as “nice” but “impractical” in the context of “real life” in this world!

- They had adopted a destructive view of grace [Jude 4 & Titus 2:11-15]

13 **The absence of ‘grieving’ and ‘mourning’ over such sin**

- v.2 - *“And you are proud! Shouldn't you rather have been filled with grief and have put out of your fellowship the man who did this?”*

14 **Such a response to sin reflects an inadequate grasp of the holiness of God and the sinfulness of sin!**

- “Mourning” over sin is an essential characteristic of those who are true citizens of the Kingdom of God!

- *“Blessed are those who mourn.”* Matt. 5:4, II Cor. 6:9-11

15 **Instruction for correction**

- Note the following about the sin itself:
 - Someone who said: “I am a Christian,” chose to willfully persist in sin while trying to continue in fellowship in the church of Christ
 - His sin was unconfessed and willfully persisted in!
 - Therefore, there was every reason to believe his sin was serious, grievous, and life-dominating [cf. I Cor. 6:9-11]!

16 **Note the destructive impact of such sin in the church**

- Such sins are, therefore, “soul destroying” in the personal life - I Peter 2:11

- When tolerated in the midst of the church, they are a defilement and corruption which spreads like cancer! - I Cor. 5:6

17 **Note the response which Paul recommends**

- I Cor. 5:2-5 - Paul is immediate and unambiguous about what should be done! - Excommunication & disfellowship!
- How is this to be implemented?
 - ✓ v. 5 - *“hand this man over to Satan”*
 - ✓ v. 5b - *“so that the sinful nature may be destroyed”*
 - ✓ v. 5c - *“and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord.”*

18 **Note: It is the responsibility of the entire congregation to act!**

- Gal. 6:1 - *“Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.”*

- Failure to do so demonstrates a lack of love
[cf. Heb. 12:6 *“... the Lord disciplines those he loves.”*]

19 **Who should we stay away from?**

- I Cor. 5:9-12 *“As island dwellers, we can’t get away from the world’s immoral sea. In fact, we shouldn’t even try to isolate ourselves from it. But when it comes to defiant believers who habitually swim in the sin around them, we are told to keep them off our shores.”*