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BIBLE STUDY

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"FLESH DESTRUCTION FOR SPIRIT SALVATION"

1 Corinthians 5:1-13

1 Corinthians 5:1 "It is reported commonly [that there is] fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife."

The attitude of arrogance in the Corinthian church was unfounded and Paul points to "exhibit A" to explain why: It was reported to him that there was gross sexual immorality among them. Fornication, in this particular Scripture means harlotry. We notice first about this, that it seems to be common knowledge. Moreover, it was a level of sexual sin that was not even tolerated among the Gentiles (that is, among unbelievers). So, even as depraved as the city of Corinth often was, the non-Christians there would at least draw the line at the kind of immorality taking place in the church! This sin and incest {so prevalent in our day} are so bad that even the heathen, who do not know God and His laws, do not practice this sin. A man from their congregation was sleeping with his father's wife. Paul doesn't say that it was the man's mother, so the implication is that she was his stepmother, but it is a terrible sin by any account. We know that the woman was unsaved and not a part of the church because Paul only concerns himself with the actions of the man. In the book of Leviticus and deuteronomy, there are definite regulations about this very thing.

Leviticus 18:6-8

6 None of you shall approach to any that is near of kin to him, to uncover their nakedness: I am the Lord.

7 The nakedness of thy father, or the nakedness of thy mother, shalt thou not uncover: she is thy mother; thou shalt not uncover her nakedness.

8 The nakedness of thy father's wife shalt thou not uncover: it is thy father's nakedness.

Deuteronomy 22:30 *"A man shall not take his father's wife, nor discover his father's skirt."*

Deuteronomy 27:20 *"Cursed be he that lieth with his father's wife; because he uncovereth his father's skirt. And all the people shall say, Amen."*

1 Corinthians 5:2 "And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you."

These Christians know about this and have done nothing about it. This is like so many in our day, who believe if you have been baptized, you are not guilty of sins you commit. Not only was Paul shocked by the sin, but he was also shocked by the fact that the Corinthians ignored it and were arrogant instead of grieved. The church was bragging about all its supposed greatness instead of mourning over its sin. Paul is saying, why have you not forcibly removed him from your group? It is as if you approve of what he is doing. This could give this church a very bad name in the community. The fact that they have not dealt

with this within the church would make it even worse. They were like a person who goes to the doctor, learns that he has a malignant cancer, and then proceeds to boast about his good looks, personality, and bank balance. In view of such a diagnosis, what matters is removing the cancerous tumor from the body, and that's what Paul urges: remove from your congregation the one who did this. They are puffed up with pride that they are Christians and are not dealing with the sin that is in the church. One of the marks of a true and spiritually healthy church is how it deals with sin particularly, an ongoing pattern of rebellious behavior against God. When you hear about a fellow Christian entrapped in a web of sin, does it break your heart and cause you to seek to rescue them? Or does it prompt you to pick up your phone and gossip? As Paul explains later in the letter, members of the church are part of the body of Christ and should have concern for each other.

James 5:19-20

19 Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him;

20 Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.

1 Corinthians 12:25 "there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another."

1 Corinthians 5:3 "For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, [concerning] him that hath so done this deed,"

Paul has just heard of this sin from afar, and he knows exactly what should be done about this matter. Those who were in the church in authority should have already handled this. Frequently, people quote Jesus's words: "Do not judge". But when Jesus said this, he wasn't saying that his followers were never to judge. He was warning them not to use a self-imposed standard to judge others; such people will find that their hypocritical standard will be used against them.

Matthew 7:1-6

1 Judge not, that ye be not judged.

2 For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.

3 And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?

4 Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye?

5 Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

Paul tells the Corinthians that he had already pronounced judgment on this particular man. Why? Because his was a serious and public sin that required public judgment. Not only did everyone in the church know about it, but also people outside the church. And while the believers weren't called to judge anyone's motives, they were to judge this man's actions. Some people might say, "What a man does is his own business." No, what a professing believer does is God's business because it's his church. And it's the church's business because we are a family. If a member of your family is physically sick or injured, you wouldn't simply say, "That's his business." Rather, the problem is family business.

Matthew 18:15-20

15 Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.

16 But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

17 And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.

18 Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

19 Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.

20 For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

I Corinthians 5:4 "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ,"

I Corinthians 5:5 "To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."

What was the Corinthian church to do? They were to gather in the name of our Lord Jesus and with the power of our Lord Jesus. That means they were to act on Jesus's behalf, under his authority, to exercise his kingdom power. Paul is saying also that these are not his own personal wishes for this man, but the will of the Lord Jesus Christ. Then they were to hand over this man to Satan, that is excommunicate him from the church, so that God's covenant protection was removed from his life. With that umbrella gone, the man would have no defense against the devil's schemes. But the goal of this move was not punitive. Rather, the goal was for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord. In other words, Paul wants the man to be driven to repentance and even allows the devil to be used as the instrument to accomplish this so that the man could be delivered from this sin before facing Christ's judgment seat. This is not saying that they would automatically be saved because of the suffering of the flesh. This is saying that the protection is removed from this person, and Satan can do with this sinner's body whatever he will. This is done to cause the sinner to repent. If you repent of sin, your spirit will be saved, even if your body is ravaged by that sin.

I Corinthians 5:6 "Your glorying [is] not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?"

Paul uses a baking metaphor to explain the consequences of not dealing with serious sin in the church: Don't you know that a little leaven leavens the whole batch of dough? To put it another way, one bad apple will spoil the whole barrelful. Or, to use another analogy, you need to treat cancer before it metastasizes and spreads throughout the body. Paul was telling them that sin, left unchecked, would harm the entire congregation. Just the fact that a person has accepted Jesus as their Saviour does not exempt them from punishment for their sin. Paul is saying here, if you let this go without taking care of this, the sin will spread in your church. You must remove the one who is infected with sin, so that this disease will not spread to the other members.

I Corinthians 5:7 "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us:"

Leaven, in the verse above, is sin. Paul is saying, clean up your church, so that it will be without sin again. Purge, in this Scripture, means to cleanse thoroughly. Do not leave anything at all that is associated with this sin. Christ was the unleavened Bread. He was without sin. If we are truly followers of Him, we must be free of sin, as well. Jesus' sacrifice for us was to do away with the sin in our life. A person who sins must repent quickly and get forgiveness for that sin. The mention of leaven leads Paul

to point to Israel's exodus experience as an illustration. The Israelites were commanded to sacrifice a lamb and put its blood on their doorframes so that the angel of death would pass over them when the Lord brought judgment on Egypt's firstborn. In addition, the Israelites were to remove leaven from their homes and eat unleavened bread for seven days as a reminder of their hurried departure from Egypt. Paul tells the Corinthians that Christ is the fulfillment of the Passover lamb. He was sacrificed to protect them from judgment. Furthermore, leaven is symbolic of sin. So just as the Israelites were to rid their homes of all leaven, so the Corinthians must clean out the old leaven so that they might be a new unleavened batch.

1 Corinthians 5:8 "Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened [bread] of sincerity and truth."

The life of a Christian should be a continual remembrance of the great sacrifice that Jesus made for us. Jesus {the perfect Lamb sacrifice} was our Substitute. We deserved the death on the cross, but He took our place. In this we see a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus. In the Passover the lamb was killed and the blood drawn of the animal, but had they not put the blood over the door, death would have come to that house. We must not only believe that He gave His body at Calvary for our sin, but we must individually apply that precious blood to our life. He must be our personal Saviour. We must desire to be like Jesus.

Galatians 2:20 "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

Sin should not be tolerated in your life if you are a Christian. Anyone proclaiming Christianity should have no desire in their heart to sin. We should constantly be sincere with the Lord. Truth should be our standard. In other words, sin the old way of life must be left behind so that the church can live as the new people we are in Christ and not as the old people we were. One person's sin (leaven) can hinder or stop God's blessing for everyone. Therefore, we must discard the leaven of malice and evil so that we may live with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

1 Corinthians 5:9 "I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators:"

The Corinthians should have known better than to ignore this church member's sexual immorality. For Paul reminds them of a previous letter he had written in which he told them not to associate with sexually immoral people. We become like those we keep company with. Paul had warned of the dangers of fellowshiping with sinners. Fornicator, in this particular Scripture, is taken from the word pornos, and can be translated male prostitute. This includes homosexuals. This leaves no doubt as to the danger of those who associate with those who are involved in sex sins. This is primarily speaking of unnatural acts in sex relations, but includes adultery between male and female, as well. One thing we must note in this, it is alright to go and witness to the lost, this is just speaking of not getting caught up in their sin.

1 Corinthians 5:10 "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."

The statement "not altogether" just means that he did not forbid casual association with these sinners, but continuous association, which might cause you to get involved in their sin. We are in this world with those who commit these sins, but we are not of this world. We are a holy people set aside for the purposes of God. We are not holy in our own right but have put on righteousness which Jesus provided for us when He washed us in His precious blood. There would be no point in us staying in this world, except we had the opportunity to win people out of these sins to the living God.

1 Corinthians 5:11 "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."

Paul now instructs them not to “keep company” with a sinning brother. Notice the fact that Paul called him a brother here, which means they were of like faith (believers). It seems it is much worse for a Christian to be caught up in these sins, than it is for those who have not repented and given their lives to the Lord. To sin in full knowledge is much worse than to sin and not be aware that you are sinning.

Luke 12:47-48

47 And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.

48 But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.

It does not say, again, that you are not to come in casual contact with them, but not to eat with them. When you eat with someone, it is a time of fellowshiping. We are not to turn our head the other way when a brother or sister sins, and act as if it did not happen. When you fellowship by eating with them, it is as if you are condoning what they are doing. By this he did not mean the immoral people of this world that is, unbelievers. After all, we all have to together live in the world. We will inevitably encounter sinners those who are greedy and swindlers or idolaters. We can't leave the world. Rather, Paul says, Christians are not to associate with an unrepentant person engaged in these sins who claims to be a Christian brother or sister. Unbelievers are expected to live as unbelievers. But those who consider themselves part of God's people are expected to live as God's people. This doesn't mean that Christians never sin. Instead, it means that clear patterns of sin are not acceptable and must be confronted. To call oneself a child of God and live like a child of the devil is a contradiction. If a so-called brother refuses to repent of such actions, Paul insists that the church must put him out (excommunication) and not associate with him that is, engage in intimate social fellowship with him. They're not even to eat with him. This doesn't mean you can't speak to the person, or that you are to treat him cruelly. Instead, it means you are not to treat him like a fellow Christian when he is showing contempt for God and for his people by ignoring the divinely prescribed process of church discipline. In other words, we must not treat someone who is sick as if he is well. To do so is unloving.

1 Corinthians 5:12 "For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within?"

1 Corinthians 5:13 "But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person."

Paul is interested in keeping the converts that the Lord has given him. He cannot change the world unless they want to be changed. His instructions are for those he claims as his own converts. There is a day of judgement coming when the Lord Jesus will judge the whole world. Paul is saying, here, we do not judge the world, Jesus does. If someone is determined to live in sin like the world, put them out there in the world with the rest of the sinners. Let God judge them on judgement day, just as He will the rest of the sinners. Those who are determined to sin, should not be left with the Christians to contaminate them. It is not the church's business to judge outsiders (unbelievers). God will deal with them. But the church is called to judge its own, to judge those who are inside, for the good of the sinning member, the purity of the church, and the glory of God.

John 3:17-19

17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

18 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

19 And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

1 Peter 4:17-18

17 For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?

18 And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?

Churches that refuse to address unrepentant sin lovingly and clearly are not functioning as biblically centered, New Testament churches. Therefore, they are limiting or negating God's powerful presence in their midst. The local church is to be a hospital for the sick, a place where sinners can come to be healed. Indeed, we must welcome the sick and never keep them away. But what the church must not do is allow the sick to be content with being sick. When we do that, we cease to be a hospital and devolve into a hospice that simply makes people comfortable in their sin.

QUESTIONS

1. What had been reported to Paul about the church at Corinth?
2. This sin was such a bad one that not even the _____ committed this sin.
3. What does fornication, in verse 1, mean?
4. What is a similar sin prevalent in our day?
5. Who was this woman probably?
6. What did Paul say they should do with this sinner?
7. What is this church puffed up with?
8. Paul was absent in body, but present in _____.
9. In verse 4, Paul is speaking this in whose name?
10. Who were they to deliver this sinner to?
11. That the spirit ____ be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.
12. A little leaven _____ the whole lump.
13. Is a person exempt from punishment just because he has accepted the Lord Jesus?
14. Why must the sinner be removed?
15. What is leaven in verse 7?
16. What does purge mean in verse 7?
17. Who was the unleavened Bread?
18. Who was our Substitute?
19. Jesus must be our _____ Saviour.
20. Who had Paul written them not to company with?
21. What does fornicator, in verse 9, mean?
22. What does the statement "not altogether" mean?
23. What other sins are mentioned in verse 11?
24. What one word shows that Paul was speaking of someone professing Christianity?

25. Who judges them who are outside the church?