1 Corinthians 5: 9-13

Sexual Immorality Must Be Judged

I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; 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. But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is 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. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church?

But those who are outside, God judges. REMOVE THE WICKED MAN FROM AMONG YOURSELVES. – 1 Corinthians 5:9-13

# I Wrote You in My Letter

As previously discussed in the introduction to 1 Corinthians this is likely the second letter from Paul to the church in Corinth. One of our clues is this very verse. Rather than ignore this little fragment we should observe Paul’s patience and dedication to the church in Corinth. We should also observe that the church there seems to have ignored the sound biblical doctrine and that leadership there have abdicated their responsibilities so that Paul’s efforts were massive in trying to fight secularism and hedonism within the body in Corinth.

# Not Associating with Sexually Immoral People within the Church

The Greek word here for ‘Immoral’ is not just general sin, but perverse people who commit unlawful sexual acts. Paul has just spoken explicitly about incest, but given the Corinthian culture and being a transportation hub for the region and the Roman proclivity for sexual perversion Paul repeats himself here with the focus on the church. Paul tells the believers not to intermix with others who might be attempting to behave in this way AND claim Christ.

## Consequence of Acceptance of Carnality

*What happens if we inclusively mingle with perversion inside of the church?*

We can thank the church in Corinth for letting us know precisely what happens when the church embraces carnality, but we can look all around us today in various churches that claim acceptance of sexual and other sins in the name of “love” and “tolerance.” The main thrust of hedonism is the flesh and indulgence, it is not of the Spirit. When we look at Galatians 5:16 we see Paul’s admonition against fleshly indulgence is on the fulcrum of abiding. Otherwise his warning there [Gal. 5:19-20] and elsewhere talks of immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, etc.

Those behaviors compound and suck carnal people into more carnality. Paul’s writing to us in Romans 1:32 reminds us that those who practice carnality entice others into carnality and want their collective of deviants to grow. Given that the church is a physical manifestation of Christ’s bride [Eph. 5:24,32], and Christ is made Holy [Eph. 5:27] it does not reflect His nature, the Church’s position, or the working of the Holy Spirit, God’s counselor for us on this earth, in any way. The fruit of carnality is the wages of sin.

## Consequence of Rejection of Carnality

*What happens if we reject perversion inside of the church?*

When the church rejects carnality and instead is abiding what do we know about the fruit? We know that the fruit is eternal rewards [Eph. 2:10+1 Corinthians 3:14], peace that passes all understanding [Phi. 4:6-7], maturity, a healthy body where needs are met and the spiritual gifts operate, and an outward evangelistic ministry [Romans 12]. We also find we can set our thoughts on things above [Cor. 3:1-3], what is good [Phi. 4:8], and can behold the Lord [2 Cor. 3:18].

The believer that is focused on God’s Word and the truths therein is not constantly fighting with the flesh in the same way as someone who is trying to saturate themselves in the Word, but also fighting off the constant intrusion of immorality due to cultural embrace. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, “…such were some of you…,” after listing off a list of sinful behaviors. He then tells them that that was their past life, but now they’re justified and sanctified. Addictive and culturally accepted sinful behaviors are not the lives the believer is to live. Liberty is not license, and grace is not permission, but motivation. We don’t promote legalism or license, but an abiding life within the church.

# Associating with Immoral People in the World

Evangelism is one of the responsibilities of the church [Eph 4:11; Phi. 4:5] and if we are not interacting with the world at all how will the gospel go out? Paul’s direction here is about motivation, exposure, and evangelism. If the Spirit leads us in evangelism that may be within our own homes to family and friends. The Spirit does not lead us to saturation of sin to where we’re numb or callous or to places where we’re going to be drawn into sin. We don’t find Paul’s going into places of specific sinfulness such as the pagan temples of prostitution and idolatry, “for the sake of the gospel.” However, Paul is around the world and preaching the gospel. Paul could have have written the aforementioned, “…such were some of you…,” if the gospel was not preached to those in the world. As believers we need to be living the righteous life of Christ in front of the world for them to see it, hear the gospel, and respond.

# So-Called Brothers

The text here should cause us to pause and reflect on the number of people in the world who claim Christianity in various forms and have discernment. Cults claim Christ, descendants of Christians, various people who think that Jesus only taught that we should love one another, and various people who do not believe the gospel but consider themselves religious may claim Christ. These people claim Christ, but are “so-called.”

*Do we find that sin in someone’s life means that they are not saved?*

# The Immoral, Covetous, Idolators, Revilers, Drunkards and Swindlers

Paul lists a few specific sins here [and others elsewhere] that should definitely not be in the church’s company. Rather than concern ourselves with list comparison, let’s look at the specific consequences of these sinful behaviors.

## Immoral [Sexual] Sins

Sexual sins – due to the way the brain is wired – tend to compound and draw the thoughtlife into further and further focus on sexuality. While biblical sexuality between a man and a woman is healthy within a marriage anything that operates outside of this scope compromises marriages in various ways. Paul also writes that sexual sin is inside the body verses external sins elsewhere [1 Cor. 6:18]

## Covetousness/Greed

If there is a problem in American culture that marketers love to exploit besides sexuality, it is greed. The sense that we need more, should have more, or will be happy with more is preyed upon heavily. Politicians use it to tell you how they will give you more and fulfill your desire for the things that you don’t have. Greed is never satisfied and will corrupt a mind seeking fulfillment outside of Christ.

## Idolatry

While idolatry seems like an obvious problem in biblical times, modern Christianity still faces a world rife with idolatry through cults, religious ceremonies, and humanism. Making anything above, or equal to, the God of the Bible and setting it as your focus will certainly not lead to Biblical spiritual growth.

## Revilers

“Reviler” is not a term we use a lot in our culture, but a modern parallel would be someone who is abusive with language. Obviously when we see physical abuse we are repulsed by it, but verbal abuse is highly destructive and can create a long-lasting impact on the lives of those who receive it. Since the scripture is replete with the truths of who we are in Christ, let us set our mind on those things rather than the lies of the abusers.

## Drunkards

Drunkards are beholden to their next drink. Clearly if we’re filled with alcohol instead of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18) our effectiveness as believers will be impacted.

## Swindlers

While we would think that avoiding being robbed would be a no-brain, it is important to observe that this sort of person seems to operate under the radar. Confidence schemes exist all over the world and they prey on the unwitting all the time. Our brotherly love should have us watching out for one another and preventing this so that the body is not in greater need than it could be.

# Eating With Such A One

Eating and breaking of bread is a representation of the principle of spreading ideas and saturating ones self with others’ ideas. You’re not just taking in calories, but spreading thoughts to those you are eating with. A meal would possibly include various courses [though not always], it would possibly involve hours of time together and leave you chewing on those ideas long after the food was digested. Paul’s direction here is that believers have discernment about who they’re spending their time with. The church at its inception spent time together eating together [Acts 2:46] and we’re commended to be hospitable towards one another, but the people we spend time with influence our thinking and we need to be thinking God’s thoughts after Him, not trying to wrestle the world’s system *into* Christianity.

# Judging

*What does it mean to judge?*

## Judging Outsiders

Setting forth proper evaluation of someone’s spiritual rooting, maturity or source of motive is important for believers. Preaching only the gospel just in case someone is not saved is a wasteful use of time. Not preaching the gospel because they might be saved is also a misuse of the truth of the gospel. It requires discernment, conversation and the leading of the Spirit. If you’ve heard the trope of “Judge not, lest ye be judged,” you can probably discern that judgment is a potentially divisive thing. However, we’re called to judgment, just not undo condemnation.

How can Paul write to the Galatians 6:1 that someone should be restored unless someone can judge that the person needs restoration? We see that judgment is required for proper evaluation of where we’re at in our walk, where others are at, and what is immoral so that we can know where to be putting forth our life’s energy. Dismissing all uses of judgment is a poor application of this principle.

Instead we *carefully* take on the judgment of those inside of the church.

## Judging Those Who Are Within the Church

*What is the purpose of judgment inside of the church?*

Given the immediate context of this passage in chapter 5 we see that there are some contexts in which we need to judge and respond to the lives of those inside of the church. This is for the safety of the body as well as the longer term reputation of the church that we leave behind [until the rapture]. As a principle this judgment is not about condemnation, but about safety and maturity. If you are concerned with the life of another believer and you approach them about that concern your awareness of the sin should probably lead to their being edified and restored as written in Galatians 6:1. If the believer does not respond to this correction that is when the biblical process goes to the leadership of the church and proper correction escalates to the possible point of expulsion.

# God Judges Outsiders

The reason that God judges outsiders is because this is firstly a position of God [Psalm 50:6; Acts 17:31; Romans 2:16], and secondly because our position of interaction with the world is as agents of the gospel and the life of Christ. The gospel does not cause man fear of our judgment, but of God’s judgment. God’s judgment is perfect, righteous, and beyond reproof. As believers we can make mistakes, could be walking carnally, or unaware of a greater context. Instead we let the Lord declare the salvation of each man and instead focus on the direction of His Spirit.

# Remove the Wicked Man from Among Yourselves

There is a principle all the way through the Old Testament where righteousness and unrighteousness should not mix. God tells Israel that they should purge the evil from them [Deut. 21:21;22:21-22]; Christ tells the believers in Matthew 18:17 that if someone refuses to respond to the believers knowing their sin, that they should be cast out.

Wickedness festers, it breeds like a virus, and it should not be allowed to be knowingly saturated in the church.