

1 CORINTHIANS: MOVING FROM THE CARNAL TO THE SPIRITUAL STATE

Part X: Countering Acts Of Sexual Immorality In The Church

(1 Corinthians 5:1-13)

I. Introduction

- A. Functioning by means of the sin nature, what we term "carnality," is often a challenge in today's churches.
- B. 1 Corinthians was written to carnal believers (1 Corinthians 3:1-3), and 1 Corinthians 5:1-13 shows how the body is to counter acts of sexual immorality committed by members of the Church (as follows):

II. Countering Acts Of Sexual Immorality In The Church, 1 Corinthians 5:1-13.

- A. Paul wrote that it had been reported that there was sexual immorality in the Church, a kind that did not occur even with pagans, that a man would have his father's wife, 1 Cor. 5:1 ESV. The verb "have" (KJV) is in the infinitive (*echein*, U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 587), "suggesting" a "permanent relationship" between a man and his "stepmother, possibly divorced from his father," Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to 1 Cor. 5:1.
- B. This arrangement, called incest, was prohibited both by the Mosaic Law (Leviticus 18:8; Deuteronomy 22:22) and by Roman law (Cicero *Cluentes* 6. 15 and Gaius *Institutis* 1. 63), Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 514.
- C. Instead of arranging for the clearly sinful man to "be taken away from among" them by "church discipline and excommunication" (Ibid., Ryrie, fn. to 1 Cor. 5:2) with a spirit of mourning until he repented (Matt. 18:15-17; 2 Cor. 2:5-8), the Corinthians had become arrogant and allowed the man to stay in the body, 1 Cor. 5:2 ESV.
- D. So concerned was Paul about the debilitating effects of unchecked open immorality in the Church that he though absent had already judged the sinner (1 Corinthians 5:3), turning him over to Satan for the destruction of the body in physical death that the man's spirit might be saved in the end, 1 Cor. 5:5; Ibid., B. K. C., N. T.
- E. Paul thus urged the believers at Corinth to carry out the sinful member's excommunication when they gathered together, Paul in spirit joining them along with the power of Jesus Christ, 1 Corinthians 5:4. This action "thus became a painful example of the price of self-centered indifference and a powerful reminder of the demand for holiness in God's temple (1 Cor. 3:17; 6:19)," Ibid.
- F. Such sharp discipline for this sin needed to be explained, so Paul supplied it in 1 Corinthians 5:6-8:
 - 1. Paul asserted that the false glorying of the Corinthians in not exercising discipline on this sinful man was not good, for a little leaven of immorality leavens the whole lump of the Church body, 1 Corinthians 5:6a. In other words, sexually immoral acts in a local church, if left unchecked, remove inhibitions against the sex drive in others to where this sin quickly leads to immoral havoc throughout the Church, 1 Cor. 5:6b.
 - 2. Thus, the Church at Corinth needed to purge out the old leaven in practicing excommunication on the unrepentant, immoral man that they might be a new lump as a body, pure from spreading sin, 1 Cor. 5:7a.
 - 3. Paul added that Christ our Passover Lamb had been sacrificed for us, so since the Feast of Unleavened Bread began after Passover and was observed for seven days (Lev. 23:4-8), it foreshadowed the need for believers in Christ to live separate from corruptive sin as a holy lump once they had partaken of the benefits of Christ as the Passover Lamb in being saved, 1 Corinthians 5:7b-8a.
 - 4. This separation from sin was to be marked not by the old leaven of malice and wickedness like pride and sexually immoral acts, what the Corinthian believers were practicing and tolerating, but it was to be marked with the absence of yeast as the pure bread of sincerity and truth like Paul urged, 1 Cor. 5:8b NIV.
- G. Paul observed that he had written a former letter to the Corinthians not to fellowship with immoral people, but he did not mean that they were to avoid all contact with all the immoral or the greedy or swindlers or idolaters, for then they would have to go out of the world, 1 Corinthians 5:9-10 NIV. However, he **was NOW** directing that if any man *is called* (*onomazomenos*, pres. pas. part. of *onomazo*, "to name"; Ibid., U. B. S. Grk. N. T., p. 588; The Analy. Grk. Lex. (Zon.), 1972, p. 289) a brother in Christ who was immoral, greedy, or if he was an idolater, a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler, the upright were not even to eat with him, 1 Cor. 5:11 NIV.
- H. The unsaved outside the Church would be judged by God, not the Church, but those in the Church who were guilty of these sins that required excommunication had to be excommunicated by the Church, 1 Cor. 5:12-13.

Lesson: *As taught in the typology of the Feasts of Passover and Unleavened Bread, if a believer commits a local church leavening sin like sexual immorality that Scripturally requires church discipline, and he does not confess it, the local church must excommunicate him until he repents and confesses it for the local church's holiness.*

Application: *(1) May we live holy lives. (2) If one in the church commits a local church leavening sin like sexual immorality that Biblically requires church discipline, may we perform it for the sake of the local church's holiness.*