

Chapter 5

The problem of a serious sexual sin 5:1-5

v1 News has come to me that there is sexual sin among you. A man has been having sex with his father's wife. Even people who do not know God do not sin like that. v2 And you are proud! You should be very sad instead. You should have made the man who did this leave your church. v3 Although I am not there with you, my spirit is with you. And I have already judged the man who did this. I have done so just as if I were there. v4 When you come together in the name of our Lord Jesus, my spirit is with you. The power of our Lord Jesus will also be with you. v5 When you come together like that, hand this man over to Satan. This is in order to destroy his sinful nature. And it is to save his spirit on the day when the Lord returns.

Verse 1 The law does not allow sex between two people who are very close relatives of each other. In the church at Corinth, a man was having sex with his father's second wife. It was against Jewish law (Leviticus 18:8). Even pagans thought that it was a terrible sin. It was against Roman law as well.

Verse 2 Paul felt disgusted that the members of the church allowed the situation. They even seemed to have been slightly proud of the man's action. They may have said that Christians had freedom from the law. They thought that this action did not matter for a really spiritual person. Instead, they should have felt as sad as someone whose close relative had died.

Verses 3-4 Paul was not there. But he was thinking about them as if he really were present. He had already decided that the man was sinning. When they met as a group of Christians, Paul felt as if he was spiritually

with them. They also had the Holy Spirit with them. The Holy Spirit would give them the power to act in the right way.

Verse 5 The Christians must punish the man. They must tell him that he must leave the church. He would then be in the world, where Satan rules people's lives. There the man would learn the difference between the company of Christians and the ways of the world. Paul intended that this punishment would make the man realise his sin. Then he would ask for God's forgiveness. Then on the day of judgement, when Jesus returns, God would not shut him out of heaven. The Christians had to punish him in this way. This would be better for him in eternity. And it would show that they loved him.

The effects of this sin if it continues 5:6-8

v6 You are wrong to be proud about your church. You must know that only a little yeast spreads through the whole lump of dough. v7 Remove the old yeast. Be like a new lump of dough without yeast. That is what you really are. That is because Christ is our Passover lamb. He has become a sacrifice for us. v8 So let us keep the Feast, but not with the old yeast. I mean that hate and wicked behaviour are like yeast. Let us keep the Feast with bread that is honest and pure.

Verse 6 Paul uses a picture from Jewish practice. It shows why the man should not stay in the church. Yeast is a tiny substance. People put it in dough to make bread grow bigger. It affects the whole lump of dough. The Jews thought that yeast was a picture of an evil influence. Yeast spreads through dough. In a similar way, the man's sin would affect the whole church.

It is possible that Paul was writing his letter near Passover time. The Jews used to remove every tiny bit of yeast from their homes before Passover began.

Verse 7 The Christians must remove the guilty man. But the 'old yeast' can also mean that they must clean out every bit of sin in their own lives. That is, they must be like a new lump of dough with no yeast in it. They had to be a group of Christians with no sin among them. They had received God's forgiveness for their past sins. God forgave them by means of Jesus' sacrifice as the Passover lamb. Now they are free to live in a new way. So they must behave like the new people that God has made them.

Verse 8 The Passover feast lasted for a week. During those seven days, the Jews did not eat anything with yeast in it. Christians must also be happy that God has forgiven them. Because of this, they must live in a holy way. 'Hate and wicked behaviour' means that they were to remove any kind of sin in thought and action. They must not hide their real attitudes. Their actions must be the result of honest and pure thoughts.

The church and the world 5:9-13

v9 I told you in my letter to stay away from people whose sexual behaviour was wrong. v10 I did not mean people of this world who sin in that way, or greedy people of this world. Or they may cheat or worship false gods. To stay away from them, you would have to leave this world. v11 But now, this is what I am writing to you. Some people say that they are Christians. You must stay away from any of those people if they behave in these wrong ways. Stay away from anyone whose sexual behaviour is sinful. And stay away from anyone who is greedy. Stay away from him if he worships false gods. Keep away if he tells lies about other people. Stay away if he drinks too

much alcohol. Stay away if he cheats. Do not even eat with a person like that. v12 It is not my business to judge those outside the church. You are supposed to judge those who belong to the church. v13 God will judge those who do not belong to the church. Throw the wicked man out.

Verses 9-10 The Christians in Corinth had misunderstood Paul's advice. Perhaps they wanted to say that Paul's advice was stupid. It is impossible to stay away from everyone who sins. This was especially true in a city like Corinth. It was well-known for sexual sins.

Verses 11-12 Paul explains that he was talking about people who called themselves Christians. He meant Christians who continued to sin. He spoke about:

1. sexual sins. These were sins against a person's real nature. They made people behave like animals. It was selfish and wrong for someone to use another person to satisfy his physical needs.
2. those who were greedy. They had forgotten that other people were like brothers and sisters. They must not steal from them. Instead, they must love and serve them. The Christian faith should make it a joy to give rather than to get.
3. the worship of false gods. This is a sin against the only real God. If a person does not worship God, he will worship something or someone else. He might trust in things that he thinks will bring him luck. He might make another person, like a singer or a man who is good at sport into an idol. A person who does all this is not a real Christian. The other Christians should not even share a meal with him. To share a meal would make it seem as if they agreed with his bad behaviour.

Verses 12-13 Only God can judge those who do not belong to the church. God alone knows their hearts. But the members of the

church must judge someone in the church who does wrong things. The people outside the church must see that the Christian faith is a different way to live. If Christians refused to punish such a serious sin, they

were a poor witness to their new faith. Paul gave a definite command, ‘Throw the man out’. He used words from Deuteronomy 17:7; 24:7. The Christian church in Corinth must put out evil people.

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