

## IMMORALITY IN THE CHURCH

**TEXT: I CORINTHIANS 5:1-13**

### **INTRODUCTION:**

1. The church in Corinth was a carnal church, and oftentimes where there is carnality there is immorality (5:1).
2. Not only was there gross immorality, but the members of the church were tolerating it. Rather than are mourning over the sin, they were “puffed up” (5:2).
3. Many years ago, a preacher friend told me that he had been on the staff of a large Baptist church in Queens. One night he preached a strong message against fornication, and after the service he was rebuked by many of the members. So, he had no choice but to leave that church.
4. Unfortunately, over the years I have heard similar stories about other churches.
5. No church is perfect. These things do happen. But when they do happen, the sin must be dealt with. It should not be tolerated or condoned or overlooked or ignored or concealed, etc.
6. There are two very important passages in the New Testament, which give instructions for church discipline -- this one and Matthew 18:15-17.

1. **WE SHOULD MOURN OVER THE SIN**
2. **WE SHOULD JUDGE THE SIN**
3. **WE SHOULD PURGE THE SIN**

### **I. WE SHOULD MOURN OVER THE SIN (5:1, 2)**

1. The word “mourn” (5:2) suggests deep sorrow. The word is often linked with weeping. Mark 16:10 says, “they mourned and wept.”
2. Our Lord said in Luke 6:25, “Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep.”
3. James 4:9 say, “Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep.”
4. Revelation 18:11 says, “And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her.”
5. As Christians, we should be broken-hearted over sin, especially sin among Christians.

6. But rather than being grieved, the Corinthians were “puffed up” (5:2), that is, they were proud. Today there are Christians that are proud of their tolerance and liberalism, etc.
7. The sin in question was condemned by the law of Moses, and this sin was considered incest (cf. Leviticus 18:6-8; 20:11).
8. The sin was so wicked that even the Gentiles condemned it – “as is not so much as named among the Gentiles” (5:1). The Gentiles were known for loose living, but even they did not tolerate incest.

## II. WE SHOULD JUDGE THE SIN

1. Today we often hear people criticize certain churches and certain preachers for being “too judgmental” (or “legalistic” or too strict).
2. But Paul said, “For I...have judged already...concerning him that hath so done this deed” (5:3; cf. vss. 12, 13).
3. Some people know very little Scripture, but one verse they frequently quote is Matthew 7:1 – “Judge not, that ye be not judged.”
4. But this verse does not mean that church members should allow sin to contaminate the church. Right after our Lord said, “Judge not, that ye be not judged,” He said, “Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you” (Matthew 7:6).
5. To recognize dogs and swine, one must exercise judgment.
6. Later on, in the same chapter, our Lord said, “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves” (Matthew 7:15).
7. Again, in order to watch out for false prophets, we must exercise judgment.
8. Mathew 7:1 refers to hypocritical judging (c. Matt. 7:3-5).
9. First Corinthians 5 teaches us that public sin must be dealt with publicly.
10. Church membership is a privilege. When a church member lives in sin he needs to repent. If he does not repent he should be put out of the church – delivered to Satan “for the destruction of the flesh” (5:5).
11. This is a serious judgment. “That the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” (5:5b) indicates that the man was saved.
12. The goal is genuine repentance. Galatians 6:1 says, “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.”
13. Perhaps the man did repent (cf. II Cor. 2:5-7).
14. Unfortunately, church discipline is seldom practiced these days.

### III. WE SHOULD PURGE THE SIN (5:7).

1. In the Bible, “leaven” (5:7, 8) always symbolizes sin. The first mention of leaven is in reference to the Passover. Exodus 12:15 says, “Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread; even the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses: for whosoever eateth leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel.”
2. In Luke 12:1, our Lord said, “Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.”
3. First Corinthians 5:8 contrasts “the leaven of malice and wickedness” with “the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”
4. Leaven is a picture of sin – spreading quietly; seemingly small but powerful.
5. It “puffs up” the dough and spreads. In like manner, sin can spread through a church and defile a church.
6. Therefore, we need to “purge out...the old leaven” (5:7).
7. When Paul says, “Therefore let us keep the feast” (5:8), he is referring to the Passover feast (cf. verse 7). When the Jews ate their Passover meal, there was to be no leaven in the house. Paul’s point – there must not be sin in the church. It must be “purged.”
8. The Passover was a picture and type of Christ (cf. I Cor. 5:7b). Exodus 12:13 says, “when I see the blood, I will pass over you”
9. There must be separation; otherwise there will be contamination (5:9-13).
10. These verses teach that we must separate from disobedient Christians who refuse to repent. Paul is not referring to lost sinners. To avoid them, we must “needs go out of the world” (5:10).
11. But “if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator...” (5:11). The man may not be saved, but if he is “called a brother” (i.e., he professes to be saved), we must not fellowship with him till he repents.
12. Fellowshiping with them only encourages them.
13. It is not our place to judge the lost. They are “condemned already” (John 3:18, 36). But we must judge those “within” the church (5:12, 13).

#### **CONCLUSION:**

1. Some have wondered what Paul meant by “the destruction of the flesh” in I Corinthians 5:5. The Bible warns of the sin unto death” (I John 5:16; cf. I Cor. 11:28-30; Hebrews 12:8, 9; James 1:15, 16).

2. After King David sinned, he repented. And after he repented, Nathan the prophet said to him, “The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die” (II Samuel 12:13).
3. Then Nathan went on to say, “Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die” (II Sam. 12:14).
4. When churches do not practice church discipline, the enemies of the LORD blaspheme.
5. One preacher put it this way: “To ignore sin that should be dealt with in our local congregations is to condone it. Today many people remain in good standing in their churches even though they are drunkards, harlots, murderers, adulterers, adulteresses, gamblers, dope addicts, etc. We know that there are unsaved people who will always be critical of the churches, but they certainly have a right to be so, when churches so operate as to condone immorality” (James Crumpton, *New Testament Church Discipline*).