

## **I CORINTHIANS: HANDLING BELIEVERS' PRACTICAL PROBLEMS**

### **III. Handling Sexual Immorality In The Church**

**(1 Corinthians 5:1-13)**

#### **I. Introduction**

- A. The people Paul discipled in Corinth lived in a city that was known for its immorality, alcoholism and worldly pursuits (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, "Introduction to the First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians: The City of Corinth," p. 1619), so the formidable influence of the city's culture on the Corinthian believers left Paul addressing "(a)berrant beliefs and practices of an astonishing variety" in his letters to them, *Ibid.*
- B. However, in a vision Paul received from God as he ministered at Corinth in Acts 18:10b NIV, God told him, "I have many people in this city," so Paul was to keep on ministering regardless of the trials he faced there.
- C. This epistle is timely for us who face our own decadent culture today, so we view 1 Corinthians 5:1-13 on handling sexual immorality in the local church for our insight, application and edification (as follows):

#### **II. Handling Sexual Immorality In The Church, 1 Corinthians 5:1-13.**

- A. Paul mentioned a very serious case of immorality in the Church at Corinth, 1 Corinthians 5:1-2:
  - 1. Corinth was so well-known for its immorality that the Greek verb, *korinthiazomai*, "to act the Corinthian," came to mean "to practice fornication." (*Ibid.*, "Intro. to the First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians: The City of Corinth," p. 1619) However, Paul wrote that a case of immorality had been reported in the church at Corinth that was not tolerated even among the pagans at Corinth, the case that a man had committed immorality with his father's wife, i. e., his stepmother, 1 Corinthians 5:1 NIV; *Ibid.*, fn. to 1 Cor. 5:1.
  - 2. Furthermore, the church had reacted badly to this case by remaining arrogant instead of mourning and practicing church discipline by removing the guilty party from the church's fellowship, 1 Corinthians 5:2.
- B. The apostle then directed that church discipline be performed, explaining the process in 1 Corinthians 5:3-13:
  - 1. Paul himself, as absent in body but present in spirit, had already pronounced judgment on the guilty man (1 Corinthians 5:3), so he directed that the church body gather together and in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, with Paul in spirit and Christ's power present with them, to commit the guilty man to Satan for the destruction of his body that his spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord, 1 Corinthians 5:4-5. The "destruction does not mean annihilation, but ruin," for "(p)ersistent sin often leads to physical punishment (1 Cor. 11:30; 1 John 5:16-17)," *Ibid.*, fn. to 1 Corinthians 5:5.
  - 2. The apostle Paul then criticized the church body, writing that their boasting in not having addressed this sin was not good, because a little spiritually corrupting leaven of immorality corrupts the whole lump, meaning that not addressing this sin of immorality would eventually corrupt the whole church body by lowering its standards against immorality, that the sin would then spread among them, 1 Corinthians 5:6.
  - 3. Thus, the church body was to cleanse out the old leaven in removing this sinful man from their midst that the rest of the church body might be a new lump of dough, that it might be holy, for in the current state, the whole church body was unholy, 1 Corinthians 5:7a. Paul illustrated this need by referring to the Feast of Unleavened Bread that commenced after the observance of Passover, teaching that since Christ as our Passover Lamb had been sacrificed, we believers were then to celebrate the days of Unleavened Bread by purging out the leaven, a requirement of that feast (Exodus 12:14-15), the leaven of malice and evil in the case at Corinth, to function with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth, 1 Corinthians 5:7b-8.
  - 4. Paul had previously written directing the church not to associate closely with immoral people of the world, but he had not meant that they totally avoid all contact with the immoral or the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, for then they would have to go out of the world. Rather, he meant that if anyone claimed to be a believer in Christ who was sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater or a reviler, or a drunkard or a swindler, with such a person not even to eat, 1 Corinthians 5:9-11 ESV. We believers have no jurisdiction for judging the unsaved who are in the world, but only those in the church, for God will judge those who are unbelievers in the world, 1 Corinthians 5:12-13a.
  - 5. Thus, the church body at Corinth was to excommunicate the sinful man from their midst, 1 Cor. 5:13b.

**Lesson:** *Certain sins like acts of immorality as named in 1 Corinthians 5:9-11 are so corruptive in their impact in the church that they require the church to remove the unrepentant professing believer from the church body.*

**Application:** *(1) May we obey God's directive to face corruptive sins and practice church discipline as required. (2) If we witness a church discipline procedure, may we learn to AVOID committing that sin for our OWN good!*