

The Village Church – Rancho Santa Fe
Week #6 – Adult Bible Study

I Corinthians 5:1-13

October 15 & 16, 2024

General Considerations

1. As already noted in our study of Corinthians, Paul is concerned about the unity and integrity of the community of the church, a concern that he will further outline in chapter 5
2. He will address actions of individuals that undermine this community
3. Traditional Jewish culture and faith stressed the importance of the community over against that of the individual person. Modern Western culture does the opposite, so it can be difficult to appreciate or even understand what is said here to the Corinthians
4. Paul considers the Corinthian Christians to be part of God's covenant community despite the fact that they are Gentiles. Their calling by Christ transcends their previous identity

5:1-2

5. Perhaps it was Chloe's people who told Paul of the situation that he will now address
6. A man in the church is living with a woman (not his mother) who had become his father's wife
7. There is no way to know if the father had died or divorced this subsequent wife
8. The woman is surely not a Christian/member of the community
9. Such a situation was also condemned by the non-Christian and non-Jewish world (see Cicero, *Pro Cluentio*)
10. In v1 when Paul mentions "pagans" he uses the same word that is normally translated "Gentiles" – it seems that he thinks of the Christians in Corinth no longer as Gentiles, but as something totally different, as those who are now included in the same covenant community as the Jews
11. Such a situation is prohibited in Scripture – see Deuteronomy 27:20 – "cursed be anyone who lies with his father's wife"
12. Paul sees that the new (formerly Gentile) Christians are totally adopted into the community of faith and therefore the scriptures apply with equal force and weight to them
13. Paul also sees that the whole community is at fault here in allowing (and even approving?) this situation to continue with one of its members
14. Perhaps the error lies in the thinking that freedom in Christ allows for freedom from any moral restrictions at all
15. Throughout the Scriptures (the "old" testament at this point) there is clear indication that the actions of the one have an impact and importance for the many
 - a. Joshua 7 – one man (Achan) claims forbidden booty from Jericho and thus earns God's disfavor for the whole nation
 - b. Holiness Code of Leviticus demands that people committing sexual offenses be cut off from the community
 - c. Prayers of national confession found in Ezra 9:6-15 and elsewhere assume corporate guilt

5:3-5

16. Here Paul reveals that he considers the spiritual bond of fellowship in Christ so powerful that, even though he is not physical in Corinth anymore, still he is present with them and his words and judgments have the same force as if he were there
17. Perhaps there is a "mystical" element involved in Paul's feeling of being present with them as well, wherein his presence is not "merely" spiritual, but actual presence through the power of the Spirit of God
18. Paul's demand that the man be handed over to Satan seems incredibly harsh, but we need to understand what he means by this
 - a. In a sense, the man has excluded himself from the community by his own actions – and Paul has affirmed this exclusion
 - b. Such exclusion puts the man outside of the grace and blessing of the community and effectively back into the realm where Satan rules
 - c. The hope is that "the flesh" which will be destroyed is in fact the sinful act that the man is committing

- d. Indeed, part of the Christian message is that – through the power of Christ – everyone’s “flesh” or sinful self will be put to death and a new person will take its place – the redeemed person who is now “alive in Christ”
- e. From other parts of scripture, including the writings of Paul himself, the intent and hope of “exclusion” is for the offending person to repent and be restored – but actual repentance and restoration occurs only after the disciplinary action occurs and thus engenders true repentance

5:6-8

19. Paul next employs the metaphor of leaven here: a little bit influences the whole, for ill or for good
20. The use of this metaphor connects with the all-important Passover story of Israel, when the people leave Egypt so quickly that they take only unleavened bread with them, and forever after they celebrate the event by eating such bread
21. Paul goes on to invoke the image of the Passover Lamb (paschal lamb), whose blood demarked the Hebrew households from those of the Egyptians, thus creating the new, covenant community of God’s people
22. The “blood of the lamb” – reinterpreted by Christians as the blood of Christ – delivers those in the community from the power of evil
23. Christians are liberated from the power of evil and are therefore a new kind of community
24. It is inconsistent, therefore, for the Corinthian Christians to allow a person under the power of evil to continue in the community as if the community condones such evil

5:9-13

25. Paul is not suggesting that Christians refrain from relationships with “sinners” who are not Christian – to do so would mean total withdrawal from the world!
26. Indeed, Christians are to live in the world but not be of the world
27. The “mission field” as it were is the sinful world that Jesus came to save, but it cannot be saved if those who come end up being changed by the world rather than the other way around!
28. The church is meant to be a new and different kind of society by whose presence the rest of society is transformed

Questions for Your Life Today

- A. How can the church today become more proactive and redemptive in calling its individual members to lives of holiness?
- B. How can we fight the tendency toward moral and ethical laxity in ourselves that is willing to excuse or overlook everyone’s sinfulness?
- C. What price is paid when the church tolerates behavior that damages or destroys authentic relationships and life-giving community?
- D. In what ways does the Church maintain its distinct identity from the rest of the world? And in what ways is the Church indistinguishable from the world around it?

Notes by The Rev. Dr. Jack Baca, Senior Pastor, The Village Church, Rancho Santa Fe, California

Resources:

- Interpretation Commentary on First Corinthians, Richard B. Hays, John Knox Press, Louisville, Kentucky, 1997
- Interpretation Commentary on Second Corinthians, Ernest Best, John Knox Press, Louisville, Kentucky, 1987
- The Bible Speaks Today: The Message of I Corinthians – Life in the Local Church, David Prior, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, Illinois, 1985
- The Bible Speaks Today: The Message of 2 Corinthians – Power in Weakness, Paul Barnett, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, Illinois, 1988
- The Communicator’s Commentary, 1, 2 Corinthians, Kenneth L. Chafin, Word Books, Waco, Texas, 1985