

STUDY ON THE BOOK OF CORINTHIANS

First Corinthians – Chapter 4 & 5

Chapter 4

“Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required in stewards that one be found faithful. But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. For I know of nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord. Therefore, judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one’s praise will come from God.” (vv1-5)

Paul, in this chapter, decided to first re-introduce himself as a servant of Christ and as a steward of the mysteries of God. He is not the leader of factions or divisions as the church in Corinth had presented themselves but one who is authentic in his calling and the representation of the gospel. The Passion Translation puts verse 1 as:

“So, then you must perceive us—not as leaders of factions, but as servants of the Anointed One, those who have been entrusted with God’s mysteries.” (v1 TPT)

To buttress his point further, Paul said as a steward of God that:

- It is required in stewards that they should be found faithful. Paul was not just speaking about himself but all those who are stewards of God i.e. all of us.
- The faithfulness of stewards is judged by the Lord. Paul is saying I am not an “eye-service” person. I don’t care who judges me in the natural as it is the Lord who judges me. The same should be said of all those who will serve God faithfully as stewards.
- Each stewards praise will come from the Lord. God will bring to light hidden things, motives and heart-purpose of whatever we do. Beloved, let your praise come from the Lord.

Paul finally nails the point to the believers in Corinth that are consumed with division and esteems one minister of the gospel above another and taking sides (which do not exist).

“...It is futile to move beyond what is written in the Scriptures and be inflated with self-importance by following and promoting one leader in competition with another. For what makes a distinction between you and someone else? And what do you have that grace has not given you? And if you received it as a gift, why do you boast as though there is something special about you?” (vv6-7 TPT)

The key question in Paul statement is worth emphasising: “what do you have that grace has not given you? If you receive it as a gift, then why boast as if there is something special about you?”

Paul goes on to address the attitude of pride, arrogance and sense of self-fulfilment in the church in Corinth by speaking to their conscience in ways that might touch them.

“We are fools for Christ’s sake, but you are wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are distinguished, but we are dishonoured! To the present hour we both hunger and thirst, and we are poorly clothed, and beaten, and homeless. And we labour, working with our own hands. Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure; being defamed, we entreat. We have been made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things until now.” (vv10-13)

Some will call this reverse psychology. Paul was speaking to the hearts of these carnal and insensitive believers. He was speaking as a father to these group of Christians.

“I’m not writing this to embarrass you or to shame you, but to correct you as the children I love. For although you could have countless babysitters in Christ telling you what you’re doing wrong, you don’t have many fathers who correct you in love. But I’m a true father to you...” (vv14-15 TPT)

This is Paul’s heart cry... Imitate me! *“Therefore, I urge you, imitate me.” (v16)*

- In what way was Paul encouraging these believers to imitate him?
- How do we imitate Paul today?

Paul finally made clear once again how to reveal the kingdom of God. It is not in words or eloquence but in power and the demonstration thereof. If these Christians claim to belong to and mature in the kingdom of God, it is not revealed in words but the demonstration of power:

“For the kingdom of God is not in word but in power.” (v20)

Chapter 5

At this point, Paul moved on from addressing the divisions among the church in Corinth to something even worse – sexual immorality.

“It’s been widely reported that there is gross sexual immorality among you—the kind of immorality that’s so revolting it’s not even tolerated by the social norms of unbelievers. Are you proud of the fact that one of your men is having sex with his stepmother? Shouldn’t this heart-breaking scandal bring you to your knees in tears? You must remove the offender from among you!” (vv1-2 TPT)

In this church, they condone and would not condemn the action of one of the men in fellowship. He was having sexual relationship with his stepmother. This was the type of action that Reuben engaged in that his father eventually cursed him.

- Would it be safe to conclude that this is just an extreme example of other type of sexual sins within this church or fellowship?
- What do you think Paul means by saying “you must remove the offender from among you”?

Paul has already judged this person already. At this point, Paul is not asking the church leaders to investigate but was instructing the church to cast out this person:

“So call a meeting, and when you gather together in the name of our Lord Jesus, and you know my spirit is present with you in the infinite power of our Lord Jesus, release this man over to Satan for the destruction of his rebellious flesh, in hope that his spirit may be rescued and restored in the day of the Lord” (vv4-5 TPT)

- Would you consider this harsh? How would you have wanted this handled?

Dealing with sinful brother or sister

“Brothers, if anyone is caught in any sin, you who are spiritual [that is, you who are responsive to the guidance of the Spirit] are to restore such a person in a spirit of gentleness [not with a sense of superiority or self-righteousness], keeping a watchful eye on yourself, so that you are not tempted as well.” (Galatians 6:1 AMP)

“If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens and pays attention to you, you have won back your brother. But if he does not listen, take along with you one or two others, so that every word may be confirmed by the testimony of two or three witnesses. If he pays no attention to them [refusing to listen and obey], tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile (unbeliever) and a tax collector.” (Matthew 18:15-17 AMP)

Steps to Correction:

- Private Correction
- Correction before 2 or 3 witnesses
- Church Correction
- Condemnation

The church of God is the highest level of correction that exist on earth on behalf of God. If the church of God corrects and the person still refuses, then such a person is cast out to the devil for a season so the person (brother or sister) can hopefully, come to repentance and hence restored.

At this point, Paul was at the last stage and asked the church to gather and cast this dude out.

Tolerance of sin!

“Boasting over your tolerance of sin is inappropriate. Don’t you understand that even a small compromise with sin permeates the entire fellowship, just as a little leaven permeates a batch of dough? So, remove every trace of your “leaven” of compromise with sin so that you might become new and pure again...” (vv6-7 TPT)

Whether in our personal life or as a church, when we tolerate compromise...we lose the ability to determine when compromise has gone too far. This statement that Paul made reveals how it all started. Possibly, a little lust was overlooked then fornication was permitted; perhaps adultery etc... We cannot fully tell but their tolerance of sin became the bed whereby all sinful desires had a place to grow.

Lost Letter

“I wrote you in my previous letter asking you not to associate with those who practice sexual immorality.” (v9 TPT)

Paul is referring to a previous letter to the Corinthians, known as the lost letter, because a manuscript has never been found. In light of this, the letter to the Corinthians should have been three letters.

Based on verse 9, it appears Paul had dealt with this issue of immorality before with this church but nothing seemed to have been done about it.

Same Sin – Different Response (Believer v Unbeliever)

“Yet I certainly did not mean with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reveller, or a drunkard, or an extortioner—not even to eat with such a person. For what have I to do with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside? But those who are outside God judges. Therefore “put away from yourselves the evil person.”” (vv10-12)

Paul is saying that it is ok to relate with the sexual immoral people of this world but for anyone who calls himself a brother (or herself as sister) and is sexually immoral – do not keep company with such a person or even, as much as eat with that person.

His conclusion is this: PUT AWAY FROM YOURSELVES THE EVIL PERSON!

The Psalmist warns us:

“When you saw a thief, you consented with him, and have been a partaker with adulterers.” (Psalm 50:18)

When it comes to sin – especially financial and sexual sin, we cannot play neutral when you know so it is not recorded against you that you consented with a thief and you are a partaker with adulterers.