

## I CORINTHIANS

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to I Corinthians chapter 4 as we continue our study through the Word of God.

We are going to see tonight that before Paul deals with some of the problems within the Corinthian church, he is going to explain what a true servant of God, a true minister of God is all about. And the idea is that if the leaders are servants, then the people are servants also and should reflect that in their lives, the nature of Jesus.

Remember what Jesus said in Mark 10:45, **“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”**

Thus, if Jesus, the Creator of heaven and earth, God Almighty came to serve, then we as His disciples should do the same.

But remember the divisions that were going on in the church as people sided with Paul, some with Apollos and others with Cephas, and even some with Christ. Which sounds great, but it was meaningless because their heart was not right.

Now you might not see this as a big deal, this name dropping to make yourself popular, make yourself impressive to others, but it is, and it is still happening today. Let me show you what I mean. We are told,

In the spring of 2013 a debut crime fiction novel from a writer by the name of Robert Galbraith hit the shelves. The book received generally positive reviews but experienced modest sales. Over its first three months it sold 8,500 copies. By the summer of 2013, sales had dipped significantly.

During the week of July 7, the book sold just forty-three copies. How then did *The Cuckoo's Calling* make the sudden jump to the #1 best-selling book in the US and the UK? How did it jump from forty-three copies during the week of July 7 to 17,662 copies during the week of July 14? How did a book that was sitting comfortably at 4,709<sup>th</sup> on Amazon's best-seller list immediately jump to first place?

It was revealed that Robert Galbraith was a pseudonym for J. K. Rowling, the best-selling author of the Harry Potter series. Rowling was upset. She sued the law firm that had revealed her name and demanded that the law firm make a sizable donation to charity for their slipup.

We would like to think that our world is fair and does not evaluate people on the basis of their name, status, or position. But evaluation is a many-layered, multifaceted, almost impenetrable thing.

What is the difference between Galbraith and Rowling? Absolutely nothing but a name and a reputation.

- Stephen T. Um, I Corinthians – The Word of the Cross, p. 69

What an important lesson for us in that we should not exalt Christians or put them on some pedestal like they were god, because they are not. And Paul is going to address that here in our study this evening.

With that said, let's begin reading in I Corinthians chapter 4, starting in verse 1 and see what the Lord has for us this evening as we study through His Word.

**I CORINTHIANS 4****VERSES 1-2**

Look at what Paul is doing here. Remember back in I Corinthians 1:10-13 Paul said, **“Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe’s household, that there are contentions among you. Now I say this, that each of you says, “I am of Paul,” or “I am of Apollos,” or “I am of Cephas,” or “I am of Christ.” Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?”**

As the church in Corinth was taking sides, I guess they were saying, *“Our guy is the greatest!”* they were dividing the church.

And Paul picks up on that hard-hearted, selfish attitude here and is basically saying we are all servants of God and thus, why are you fighting over which slave is better?

Let me show you how Paul drives this point home so there is no confusion here.

First of all Paul speaks of **“servants”** and the word that Paul uses for **“servants”** is the Greek word HUPERETES (hoop-ay-ret’-ace) and it speaks of an under-oarsman or an under-rower.

These were the lowest galley slaves that sat in the bottom tier of the ship rowing. They followed the beat of the drum and the idea here is that we too are under-oarsmen or under-rowers following the beat, the direction that Jesus is setting for us.

From there we see Paul speak of “**stewards**” which is the Greek word OIKONOMOS (oy-kon-om’-os) and it speaks of a house-distributor or manager. It was a slave who was placed in control of the master’s house.

Clarke gives us this insight regarding this word, “The steward. . . was the master’s deputy in regulating the concerns of the family, providing food for the household, seeing it served out at proper times and seasons, and in proper quantities. He received all the cash, expended what was necessary for the support of the family, and kept exact accounts, for which he was obliged at certain times to lay before the master.”

Now, let me paraphrase what Paul is saying here in this verse. He is basically saying, “Hey guys, we are not the captains of the ship, we are galley slaves and under orders of the master. One slave is not better than another. We are slaves in the master’s house and we may be in charge of many things, but we are still slaves and report to our master. So we are all on the same level here, don’t exalt one above another, that is wrong!”

And what Paul said to the church in Corinth, he is saying to us as well. We are all servants of Christ. We may have different rolls in the body of Christ, but we are all servants under the direction of our Master, Jesus Christ! If we understand that it will help keep things in perspective for us.

Look at verse 2 again here in I Corinthians chapter 4, where Paul wrote, “**Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.**”

The Living Bible puts this verse like this, “**Now the most important thing about a servant is that he does just what his master tells him to.**”

Today we have lost sight of that. It is not about being faithful but how big is your church, how this and how that and it is all about success according to the world’s standards!

The quality that God is looking for in a good steward is not popularity, the most gifted, a person who has all kinds of degrees, the number of people in the church and-so-on.

God is looking for His servants to be faithful during the good times and during the storms that will come – not giving up!

Paul and the other church leaders, the other Apostles were faithful in distributing, sharing the mysteries of God, the truths of God! How sad it is today to see the pulpit being used for anything and everything except the Word of God.

One writer put it like this in what we see happening in regard to being faithful in distributing the Word of God. He wrote,

Some years ago I read a magazine interview of a certain well-known pastor. The gist of his statement was:

“I decided that the pulpit was no longer to be a teaching platform but an instrument of spiritual therapy. I no longer preach sermons; I create experiences. I don’t have time to write a systematic theology to give a solid theological basis for what I intuitively know. What I intuitively believe is right. Every sermon has to begin with the heart. If you ever hear me preaching a sermon against adultery, you’ll know what my problem is. If you ever hear me preaching a sermon about the coming of Jesus Christ, you’ll know that’s where I am heart wise. It so happens I’m not hung up on either of those areas so I’ve never preached a sermon on either one. I could not in print or in public deny the virgin birth of Christ or the physical resurrection of Jesus Christ or the return of Christ. But when I have something I can’t comprehend, I just don’t deal with it.”

- John MacArthur

How sad that is and yet, that was several years ago and now, things are much worse!

Please, please, please do not compromise or negate the Word of God but teach it faithfully.

My responsibility to you as a under-shepherd is to feed you and love you and if I don't feed you the Word of God you will be spiritually malnourished and sick, and it truly shows that I don't love you!

It is as Milton said, "The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed."

That is why I feel so passionately about the Word of God, it is living, and it is powerful and it is able to transform your lives, it will keep you spiritually healthy!

And I have seen over the years many drop out, stop serving and they were not faithful in the work that God has called them to do. Be faithful. You might not be noticed, applauded, or patted on the back. That's okay. Neither was Jeremiah!

#### VERSES 3-5

Now, as some read this, they go to Matthew 7:1-2, which says, "**Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.**"

And what they will do is say, "***Judge not brother!***" In other words, we can't judge anything because they believe it is wrong!

And yet, if you continue reading on in Matthew chapter 7 Jesus speaks of judging false doctrine, false teachers, false teaching. We are to judge that. He is speaking of not judging the heart!

And here in I Corinthians, Paul is not speaking of sin or false teachers and teaching, he in fact will deal with that.

Then what in the world is Paul speaking of? Paul is speaking of the matters of the heart, judging another person's motives, just as Jesus spoke of in Matthew!

You see, Paul knew of no serious sin that he committed but he also knew it was not the outward actions that would be judged at the Bema Seat of Christ but the motivation of his heart, which Paul knew himself that he could not even judge because his heart, like our heart is wicked, it is deceitful!

That is what we are told in Jeremiah 17:9-10, **“The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it? I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings.”**

I hope that makes sense to you because you will hear people speak of judging sin and false teaching and we should not be doing that. Of course we should but not the motives of a person's heart, only God can judge that!

#### VERSE 6

Paul is rebuking them here because of their pride. And Paul wanted the Corinthians to stop living or being guided by their own feelings or worldly opinions and be led by the Word of God and the Spirit of God, looking to godly men as examples for them.

Now the Corinthians had become puffed up in their walk, they were inflated, proud and Paul was trying to burst their bubble and have them live humble lives instead of saying, **“... ‘I am of Paul,’ and another, ‘I am of Apollos,’ are you not carnal?”** I Corinthians 3:4.

Make no mistake about it, pride is something that God looks down upon, in fact listen to what God has to say regarding what He hates.

In Proverbs 6:16-19 we are told, **“These six things the LORD hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him: A proud look, A lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood, A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that are swift in running to evil, A false witness who speaks lies, And one who sows discord among brethren.”**

What is first on the list? ***PRIDE!***

It is what brought Lucifer down and it is what will bring us down if we are not careful. Don't be puffed up, but humble yourself in the sight of the Lord and He will lift you up!

#### VERSE 7

That is a very good point! You see, the Corinthian's were proud, boastful, and arrogant and Paul tells them three things to evaluate themselves by.

First, yes, we are different, but we are different because God has made us that way, there is no room to boast in that.

Secondly, the gifts, the talents we have are not because we are so special, so smart, so talented, but God has graciously given them to us, and again there is no room for boasting in that.

And lastly, why are you glorifying in that which you have received, it is a gift of God, and there is no room for boasting in that.

In other words, ***“Since everything you are was given to you by God - why are you puffed up as if they were all your doing?”***



Folks, like it or not, we need to do a heart check-up on ourselves, asking the Lord to show us what is in our heart, what we need to let go and give to Him for it will get in our way if we don't.

Don't be prideful because it is all God's grace and thus, He should get the glory, the praise, not us!

Alex Halley, author of "Roots" had a plaque on the wall of his office that said, *"If you see a turtle on a fence post - you know it had some help!"*

Good point! Remember what Paul said, **"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."** Philippians 4:13. May we not forget that all that we do is done because of Christ working in us and through us for His glory and not our glory!

#### VERSES 8-13

Paul did not pull any punches with the Corinthians. He just spoke as he saw it. And what we see here is Paul is now contrasting the carnal Corinthians with the humble servants of God, and it is a very interesting comparison.

Paul, in a sarcastic way, is saying, *"Oh how wonderful it must be for you, you have it so well, things are just perfect for you, you are complete, perfect while the Apostles are beaten, persecuted, have absolutely nothing!"*

Do you see how evil pride can be, how evil self-righteousness can be?

You see, as they looked at things, they saw themselves as being spiritual based on their outward riches while the Apostles had nothing!

In fact, just the opposite is true. Paul warned Timothy **"Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution."** II Timothy 3:12.

Maybe the reason they lived at ease is that they were not living godly lives and thus, they looked just like the unsaved! The world did not come against them because they looked just like the world!

Today in the church we see the same attitude growing, one that equates worldliness with spirituality, materialism with being Godly and-so-on.

H. B. Barker warns, "It is positive disloyalty to seek our crown before the King gets his. Yet this is what some Christians at Corinth were doing. The apostles themselves were bearing the reproach of Christ. But the Corinthian Christians were 'rich' and 'honorable.' They were seeking a good time where their Lord and Master had such a hard time."

Folks, the idea that the life of a disciple of Christ is easy, is false and is one of the Devil. Look at the life of Paul and the other Apostles and see what they went through for their faith and those that came after them were no different.

We are in a spiritual battle that is played out in the flesh or the physical world and the life of a disciple is a life of serving in humility and it could even cost you your life!

To the Corinthians, Paul gives them a strong rebuke for their carnality, their pride, their self-righteousness.

For us, we are more spiritual than that and to show it we only want to be a little popular, we only want to be a little persecuted, we only want a little trouble, we want all the power of God without the cost!

God says give Me all of your life not just part of it and as hard as that may be at times, you will be blessed for before glorification there is always the cross!

VERSES 14-17

Paul was not trying to put them down but to warn them and reprove them so they would see their error, repent and grow in the Lord. Paul saw himself as their spiritual father, not the source of their salvation, for only God can do that, but the tool that God used to bring them into that relationship. Thus, Paul continues to look out for them as any good father would do.

But that is the problem. If you try to correct someone they get offended and distance themselves from you or leave.

I have seen this increase over the years and it is not a good thing. We are seeing Christians that just want to ignore sin, ignore false teachers and false teaching, and go on their merry way. And don't even think to correct them – ***“Judge not!”*** is what they may say! Paul corrected them, reprovved them for their error because he loved them and wanted them to see the danger that they were in.

And Paul does not stop there. Paul tells them to imitate him or mimic him as he follows the Lord.

Keep in mind that the church in Corinth felt they were spiritually strong, full, rich, in need of nothing and now Paul is saying to imitate him, a fool for Christ. One who is weak, dishonored, hungry, thirsty, poorly clothed, homeless, working to the point of exhaustion, reviled, persecuted and-so-on.

I know, you may be thinking, “Is there anyone else we could follow after?” because I am sure that is what some of them were thinking!

And Paul's response would be a very confident, ***“No, follow me, not because of all the things I have been going through and are going through but in spite of all these things for it is God who has sustained me and will sustain you in the work!”***

With this idea of following after Paul, Pastor Chuck Smith wrote,

If the whole church acted just like you would it get better or worse?

If the whole church gave like you would it be better off or worse off?

If the whole church served like you serve would it be better off or worse off?

If the whole church attended Bible studies like you would we have to start shutting them down for lack of attendance?

If the whole church attended prayer meetings like you would it be better off or worse off?

If the whole church supported missionaries like you would it be better off or worse off?

If the whole church witnessed to the lost like you how many would really hear the gospel or be lost for lack of truth?

- Pastor Chuck Smith

When people look at our lives, what are they seeing? They should be seeing Jesus!

When I first was saved I followed after my Pastor, Phil who was and is a very godly man and as a new Christian I wanted to be like him, to have that passion for the Lord.

And I caught what he had and I am so thankful that God brought him into my life and He still uses Pastor Phil mightily as an example of what a servant is all about.

The first time I met Phil was the first time I went to church and I saw this guy carrying all this stuff into the church, I thought it was the janitor or someone like that, but it was the pastor. The heart of a servant, the love for the Lord he showed me, and I pray that I am showing you!

To help them grow in the Lord and to get back on track, Paul's sends Timothy to them. Timothy was what we might call a troubleshooter as Paul sent him to churches that had problems to help them get back on track.

Paul trusted Timothy, they were like-minded in the faith, and what a comfort to him to have a man like that!

What was the passion of Paul? The Lord and showing the Lord to the people through the Word of God and that was the heart of Timothy. We again need people today who are faithful in service, in teaching the Word of God instead of going down roads that are dead ends and will be of no use to the people.

To encourage Timothy in the work that he was to do, Paul told him, **“I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.”** II Timothy 4:1-5.

Paul told Timothy not to give the people what they want but what they need, the Word of God and he was faithful in doing that!

Make no mistake about it, it can be difficult at times, but we need to continue on, not give up, even when the church itself comes against the work of God.

Listen to this from the diary of John Wesley and see how he forged ahead no matter the cost. And keep in mind, the church has always come against itself. This is not something that is new.

Listen to what we read from the diary of John Wesley and what he encountered. We are told,

Sunday, A.M., May 5 Preached in St. Anne's. Was asked not to come back anymore.

Sunday, P.M., May 5 Preached in St. John's. Deacons said, "Get out and stay out."

Sunday, A.M., May 12 Preached in St. Jude's. Can't go back there either.

Sunday, A.M., May 19 Preached in St. Somebody Else's. Deacons called special meeting and said I couldn't return.

Sunday, P.M., May 19 Preached on street. Kicked off street.

Sunday, A.M., May 26 Preached in meadow. Chased out of meadow as bull was turned loose during service.

Sunday, A.M., June 2 Preached out at the edge of town. Kicked off the highway.

Sunday, P.M., June 2 Afternoon, preached in a pasture. Ten thousand people came out to hear me.

- John Wesley

Never give up, never give in, continue doing the work of the Lord no matter what. And if you truly have your eyes on the Lord, nothing will stop you and we see that with Paul! He was not afraid to tell the truth because it was not his opinion, it was the Word of God!

#### VERSES 18-21

Amazingly, some Corinthians thought Paul was afraid to come to Corinth, which only made them more prideful.

But Paul wants them to understand that he is coming and now the ball is in their court, they can get back on track and deal with their sin and Paul will come to them in the spirit of gentleness.

Or, they can harden their hearts to what he has said and remain in their sin and Paul will come with the rod of correction.

Some say that is not love but what is not love is when someone is in sin and that is not dealt with, the so-called friend ignores it. Paul loved them and that is why he is telling them these things.

It is as Paul said in Hebrews 12:5-7, **“And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: ‘My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives.’ If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?”**

God will also deal with us as a loving Father, may we listen to Him and obey Him!

Now, as we move into I Corinthians chapter 5 keep in mind that what Paul has said is preparing the way for him to deal with some discipline that needed to happen in the church. And we will see that in the next two chapters of I Corinthians.

The church in Corinth was filled with sin and Paul is prepared to deal with it. In fact, as we will see in I Corinthians 5:9, he already had written to them about this sin in the church and they ignored the letter, they did not deal with the problem.

And as Paul hears that this is still going on, he now is going to deal with it.

## I CORINTHIANS 5

### VERSES 1-2

Look at what is taking place here. Pride had now allowed them to welcome sin into the church.

And I am not exaggerating when I say *SIN!* What we see here is a man who was having sexual relations with his father's wife, his stepmother!

We don't know if the father was dead and we don't know if this young man was married or not. But can you even imagine?

Now the Greek word that is used for "**sexual immorality**" is PORNEIA (por-ni'-ah) and it speaks of any kind of extra-marital sex.

Poole says this about this word, "The Scripture by this word comprehends all species of unlawful mixtures."

And Clarke tells us, it "must be understood in its utmost latitude of meaning, as implying all kinds of impurity."

Folks, this was not a one-night-stand, as wrong as that was. But this was an affair that continued on and he continued going to church.

How bad is this? First of all the Old Testament says this is wrong, (Leviticus 18:7-8, 29; Deuteronomy 22:30). In Leviticus 18 God attached the death penalty to this kind of sexual sin.

Also, even the unsaved saw this kind of behavior, this kind of relationship as being wrong, Roman law forbid it!

And the ancient Roman writer and statesman Cicero said this type of incest was an incredible crime and practically unheard of.



But for the Corinthians, they were proud of their tolerance, their liberty they had in Christ!

Sound familiar? It should, because we see the church today embrace homosexuality and all kinds of sexual sin as nothing and they are proud that they are accepting this in their church! God isn't!

Someone has said, ***“In this therapeutic age where the Church is viewed more as a support group than a holy temple confronting sin is rare and it is even rarer when it is public and ongoing and offensive. And the reason we give for not dealing with it is - ‘we just want to love people and none of us is perfect.’”***

That was the church in Corinth, they were proud of allowing this in their church. But Paul is not going to tolerate this sin because Paul knows that if this is not dealt with, if they refuse to purge this poison the church will grow weaker and weaker until it finally dies!

### VERSES 3-5

Paul is telling them that this letter represents him in regard to this issue, that he need not be there in person to deal with this issue.

In fact, he tells us that he has already made a judgment on this issue! Now some are taken back by that. How can he make such a judgment when he didn't even go and hear this man speak?

Because this man was in sin. This is not something to be debated but dealt with and Paul did exactly that!

Now we have talked about this already, but some still may be upset by what Paul did, judging this man, and say what Jesus said back in Matthew 7:1-2, **“Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.”**

Here’s the problem. This is just a way for people to justify their sin, their behavior but that is not what Jesus is speaking of. We are to judge sin!

First of all, make sure you come with the right motivation, the right heart attitude before you confront someone.

Secondly, as Warren Wiersbe said, “While Christians are not to judge one another’s motives or ministries, we are certainly expected to be honest about each other’s conduct.”

We are to keep each other accountable and when sin is seen, it needs to be dealt with or like a cancer it will permeate the body!

Also, we are to judge doctrine to make sure it lines up with the Word of God.

And look at what Paul’s solution to this problem is! Paul tells them to excommunicate this man, remove him from their fellowship, and hand him over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh!

Folks, there is a protection within the body of believers and when someone is excommunicated, they are out there on their own in Satan’s dominion.

The destruction of the flesh can mean the attacks of the enemy against their lives and as he gets beat up, you might say, that he would then come to his senses and repent and get right with God, stop the sin he was in.

You see, the idea is not damnation but restoration for God is interested in a person’s spirit for all flesh will eventually go back to the dust of the earth.

Of this Warren Wiersbe said, “Church discipline is not a group of ‘pious policemen’ out to catch a criminal. Rather, it is a group of broken-hearted brothers and sisters seeking to restore an erring member of the family.”

Now today, you try to correct someone and they leave and just go down the street to the next church. Or, people take them in and allow them to continue in their sin and there is no buffeting of their flesh and no need to repent and get right with God. I have seen this on more than one occasion and it is very sad.

Now, why doesn’t Paul rebuke the woman that was involved?

I believe it is because she was not saved and thus, she is not held to the same standards as those that are saved.

So this man was not only involved in this sexual sin, but he united himself to a woman who was not saved! And the church in Corinth was excited they were so tolerant! Be careful!

#### VERSES 6-8

The church in Corinth were proud of their tolerance but Paul shows them the foolishness of such behavior.

It would be like ignoring a tumor in your body, not getting it treated and boasting about your tolerance towards that cancer.

By doing that it will eventually grow and consume your body, destroying it!

That is what was happening in the Corinthian church and why it needed to be dealt with now!

But we think we know better than God, I guess. Let me show you what I mean with this story of a very intelligent man, a brilliant man, and yet, he let his wisdom destroy his life. We are told,

Arguably one of the great iconic figures of this generation for innovation and technology is Steve Jobs. Many might not be aware, but for Jobs technology was not one of his idols. He had a very healthy understanding and view of technology. His idol, however, according to the authorized biography by Walter Isakson, was food. Jobs was obsessed with food from a very early period.

So his entire life was dominated by an attachment to food. It's ironic because the symbol for Apple is also a fruit. Moreover, it affected all of his decisions. He had unusual diets that were influenced by the broader exploration of Eastern spirituality. . . .

In October 2003 he was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. What many might not be aware of is that Jobs had a rare type of pancreatic cancer, islet cancer. This form of cancer is slow-growing and is in most instances curable with prompt surgery to remove the tumor from the pancreas.

“To the horror of his friends and wife, Jobs decided not to have the surgery to remove the tumor, which was the only accepted medical approach. ‘I really didn’t want them to open up my body so I tried to see if a few other things would work,’ he told me years later with a hint of regret. Specifically he kept to a strict vegan diet, with large quantities of carrot and fruit juices.”

“To the regimen he added acupuncture, a variety of herbal remedies . . . he found on the internet or by consulting people around the country, including a psychic.”

“For a while he was under the sway of a doctor who operated a natural healing clinic in Southern California that stressed the use of organic herbs, juice fasts, frequent bowel cleansings, hydro therapy, and the expression of all negative feelings.” . . .

The problem for Jobs was both his unwillingness to submit to an external authority and his desire to trust his own internal approach.

- Stephen T. Um, I Corinthians – The Word of the Cross, pp. 84-85

How sad, something that could have been taken care of, because he did it his way, cost him his life.

And Paul is telling the Corinthians not to do it their way but God’s way and deal with the sin in the church, cut it out!

But tolerance was reigning there in Corinth as it is in churches today. If you don’t think so, let me share this with you. We are told,

Some years ago, I remember a Pastor inviting me to his church to give a testimony of how I became a Christian. As I walked up to the front of the church to give my testimony, I couldn’t help but think how sad it was in a way, to see only a handful of people in the congregation. Later when I spoke to the Pastor, he told me that many people were no longer attending the church for one particular reason they refused correction of their sinful ways and disliked the fact that he was confronting their unholy manner.

Many Christians today have become so relaxed about the word of God. Some have become so relaxed that they are even willing to accept that which the bible clearly defines as a sin. It seems as if it is no longer appealing to correct our fellow Christian brothers and sisters.

Some pastors have even refrained from preaching about such things like sexual immorality due to an increasing fear of people departing the church.

We are living in a culture that seeks to please man and not God. It seems we would much rather tell people exactly what they want to hear, rather than speak the truth in love. We choose to ignore issues that arise and just shove the problems under the rug and forget about them. It's no big deal anymore.

Why have so many Christians become so tolerant of sinful or immoral behavior in the church? Is this truly the way God has called us to live as Christians? We have slowly allowed for so many ungodly things to creep into the church and in many instances, we have failed to address these issues.

- <https://christiantoday.com.au/news/growing-tolerance-in-the-church.html>

God knows what He is talking about, we need to listen and not let sin reign in the church or in our own lives!

Now Paul looks at the feast of Passover. And at the feast of Passover all leaven was to be removed from your home.

Passover was a picture of what Jesus did for us, paid in full the penalty for our sins as the perfect sacrifice, as the Lamb of God who came to take away the sins of the world.

After Passover, the following day was the feast of Unleavened Bread, which ran for seven days, and once again no leaven was to be in the home.

In the Scriptures leaven is a type of sin and thus, the picture is that we are saved by Christ, cleansed from sin and we should then walk in that new life, not surrendering to sin or succumbing to it.

It is as Spurgeon said, “Salvation in sin is not possible, it must always be salvation from sin.”

And Paul is calling for them to live a life of holiness. The feast of Unleavened Bread speaks of our sanctification.

And Paul tells them to do this with “sincerity” and the idea with this word is this. It speaks of being without wax.

What does that mean? Back then they would do artwork with stone and marble and can you imagine, you are almost done and one more hit with the chisel and off comes the nose!

What are you going to do? You can’t start over. So you take some wax and melt it and put the nose back in place and it looks good.

The only problem is that when you took it home and placed it out in the sun, the wax would melt, and the nose would fall off.

Thus, in the stores they would have signs that read, “Without wax!” so you knew that the nose or whatever would not fall off in the sun when you got it home!

The point is this. Our lives are to be real, not fake! Live in sincerity!

Also, we are to live in “truth”!

We are to be following the Lord and His Word and not what we feel is right, which the Corinthian church was doing.

You see, in the end, there will be a lot of sincere people in hell. They were sincere in what they believed but they were wrong because it was not based in the truth of God’s Word!

VERSES 9-11

Paul is speaking of a previous letter he wrote to the church in Corinth dealing with this issue of sexual immorality and not fellowshiping with people that are involved in this kind of behavior.

Now, for some, they would isolate themselves from everyone who was immoral, but where are you going to run to, an island by yourself?

That is not what Paul is talking about and Paul explains this in I Corinthians 5:10-11.

As long as we are in the world, it is necessary for us to do business with unsaved people and have contact with them in our daily lives - which is what the Great Commission is all about, right? Of course it is. We are to go into all the world to share the good news with the lost.

But even then that doesn't mean we go to their house and watch things that are sexually immoral or that we cultivate close and intimate friendships with unbelievers. That is not at all what Paul is saying here.

Warren Wiersbe put it like this, "Christians are not to be *isolated*, but separated. We cannot avoid contact with sinners, but we can avoid contamination by sinners."

The problem today is that many in the church today do the exact opposite. They avoid the unsaved because of their behavior and have no problem fellowshiping with a sinning brother or sister in the Lord.

Please understand that it is not that we approve of the sin of the lost, but that is their nature, that is what comes natural to them, what else would you expect?

On the other hand, Christians should not live that way, and please understand this was not a one-time event, but a pattern of his life, he continued on in this sin.



Folks, as harsh as this may sound, a believer who is practicing sin we are not to be in fellowship with because that only encourages them to continue on in their sin.

For this man, we see in II Corinthians he does repent, and Paul tells the believers to welcome him back, that is how it is to be done.

We see this occur in II Corinthians 2:5-8 where Paul tells us, **“But if anyone has caused grief, he has not grieved me, but all of you to some extent - not to be too severe. This punishment which was inflicted by the majority is sufficient for such a man, so that, on the contrary, you ought rather to forgive and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow. Therefore I urge you to reaffirm your love to him.”**

The only reason Paul told them to welcome this man back into the fellowship is that he has repented and turned away from this sin. That is what is to take place. You see, not for damnation but for restoration!

### VERSES 12-13

Since this woman was not a believer, Paul says God will judge her, but we need to deal with the sin within the body of Christ or it will grow and affect the entire body of believers!

Here is what we are to do, and it is simple.

You *restore* the sinner when they repent.

You *remove* the person that causes division because they are the most dangerous to the health of a church. One who sows discord among brethren is an abomination in the eyes of God.

*Reconcile* with those you are having conflict with.

But we tend to do the exact opposite today.

We restore the person that causes divisions.

We remove the sinner without trying to help them to repent.

And we never reconcile with the person who's giving us trouble.

In Titus 3:10-11 we are told, "**Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned.**"

And in Romans 16:17 Paul said, "**Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.**"

I think that is clear and now you have to decide if you will listen to what the Lord is saying or not. That is what the Corinthians had before them!

Now, let me say this as well.

Please don't leave here thinking we must be perfect, were not!

In fact, the church is like a hospital where broken hearts are mended, where cancerous sin is removed.

But for those who harden their hearts to their sin, they must be removed until they repent and get right with God and then and only then can they be restored back into the fellowship of believers.

Let me leave you this evening with these thoughts regarding pride and ignorance of God's will.

Erdman put it this way, "They should have understood that the true glory of the Christian church consists not in the eloquence and gifts of its great teachers, but in the moral purity and the exemplary lives of its members." Exactly!

It is as Peter said, "**Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.**" I Peter 2:11-12.

May we not only listen to His Words but also heed them and apply them to our lives!