

STUDIES IN THE BOOK OF 1ST CORINTHIANS

Examining the Household of Faith

Being Complacent with Sin

1 Corinthians 5:1-8

I once was privy to information of a fallen pastor. I was so disturbed about the actions and cavalier attitude of this servant-leader, that I was forced to go to my spiritual mentor for advice. I will never forget his words, “Spiritual damage is always more dangerous than physical damage. Spiritual sickness is always more severe than physical sickness. Spiritual health is much more important than physical health.” He went on to challenge me to make sure that whatever I did that my ministry was characterized by intellect and integrity.

Sin is never the order of the day. It can never be taken lightly. The Bible says the wages of sin is death. Yet most of us treat it like a common cold and ignore the eternal death that it can ultimately lead to if it is left unchecked. The church at Corinth was known for some serious sins, but that was not the worst part of the story. The more serious concern for the apostle Paul was that it was allowed to linger amongst the believers. The sinners were neither challenged nor disciplined to change for the better. The culprits remained comfortable in their affliction. Paul is obviously upset by the cavalier attitude of the church.

An easy-going attitude to sin is always dangerous.

It is one thing to be spiritually immature and not be ready for the tough meat of the word. It is quite a different thing to be spiritually ignorant concerning fundamental matters such as gross sin and immorality. Paul cannot understand why this particular sin has allowed to go unchecked. A young man has married his father’s wife-his step-mother and they are regular members of the church at Corinth. This would be quite different if this were not a church that Paul had not personally planted. It would even be different if the foundation for this particular church were not Jesus Christ. And it would also be quite a different situation if this church were not in pride or boastful position, as if they had it all together. All of these particulars added up, were too much for the Apostle Paul to hold his tongue.

Paul is literally beside himself concerning this abomination that is allowed to continue in the church, where Jesus is supposed to be Lord. He is livid that incest is allowed to fester and grow among the membership at the church without recompense. Paul’s claim is that people of the world even know better than this. It is an awful commendation of the church that is operating in or being an enabler of sin that sinful people even know is immoral. Then to make matters even worse, this individual were seen or classified as “spiritual”, because any action done in the body was considered irrelevant and separate from the spirit man. This was the result of the erroneous teaching Paul was refuting throughout the book of 1 Corinthians.

Sin begets sin.

Paul wanted the people of Corinth to understand the fallacy in this type of thinking, but more importantly, his desire was to teach the Corinthians that even the smallest sin allowed to linger among the saints of God is potentially dangerous and even deadly. Sin and Satan never stay nice and neatly put in a reserved area. Whenever they are allowed to live and linger in the lives of individuals or even the life of a congregation they spread like an aggressive cancer and ultimately take over the host. This type of carnal Christian who is willingly overridden with gross immoral sin, with no signs of remorse can, hardly be called a Christian at all. This is not only a poor example to set for the younger members and newly converted followers of the way, it is also the worst thing the church can display in front of society, which is looking to the church for answers only to see the worse of the city openly and proudly attending the church. When sinners see saints (sinners saved by grace) sinning worse than sinners, it gives them no cause to stop sinning, or to start being saints. This was a poor witness not only for the church at Corinth, but for the whole body of Christ.

Paul had made up his mind that there was only one solution for this matter. The church needed to meet and agree that this sin had to stop or this member had to be treated like the sinner that he is and cast out of the assembly. This action had a two-fold purpose. First, it would send the proper message to those who were members of the congregation. That this type of behavior would not be tolerated and this erroneous teaching would come to an end that the body and spirit were separate entities. It would also show the world that the body of Christ is indeed separate and set apart from the world. But lastly, and most importantly, it would confront the evil spirit that was obviously dwelling in the man. It would give him an opportunity to repent and confess this evil that he was a part of and give him an opportunity to in fact, be saved.

Christian Discipline constrains our sinful desires and behaviors.

Is this not a good example of what is expedient for all of lives on an individual basis? Only you know which sins you are dealing with. There is good news and bad news when it comes down to your sin. The bad news is that if you allow your sin to go unchecked, no matter what it is or how significant you think that it is, it will continue to grow until it is something you can no longer control and even possibly will not be able to recognize. The good news is that every day we can go to God and confess any and all of our sins. We can ask God for the strength to abstain from all iniquities and unrighteousness. We have the ability to pray for God to keep our eyes, ears, and even our minds free from contamination. But we also have to do our part to guard ourselves from sinful activities that can invade our homes through the TV, radio, and the internet. If we will be faithful in that prayerful process, here is what God promises to do. If you confess your sin, God is faithful and just to forgive you of your sin and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness.