

1 Corinthians – Lesson 7

SECTION OUTLINE FOUR (1 CORINTHIANS 4)

Paul writes about the office and duties of a steward. A steward is a trusted servant whom the master has appointed to conduct his business matters in his absence.

I. THE CONTRASTS BETWEEN FAITHFUL AND FAITHLESS STEWARDS (4:1–13)

A. The faithless steward (4:6–8, 10b, 10d–10e)

1. This person is filled with pride (4:6–7).
2. This person is presumptuous (4:8).
3. This person is wise in his own eyes (4:10b).
4. This person is physically strong (4:10d).
5. This person is well thought of by the world (4:10e).

B. The faithful steward (4:1–5, 9–10a, 10c, 10f–13)

1. This person possesses a clear conscience (4:1–4).
2. This person does not judge others (4:5).
3. This person becomes a spectacle (4:9).
4. This person is written off as a fool (4:10a).
5. This person may be physically weak (4:10c).
6. This person is laughed at by the world (4:10f).
7. This person is often hungry, thirsty, and without warm clothes (4:11a).
8. This person is brutally treated and homeless (4:11b).
9. This person is acquainted with backbreaking labor (4:12a).
10. This person blesses his or her enemies (4:12b, 13a).
11. This person is looked upon as the world's garbage (4:13b).

II. THE COUNSEL TO THE FAITHFUL AND FAITHLESS STEWARDS (4:14–21)

A. Paul's appeal (4:14–16)

1. His reminder (4:14–15): The apostle reminds the Corinthian believers that he led them to Christ.
2. His request (4:16): "Follow my example and do as I do."

B. Paul's ambassador (4:17): He will soon be sending Timothy their way to assist them.

C. Paul's appearance (4:18–21): The apostle plans to visit them personally in the near future.¹

5 It is actually (ὅλως) reported *that there is sexual immorality* (πορνεία) among you, and such sexual immorality (πορνεία) as is not even named among the Gentiles (εἰθνος) —that a man has his father's (πατήρ) wife (γυνή)! 2 And you are puffed up (φυσιόω), and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed (εργον) might be taken away (ἐξαίρω) from among you. 3 For (γάρ) I indeed, as absent in body (σῶμα) but present in spirit (πνεῦμα), have already judged (κρίνω) (as though I were present) him who has so done this deed. 4 In the name (ὄνομα) of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together (συνάγω), along with my spirit (πνεῦμα), with the power (δύναμις) of our Lord Jesus Christ, 5 deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh (σάρξ), that his spirit (πνεῦμα) may be saved in the day (ἡμέρα) of the Lord Jesus.

¹ Willmington, H. L. (1999). The Outline Bible (1 Co 4). Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

6 Your glorying (καυχῆμα) is not good. Do you not know (οἶδα) that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? 7 Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For (γάρ) indeed Christ, our Passover (πάσχα), was sacrificed for us. 8 Therefore (ὥστε) let us keep the feast (ἐορτάζω), not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but (ἀλλά) with the unleavened *bread* of sincerity and truth.

5:1 – After spending four chapters dealing with sectarianism within the church at Corinth as he had heard from the household of Chloe (1:11), Paul abruptly introduces a new subject – sexual immorality (πορνεία – *por-nay'-ah*) – that will be the focus of the next two chapters. He begins: **It is actually reported.** The Greek word translated “actually” (ὅλως – *ho'-lohse*) literally means “completely” or “altogether”. It is used three out of its four times in the New Testament by Paul in this epistle (6:7; 15:29). The report Paul had heard was that there was sexual immorality in the church at Corinth. Sexual immorality was part of the Greek world as well as the larger pagan world. The word πορνεία originally meant going to a prostitute (πόρνη – *por'-nay*) but took on a broader meaning in the New Testament. Gordon Fee explains: “But the word had been picked up in Hellenistic Judaism, always pejoratively, to cover all extramarital sexual sins and aberrations, including homosexuality. It could also refer to any of these sins specifically, as it does here.”² The kind of sexual immorality present in the Corinthian church was not condoned by the pagans – condemned in both Greek and Roman law – incest: **that a man has his father’s wife!** This was forbidden under the old law and the difference in wording between the two verses in *Leviticus 18:7-8* makes it clear that the woman is not the man’s mother. We don’t know what has happened to the man’s father, but this is evidently the man’s stepmother. The verb “has” indicates this is an ongoing relationship. It is also probable that this woman was a pagan since no action is taken against her.

5:2 – Paul then continues his incredulity – **And you are puffed up!** He has already dealt with this issue of pride or being “puffed up” (φυσιώω – *foo-see-o'-o*) in 4:6, 18-19 but the Corinthians seem to be taking pride in having this incestuous man within their congregation. Paul says they ought to be mourning or grieving over such sin (*Ezra 10:6; Jeremiah 9:1-2*) as one grieves over death. If they had been grieving about such an egregious sin, they would have removed the offender from their midst.

5:3-5 – In contrast to the arrogant Corinthians who have done nothing about the incestuous man in their midst, Paul has already passed judgment on the matter. He explains that, although he is absent in the body, he is present in the spirit. Paul expresses a similar thought in *Colossians 2:5*. He couldn’t be with them presently but knew enough about the case that he could render judgment as an apostle on the man. Paul then gives instructions on how to handle the situation. When they are assembled (συνάγω – *soon-ahg'-o*) as a congregation, they are to take action against this man. They do so in the name of the Lord Jesus or by his authority, with the approval of the apostle Paul who is with them in spirit and with the power of the Lord Jesus. With such authority and power, they should not be hesitant to take action. The church in Corinth is to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of his flesh. To hand one over to Satan as expulsion from the church appears one other time – *1 Timothy 1:19-20* – as Paul delivers two men who have made shipwreck of the faith. (A similar statement is made in *Job 2:6*.)

² Fee, G. D. (1987). *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (p. 200). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

The man is turned back out into the world away from the care and nurture of the Lord's church. The purpose for this drastic action is for the destruction of the flesh. While some interesting theories have been developed as to what this means, it apparently has to do with the death of this man's fleshly desires and repentance. We can draw this conclusion since the object of this withdrawal of fellowship is so that his spirit will be saved in the day of the Lord – when the end has come, and it is time to face the judgment.

5:6 – Your glorying or boasting is not good. Paul has talked about boasting four times thus far in this letter using the verb **καυχάομαι** in 1:29, 31; 3:21; and 4:7 – used no other times in this epistle. Now he switches to the noun form (**καύχημα** – *kow'-kay-mah*) of this verb and will use it twice in chapter 9 – but that's all. There can be little doubt that Paul is referring to their boasting about the incestuous man from his rhetorical question: **Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?** This is the second of ten times Paul uses the phrase “do you not know” in this letter – first in 3:16. He uses this phrase to highlight things they should know. Paul's proverb about leaven is not from Jewish literature but is similar to our adage that one bad apple spoils the whole barrel. (He uses it also in *Galatians* 5:9.) Instead of packaged yeast, Paul is talking about leaven or what we know as “starter dough”. A bit of the last batch of dough is reserved and allowed to ferment. It is then added to a new batch of dough. That little bit of fermented dough is all that it takes to leaven the whole lump of new dough.

5:7-8 – Paul returns to imagery familiar in his own Jewish history – the Passover and the associated feast of unleavened bread. This cleansing or purging is still done by faithful Jews today. It seems very appropriate to use this analogy in association with the expulsion of the incestuous man. See *Exodus* 12:15, 17-19. Paul began this letter by recognizing the Corinthians as saints – sanctified – set aside by God and for God. When they became Christians, they became new creatures (*Romans* 6:4; *Galatians* 6:15; 2 *Corinthians* 5:17). Paul is now telling the Corinthians to “become what you are”. Get rid of the evil in your midst and be the new lump you are! This is known as *haggadah* (a telling) in Judaism. From the stories in the Torah, the Israelites or Jews could know the kind of people they were supposed to be. Haggadah tells God's people “who we are”. The Corinthians were a new lump, but they had to cleanse out the old leaven – just as all Jews did for the Passover and feast of unleavened bread. Paul beautifully frames this by giving the reason – Christ died for you! He is the Passover lamb (**πάσχα** – *pahs'-khah*). This Greek word appears 29 times in the New Testament but only three times outside the gospels. E.g., notice its use in *Luke* 22:7-8. (See also *Hebrews* 10:10 and 1 *Peter* 1:18-19.) Since Christ our Passover lamb has been sacrificed, Paul reaches a conclusion with two words in Greek: **ὥστε ἑορτάζω** (*hohse'-teh heh-or-tahd'-zo*) – **“Therefore, let us keep the feast.”** **ἑορτάζω** is found only here in the New Testament although it appears several times in the LXX such as *Exodus* 12:14. Here, in our text, it is in the present tense and reflects a continual observance. The sacrifice of our Lord should be ever before us shaping who we are. We celebrate the festival not with the old leaven of who we were – the leaven of malice and evil – but rather with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

9 I wrote (γράφω) **to you in my epistle** (ἐπιστολή) **not to keep company** (συναναμίγνυμι) **with sexually immoral people** (πόρνος). **10 Yet I certainly did not mean with the sexually immoral people** (πόρνος) **of this world** (κόσμος), or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world (κόσμος). **11 But now I have written** (γράφω) **to you not to keep company**

(συναναμίγνυμι) with anyone named a brother (ἀδελφός), who is sexually immoral (πόρνος), or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler (λοιδόρος), or a drunkard, or an extortioner—not even to eat with such a person.

12 For (γάρ) what *have I to do with judging* (κρίνω) those also who are outside? Do you not judge (κρίνω) those who are inside? **13** But those who are outside God judges (κρίνω). Therefore “put away (ἐξαίρω) *from yourselves the evil person* (πονηρός).”

5:9-10 – Paul now very abruptly announces that he had previously written to the church at Corinth. Of course, this letter (ἐπιστολή – *eh-peese-toe-lay*) is no longer extant. However, the apostle reminds the Corinthians and us of its contents. First, he comes right to the point of his previous letter – to not keep company with (συναναμίγνυμι – *soo-nah-nah-meeg'-noo-mee*) sexually immoral people. This Greek word translated “**to keep company**” literally means “to mix together with” and means “to mingle” or “to be in close association with”. This word appears only two other times in the New Testament – in verse 11 and 2 *Thessalonians* 3:14. Paul’s use of this word in the latter passage with regard to idlers/busybodies is useful to our understanding here. Gordon Fee summarizes this very well: “In 2 *Thessalonians* this prohibition occurs only as a last resort; that is, if the idlers/busybodies do not give heed to what is now a second warning (cf. 1 *Thess.* 4:11–12; 5:14), they are to be shunned in terms of close fellowship in the believing community. But even so, he adds, they are not to be treated as enemies, but as brothers.”³ Evidently, the church at Corinth had misunderstood Paul’s previous letter but it’s very probable they had some help in their misunderstanding by some of the boastful people (such as those in 4:18). The Corinthians had apparently concluded that Paul meant for them not to associate with any sexually immoral people which would prevent them from having contact with almost everybody in Corinth! Paul clarifies that he did not mean the sexually immoral of this world and then he adds the greedy, swindlers and idolaters. Perhaps he had included these in his previous letter and now mentions them because they are part of other issues he’s going to address (i.e., the idolaters in chapters 8-10 and the greedy and swindlers may have prompted the lawsuits in chapter 6). Paul concludes they would have to go out of the world if they couldn’t associate with these four types of people – and we would have to also!

5:11 – To clear up any ambiguity, Paul says he is now writing to tell them not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother and is guilty of these sins. While we all sin, Paul’s point seems to be one who persists in these sins as a way of life. To the four classifications of sinners listed in verse 10, Paul adds the reviler and the drunkard – maybe because these were problems in the Corinthian church. The Greek noun for reviler (λοιδόρος) is strictly a Pauline word in the New Testament – here and in 6:10. (Paul has just used the verb form [λοιδορέω] in 1 *Corinthians* 4:12.) When it comes to a brother in Christ – one who has been a part of this Christian community – who is guilty of continuing sexual immorality, greed, idolatry, reviling, drunkenness or swindling, Paul further defines what is meant by not associating with them: we’re not to even eat with them. This would be more than the Lord’s Supper and include common meals.

5:12-13 – As Paul concludes this section on what needs to be done with the incestuous man, he introduces verse 12 with an explanatory γάρ (“for”). He begins by asking a

³ Fee, G. D. (1987). *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (p. 222). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

rhetorical question about what he has to do with judging those outside? In effect, he is going back to the theme of their misunderstanding his previous letter and the people of the world in verse 10. Here he is equating “judging” with “not associating with” – a judgment of these people of the world would be a prelude to dissociation. But Paul says this is not feasible as long as we’re living on this earth. And this leads to his next rhetorical question which expects a positive answer: Do you not judge those who are inside? Some newer translations add the words “the church” to clarify the meaning of inside/outside. Once again, Gordon Fee provides some insight to these phrases: The words “the church” are not in the text, but are added for clarification. The language “outside” and “inside” belongs to Paul’s Jewish heritage. Jews applied it to Gentiles; Jesus himself used it to refer to those who were not his disciples (*Mark 4:11*). Paul applies it to non-Christians, whether Jews or Gentiles (cf. *1 Thessalonians 4:12*; *Colossians 4:5*).⁴ If they had not “misunderstood” Paul’s first letter, they would have realized they have a responsibility to judge those within their community – the church. Therefore, Paul summarizes in the last verse of the chapter: God will judge “those outside” the church or those in the world – their sins will not go unpunished. Then Paul instructs them to do as he had said in the second half of verse 2 and again in verse 7 with regard to leaven: Put away from yourselves the evil person. The word Paul uses here for “put away” (ἐξάιρω) appears only here and also verse 2 in the New Testament. However, this last phrase in verse 13 is almost an exact quote for the LXX in *Deuteronomy 17:7* (as well as *Deuteronomy 22:24* and *24:7*). The church cannot permit such flagrant sin within its members.

SECTION OUTLINE FIVE (1 CORINTHIANS 5)

Paul writes about church discipline.

I. THE NEED FOR DISCIPLINE (5:1): There is a terrible sin prevalent in the Corinthian church.

A. **The notoriousness of their sin** (5:1a): It is something so evil that even the heathen won’t permit it.

B. **The nature of their sin** (5:1b): A member is living in immorality with his own mother (or possibly stepmother).

II. THE REFUSAL TO DISCIPLINE (5:2): Due to pride and indifference, the church has not removed this man.

III. THE COMMAND TO DISCIPLINE (5:3–5): Paul orders the church to call a special meeting to resolve this issue.

A. **The authority** (5:3–4): He reminds them that the Savior has given authority to the local church.

B. **The action** (5:5)

1. What the church is to do (5:5a): They must hand this guilty man over to Satan.

⁴ Fee, G. D. (1987). *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (p. 226). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

2. Why the church is to do it (5:5b): This will hopefully bring him to repentance so that his spirit might be saved.

IV. THE REASONS FOR DISCIPLINE (5:5–8)

- A. **To bring the offender back to God** (This has already been seen— 5:5.)
- B. **To keep the offense from spreading in the church** (5:6–7): Thus, the church is to:
 - 1. Cut out the cancer (5:6–7a)
 - 2. Continue in the Savior (5:7b)
- C. **To keep the celebration of Christ, the Passover Lamb, pure and true** (5:8)

V. THE EXTENT OF DISCIPLINE (5:9–13)

- A. **This discipline involves only church members** (5:9–11).
 - 1. The church has no right to judge godless outsiders (5:9–10).
 - 2. The church has the responsibility to avoid godless outsiders (5:11).
- B. **The discipline involves all church members** (5:12–13).⁵

⁵ Willmington, H. L. (1999). The Outline Bible (1 Co 5). Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.