

Sunday School Lesson

I Corinthians 5-8: Be Careful; Sins Abound (November 17, 2024)

Introduction:

- Young church consisting of Jewish and Greek converts, many with pagan backgrounds
- Corinth had such an unsavory reputation that “to ‘Corinthianize’ was popular Greek for ‘go to the devil.’”¹
- Paul is a confirmed bachelor
- Letters written by Paul from Ephesus
- Written to address specific questions, but first six chapters address Paul’s concern for the conduct of the people and their hesitation to break from their old pagan ways.
- You can almost hear the list of questions Paul is responding to as each separate subject is addressed in a few sentences.
- Paul *strongly* promotes singleness and celibacy for various reasons.
- References in this letter imply that it is actually the *second* letter to the church.
- References in 2Corinthians to a “severe letter” – now lost – indicate that it is actually the *fourth* in the series of letters.
- Paul uses “brother” to mean a fellow believer, or “saints.”

Apparently Paul had done such a good job of convincing this congregation that their salvation was through free grace, the people thought they could do whatever they pleased and they would still be forgiven. Paul was horrified! “Salvation by grace is not the opportunity to sin without consequences.”² Paul wanted to quickly address these issues because he was well aware of the pressures put on this church by the materialistic and hedonistic environment surrounding them in their thriving metropolis. It is, therefore, no great surprise that this church had questions about morality. This letter is about the reformation of conduct.

Even though absent, I am with you in spirit

Incest (5:1-2)

- Paul was shocked: not even the pagans allow this.
- Paul was also shocked at the permissive attitude of the church.
- Illicit relations were proscribed long ago and documented by Moses. Leviticus 18:7-8.

¹ Quoted from Morris, *Tyndale*, p. 18.

² Rudolph, *The Bible Tour Guide*, Day 327.

⁷ *Do not dishonor your father by having sexual relations with your mother. She is your mother; do not have relations with her.*

⁸ *Do not have sexual relations with your father's wife; that would dishonor your father.*

- If this were the man's own mother, Paul would have said so, though it is not clear whether the woman was the man's current step-mother, or widowed or divorced from the father – not that it made any moral difference.
- Deliver the perpetrator to Satan (threaten to excommunicate or withdraw fellowship). This probably shocked the church. But, it could frighten him into reforming, and thus redeem him.

Duty to perform (5:6-8)

- Paul compares malice & evil to old leaven. Get rid of it before it contaminates the “whole lump” (congregation). You are better as unleavened bread of sincerity & truth.

Association with sinners (5:9-13)

- You can't avoid dealing with sinners (immoral, greedy, robbers, idolaters) in the world, but don't make ties with them.
- Avoid any like this who call themselves “brother” (hypocrites and not true converts)
- Don't judge them because you may have formerly been one of these, yourself, before your conversion. God will judge them.

Lawsuits (6:1-8)

- Greeks loved competition and debates. Legal arguments were as much for entertainment as for settling disputes. This was the background for many in the church.
- If you have a grievance, why would you take it before unrighteous (non-believer) judges?
- We believers will be judging the angles (v.3), can we not judge among ourselves?
- Even having a lawsuit is a defeat in the eyes of non-believers

- Paul was more concerned for the welfare of the church. His perspective was that you should find someone in the church to judge your case, and, failing that, accept your losses.

V. 6:12a *“All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful.”*

Chastity (6:13-20)

- *As food is meant for the stomach, the stomach is meant for food. Likewise your body is meant for the Lord, not for immorality, and the Lord for the body.* ¹⁴ *God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power.* ¹⁵ *Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never!* ¹⁶ *Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, “The two will become one flesh.”* ¹⁷ *But whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in spirit.*
- ¹⁸ *Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body.* ¹⁹ *Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own;* ²⁰ *you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.*
- Paul’s admonition is to eat healthy food & exercise; don’t eat or do things that stress or damage your heart/body. The human body as God’s creation, made to be united with Him in spirit. “You are not your own!” And, remembering that your body is supposed to be a temple for God, you are responsible for the care of your body.

Marriage (7:1-16)

- You are better off in chaste singlehood (“like me,” says Paul)
- If you can’t restrain yourself from temptation, then get married – this is a concession, not a command. Marriage is preferable to sexual immorality. One wife to one husband (“A husband’s duty to his wife precedes his obligations to parents and children; it is second only to his duty to God.”³)
- If you are single or widowed, then stay that way.
 - o If you can’t exercise self-control, then you should get re-married.

³ Harper Study Bible, footnotes, p. 1706

- Paul articulated God's opinion: believers should not divorce each other
- Paul's opinion, not God's, believers married to non-believers should not divorce their spouse because it is through the believer that their non-believing spouse is consecrated; otherwise their children would be unclean.
 - o Believers should not initiate a divorce.
 - o If the non-believing spouse wants a divorce, then let them go, "for God has called us to peace."

Status Quo (7:17-24)

- Don't worry whether you are circumcised or not.
 - o V.19-20: For neither circumcision (Jewish converts) counts for anything nor uncircumcision (Greek converts), but keeping the commandments of God. Everyone should remain in the state in which he was called.
- If you were free when called, then good.
- If you were a slave when called, that's okay, too
 - o If you are a slave and have an opportunity for freedom, then go for it.
- You are ALL now slaves of Christ

Counsel to the Unmarried (7:25-40)

- Back to marriage: Paul's opinion – due to *the present distress* – if you are married, don't try to separate. If you are single, then don't get married.
- Unmarried men and women are anxious about affairs of the Lord.
- The interests of married men and women are divided between worldly affairs and those of the Lord.
- V. 35 *"I want to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord."*
- Getting married is not a sin, but, "So then, he who marries his betrothed does right, but he who does not marry her does better." v. 38
- A widow can remarry, but, *"In my judgment, she is happier if she stays as she is—and I think that I, too, have the Spirit of God."* v. 40.

Food Offered to Idols (8:1-13)

- We know there is only one God; the rest are inanimate, insignificant idols.
- Since idols are harmless, any offering incantation is also harmless and does not affect, or alter, the sacrificial object.

- Therefore, you can safely eat anything that was offered to an idol.
- HOWEVER, not everyone has this same knowledge as you and this may become a stumbling block for them. So, be careful that you do not mislead a person of weaker faith by
 - What you eat
 - Where you eat (as in an idol's temple)

Summary:

How are the people supposed to properly prepare/rebuild their church? Read **1Corinthians 5:6-8**.

What is this yeast? Read **Luke 12:1**.

Dr. Chafin observed that a church will adjust to what it will tolerate. So, what are the people to do? _____

An effective Christian life does not have to be a long list of “don’ts;” it can be hugely satisfying, gratifying, and rewarding.

References:

1. Asbury Bible Commentary (on line), <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search>
2. Chafin, Kenneth L., Mastering The New Testament: 1, 2 Corinthians, Lloyd Ogilvie, General Editor, Word Publishing, Dallas, TX, 1985, pp. 1-22, 60-86.
3. Harper Study Bible, Revised Standard Version, Zondervan Bible Publishers, Grand Rapids, MI, 1985.
4. Morris, Leon, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: 1 Corinthians, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI, 1985, pp. 1-34, 71-101.
5. NRSV Bible on-line: <http://www.devotions.net/bible/00bible.htm>
6. Rudolph, Rev. Kevin, The Bible Tour Guide, Rich Publishing Co, Houston, TX, Day 327.