

## Disassociation and Excommunication Are Severe But Necessary

1 Corinthians 5:9-13

*This portion comes at the following point in the outline.*

- II. Paul's response to reports of division (1:10-6:20).
  - A. A church divided, internally and against Paul (1:10-4:21).
  - B. Sexual immorality and litigation: how Paul's authority, the gospel, and the wisdom of God apply to real issues (5:1-6:20).
    1. The incestuous man (5:1-13).
    2. Lawsuits against each other (6:1-11).
    3. Sexual immorality with prostitutes (6:12-20).

### Introduction

*Paul's message to the Corinthians in this chapter is to decisively deal with the man who is involved in continued sexual sin with his stepmother, for the good of the church, and for his good too. In these last verses, he emphasizes the facet of disassociating from professing Christians who persist in similar or other sins.*

### Verses

<sup>9</sup>I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people - <sup>10</sup>not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. <sup>11</sup>But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler - not even to eat with such a one. <sup>12</sup>For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? <sup>13</sup>God judges those outside. "Purge the evil person from among you."

### Questions

1. General.
  - a. What are your initial observations, thoughts, or questions about the passage?
  - b. How would you briefly describe the passage?
    - It is necessary, for the good of the church and the sinner, for the church to excommunicate and disassociate from one who continues in unrepentant and grievous sin.
2. Specific Verses.
  - a. To what is Paul referring in verse 9, and why is this relevant to the matter of the sexually immoral man?
    - Paul has written a previous letter to the Corinthians, and told them to not associate with sexually immoral people, and something merited this previous admonition. So the current issue seems to indicate the continued prevalence of having to deal with situations involving sexual immorality in the church, particularly keeping in mind his clarification in the next verses.
    - This, as already indicated, relates to the purity of the church body, and to the reality of church discipline (Mt. 18:17 - If he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.). It also speaks to each individual not being negatively influenced by this type of sin in someone who claims to be a Christian.
  - b. How does Paul clarify his previous admonition in verse 10, and what does this indicate?

- He's not referring to not associating with unbelievers who are sexually immoral, or marked by other sins like greed, swindling, or idolatry. His reason is that it would be impossible to in our daily living totally keep away from anyone who sins like this (or anything else).
- There are a couple of important implications relating to this. One is that this speaks to the realm of evangelism. We are called to shine the light of the gospel into a sinful world (Mt. 5:16 - Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.), as God will use that to either bring people to himself or reveal their wickedness (2 Co. 2:16 - To one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life.). Simultaneously, we must guard ourselves to not be drawn into these sins, even as we are in incidental or intentional contact with unbelievers (2 Co. 6:14 - What partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?).

c. How does Paul further clarify his admonition in verse 11?

- He explains that they are not to associate with someone who claims to be a Christian, yet is involved in sin, illustrated by several examples. They're to not even have a meal with this person. This seems to imply someone who continues in this, and has been disciplined, when we compare it to Matthew 18:15-17.
- The excommunication is purposefully extensive and severe. The purpose, already stated in verse 5, is restoration (You are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.), as this person is "shunned" by those who love him but realize the severity of this sin. This is stating that the church family ties have been broken, and it's a big deal. This disassociation also is for the good of individual believers and the testimony of the church (Vs. 7 - Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened.). This also seems to imply that any contact at all with someone in this situation is within the context of the excommunication.

d. In verse 12, Paul stresses again that this doesn't apply to contact with the unbelievers out in the world. That's not his realm of authority, or the church's, at least related to this matter. But it is the church's business, and it's very serious, to appropriately judge those within the church. He says at the beginning of verse 13 that God is the One Who judges unbelievers. What does this indicate to us about the role of the church in our lives?

- God has designed it that we have responsibilities, expectations, accountability, etc. in our local church.

e. In the second part of verse 13, Paul closes this matter by repeating his exhortation of the chapter. What does he say and why does he say it?

- He says to "purge the evil person from among [them]." This is a quote from Deuteronomy 13:5, which discusses the necessity of putting to death false prophets for the sake of the holiness of God's people. They are to take decisive action, for his good, and for the good of the church body. The seriousness of this can't be overemphasized.

3. Final thoughts and application

a. Do you have any final observations, comments, or questions?

b. How do you think you can apply the truths of this passage to your life?

- There are several facets of our lives, and of church life, that this addresses: Church discipline. The purity and testimony of the church. How we relate to professing Christians who continue in sin and the necessity and purpose of disassociation. Relating to unbelievers and implications of this. Indirectly, the depth of association that should be present in the local church. The magnitude of personal sin.