

**PREFACE**

In **vv1-5** of Chapter Five, Paul addresses head-on the scandalous situation in the Corinthian church regarding the man who is sleeping with, and probably living with, his step-mother—considered incest, not just by the Lord God, but by even the pagan society in which the church dwells. Paul states unequivocally that the man should be removed from the communion of the church.

In **vv6-8**, the apostle gives the reasoning behind his injunction: leaven, representing “malice and wickedness,” if left alone will corrupt that which is unleavened, representing “sincerity and truth.” In Christ, because of His sacrifice, the church is indeed unleavened; to remain so they must guard their purity by removing the “leaven” of sin—that is, the sexually immoral behavior of the man.

Now, in **vv9-13**, Paul, based on the correspondence he has received from the church, must “clarify” what he means by not associating with immoral people such as the incestuous church member.

**Sidebar:** I place “clarify” in scare quotes because many scholars are of the opinion that this was less an honest misunderstanding than a cynical means by which to argue the point. More than one commentator has posited that the Corinthians were reluctant to discipline the man because he was a prominent—influential or wealthy—member of the church.

**Sidebar:** With the evidence at our disposal we can assume at least three, and possibly four, letters from Paul to the church in Corinth—only two of which are extant and in the canon. The correspondence can be plausibly reconstructed thus:

1. Paul visits Corinth the first time (Acts 18), then departs.
2. The Corinthians (possibly) write him a letter seeking clarification on a few subjects; this letter probably included questions regarding sexual immorality.
3. In Paul’s first letter to them, to which he refers in v9 (not extant; written while he was in Ephesus), he tells them “not to associate with immoral people.”
4. They either misinterpret or reject his admonition, sending him (by way of Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, 16:15-17) a second letter which would seem to be, based on the evidence in his reply, in places argumentative, even combative.
5. Paul answers this letter with a second letter to them—the epistle we know as First Corinthians.

## Read 1 Corinthians 5:9-13.

v9

*I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people;*

**associate with, company with** = *synanamignysthai* = from <G4862> (sun) and a compound of <G303> (ana) and <G3396> (mignumi); **to mix up together**, i.e. (figurative) associate with :- (have, keep) company (with). **That is, more than just occasionally spending time with someone, but being identified with someone as part of the same group.** If I wear a red fez that identifies me as a Shriner, then others will assume I subscribe to the philosophies and dictates of that group. At the same time, if they are familiar with my character, they will assume that my character and way of life is acceptable to the Shriners—because I am “in company with” the Shriners.

**immoral people, sexually immoral people, fornicators<sup>kiv</sup>, whoremongers<sup>ylt</sup>** =  *pornos* = from *pernemi* (to sell; akin to the base of <G4097> (piprasko)); a (male) prostitute (as venal), i.e. (by analogy) a debauchee (libertine) :- fornicator, whoremonger. **In original secular Greek and early OT, this word group generally referred to prostitution, but in later Jewish rabbinical language, as well as usage in the NT epistles, referred not just to prostitution, but any kind of extra-marital sexual intercourse—including incest.**

Paul’s use of these two words reveals why it is so important for the church today to stand firm against this society’s insistence—coming predominantly from the left—on eliminating the right of religious institutions to define their membership. If a church can be legally forced to include individuals whose very lives stand against biblical principles, then the church is doomed as a distinct oasis of righteousness in a desert of moral ambiguity.

This war is being waged not just in the courts, but through an incessant media campaign that is impossible to avoid. As we saw in the sad illustration of my old school chum’s church in eastern Iowa, this philosophy of moral ambiguity is being eagerly *embraced* by many churches and even entire denominations.

- God’s word says that women are not “to teach or exercise authority over a man” (1 Timothy 2:12), yet there are many churches today that have women pastors.
- God’s word says that homosexuality is an abomination that, in the Mosaic Law, was punishable by death (Leviticus 20:13). Today there are churches that cater specifically to gay people, and many that welcome them.
- Many churches today do not hold their membership to a specific belief system, welcoming all whether or not they are in agreement with biblical truth.

All this renders the church impotent—exactly their goal.

## w10-11

Whether through ignorance, sheer obstinacy, or honest misunderstanding, the Corinthians wanted Paul to clarify what he meant for them not to “associate with immoral people.” And in his answer he moves well beyond just the sexually immoral transgressor.

*I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world...for then you would have to go out of the world.*

Let’s look first at his answer before we address his adding in of the other types of ne’er-do-wells. When you think about it, it is a bit of a stretch to believe that the recipients of his previous letter innocently misunderstood what Paul wrote about this. Even if they came back with remarks implied by what he writes here—that to be obedient to this they would have to leave this world all together—then what were they doing “boasting” about their association with the immoral man who was *in their midst*? No, the logical conclusion is that they knew exactly what he meant and were just being difficult.

**Sidebar:** It is possible the apostle is employing some dark humor here. In a number of ancient writings this phrase “go out of [or leave] this world” is a reference to death. He might be saying, *If you think that you must avoid all the sexually immoral, you will have to die and go to heaven to do so.* (David Garland)

Shortly before His arrest, Jesus prayed to His Father regarding His disciples,

“I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one.” (John 17:14-15)

After Jesus rid the man called Legion of the many demons that possessed him, he was, not surprisingly, grateful. He asked if he might accompany Jesus, but the Lord replied, *Go hide in a cave for the rest of your life.* No, He said,

“Return to your house and describe what great things God has done for you.” So he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done for him. (Luke 8:39)

We are not called to be hermits in a cave, to be isolated monks, separated from the world. We are to be *in* this world—just not *of* it.

*But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person... —not even to eat with such a one.*

In v11 Paul reminds the Corinthians of what he *did* say. Gordon Fee summarizes this nicely.

*Fee:* Paul is not advocating that only the sinless can be members of the Christian community; rather, he is concerned about those who persist in the very activities from which they have been freed through the sacrifice of the Paschal Lamb (v7)... Because in Christ all things are new by the Spirit (2 Corinthians 5:14-17), those who belong to Christ must put off their former way of life (Colossians 3:5-11). Those who persist in that former way of life, *not meaning those who simply struggle with former sins*, essentially do not belong to this new community. By their own actions they have opted out; the community must distance itself from such people for its own sake. (emphasis added)

This break in association with the unrepentant offender was to be extended even to the sharing of meals; this certainly applied to the Lord's Supper (since they would not be in attendance to partake of that privilege), but could also extend to more social meals. "Eating together connoted more than friendliness in ancient culture; it created a social bond. When Christians ate together, it reinforced and confirmed the solidarity established by their shared confession of faith in Christ" (Garland).

*v10: or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters,*

*v11: or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler*

There are a number of "vice lists" in God's word; none are exhaustive. When we examine the brief list included here, we discover that it is not random; Paul is not just adding a few other vices to keep company with "sexual immorality."

If we combine those listed in v10 with those listed in v11, and remove the duplicates, we end up with the following list:

- sexually immoral
- the covetous and swindlers,
- idolaters,
- revilers, and
- drunkards.

What I want to point out is that each of these both fit into the context of this letter—either hearkening back to a topic already addressed, or setting up a topic to come—and tie back to transgressions mentioned in the Law that warranted exclusion from the community.

We will not take the time in class to examine each one of these in detail, but I have prepared a chart that shows these connections.

**See the hand-out at the end of these notes.**

The first column connects each of these vices to passages in this letter to the Corinthians, and the second column connects each back to a passage from the Law in Deuteronomy. And note: in each case in the Law, the penalty is not just excommunication, but death.

In addition, the case can be made for each of these added vices having a connection to the topic at hand: sexual immorality. For example, idolatry and fornication are associated with each other in Jewish thinking, and drunkenness and greed are associated with licentiousness in Greco-Roman thinking (Gowers in Garland).

### w12-13

In these last two verses, Paul wraps up not just this passage, but this section. I seldom bring out the structural details of any given passage, preferring to concentrate on *what is being said*, rather than the order in which it is said. But here I think pointing out the structure helps. These last two verses are presented in a quatrain (*stanza or poem of four lines*) of balanced pairs (AB/AB), the last line of which borrows from Deuteronomy 17:7, which is cited in the handout. Let's address these as pairs, rather than as verses.

*12a: For what have I to do with judging outsiders?*

*13a: But those who are outside, God judges.*

Referring back to the church's "misunderstanding" of his previous letter, Paul poses a rhetorical question, the answer to which is obviously "nothing." It is not within the church's purview or responsibility to judge those outside its communion. Why? God will handle that, thank you very much. In his own time—not least on The Day—the Lord God will judge the "quick and the dead."

*12b: Do you not judge those who are within the church?*

*13b: REMOVE THE WICKED MAN FROM AMONG YOURSELVES.*

Capping this paragraph with a concise summation, Paul states what the church's purview is: those *within* the church. Even if the offender is just a Christian in name only (v11, "any so-called brother"), the church must deal with him. Then in no uncertain terms Paul restates the verdict:

Put him out of the church!

# 1 Corinthians 5:9-13

Vice	1 Corinthians	The Law
<p><b>(sexual) immorality</b>  <i>a (male) prostitute (as venal), i.e. (by analogy) a debauchee (libertine) :- fornicator, whoremonger.</i></p>	Chapter Five	<p>Deuteronomy 22:20-22, 30                      “But if this charge is true, that the girl was not found a virgin, then they shall bring out the girl to the doorway of her father’s house, and the men of her city shall stone her to death because she has committed an act of folly in Israel by playing the harlot in her father’s house; thus you shall purge the evil from among you. If a man is found lying with a married woman, then both of them shall die, the man who lay with the woman, and the woman; thus you shall purge the evil from Israel.”                      “A man shall not take his father’s wife so that he will not uncover his father’s skirt.”</p>
<p><b>covetous &amp; swindlers</b>  <i>greedy and rapacious racketeers</i></p>	6:1-11 <i>suing in pagan courts</i>	<p>Deuteronomy 24:7                      “If a man is caught kidnapping any of his countrymen of the sons of Israel, and he deals with him violently or sells him, then that thief shall die; so you shall purge the evil from among you.”</p>
<p><b>idolaters</b>  <i>an image- (servant or) worshipper (literal or figurative) :- idolater.</i></p>	Chapters Eight to Ten	<p>Deuteronomy 17:2-7                      “If there is found in your midst, in any of your towns, which the Lord your God is giving you, a man or a woman who does what is evil in the sight of the Lord your God, by transgressing His covenant, and has gone and served other gods and worshiped them, or the sun or the moon or any of the heavenly host, which I have not commanded, and if it is told you and you have heard of it, then you shall inquire thoroughly. Behold, if it is true and the thing certain that this detestable thing has been done in Israel, then you shall bring out that man or that woman who has done this evil deed to your gates, that is, the man or the woman, and you shall stone them to death.”</p>
<p><b>reviler</b>  <i>malicious false witness causing dissension</i></p>	1:18 to 4:21	<p>Deuteronomy 19:15-19                      “A single witness shall not rise up against a man on account of any iniquity or any sin which he has committed; on the evidence of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed. If a malicious witness rises up against a man to accuse him of wrongdoing, then both the men who have the dispute shall stand before the Lord, before the priests and the judges who will be in office in those days. The judges shall investigate thoroughly, and if the witness is a false witness and he has accused his brother falsely, then you shall do to him just as he had intended to do to his brother. Thus you shall purge the evil from among you.”</p>
<p><b>drunkard</b>  <i>a sot; associated with idolatrous feasts</i></p>	10:7; 11:21	<p>Deuteronomy 21:20-21                      “They shall say to the elders of his city, ‘This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey us, he is a glutton and a drunkard.’ Then all the men of his city shall stone him to death; so you shall remove the evil from your midst, and all Israel will hear of it and fear.”</p>

