



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians

Chapter 5

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Introduction

- After dealing with the problem of division, St. Paul now addresses the problem of immorality (1)
- Rebuking them for being "puffed up" instead of mourning (2)
- St. Paul then excommunicates that person as a necessary step to help him in repentance (3-8)
- St. Paul concludes by explaining towards whom such action is to be taken, and describing how it is to be carried out in practice (9-13)

Immorality Defiles the Church (5:1-8)



- "It is reported," implies, that the Corinthians, though they "wrote" (1 Cor 7:1) to St. Paul on other points, gave him no information on this issue
- These latter matters reached the apostle indirectly (1 Cor 1:11)
- There was in the church a worse case than the Gentiles would condone; a man had taken his father's wife, his own step-mother
- This sort of incest was condemned by Greeks➤

Immorality Defiles the Church (5:1-8)



- In the face of such a scandal, you are still puffed up, instead of being humiliated and covered with a sense of shame
- Your duty was to manifest sorrow, and to take such steps that the evil doer by means of church discipline
- The early church mourned those who fell into grievous sins as dead, and if they repented, received then as risen from the dead

Immorality Defiles the Church (5:1-8)



- Though absent, yet with them in spirit, St. Paul judged the case as present, and commanded the church as a body to take action by withdrawal at once from the evil doer
- Excommunication ought not to be committed to one man's power, but must be done by the authority of church, after the matter is diligently examined
- Excommunication is by the authority of the Lord

Immorality Defiles the Church (5:1-8)



- It must be the act of the whole church (2 Cor 2:6)
- He will be present in spirit, since the act will be carrying out his command
- The act of excommunication for misdeeds, when administered according to the will of the Lord, is not merely man's decision, but will be executed by the power of the Lord
- To deliver unto Satan is to transfer from the kingdom of God to the prince of this world

Immorality Defiles the Church (5:1-8)



- Fleshly desires had caused the sin. These must be destroyed
- The humiliation of excommunication, the sense of one's lost condition, was well adapted to bring a repentance
- Salvation is the object of all true discipline, if carried out properly, it would bring repentance
- It was effective in this instance, as we learn from 2 Cor 2:6

Immorality Defiles the Church (5:1-8)



- Your boasting, in such a state of affairs, was unseemly
- As a little leavens the whole mass of dough, so one sinner sends a corrupting influence through the whole church (Gal 5:9)
- Let the leaven of impurity be removed, by putting out the fornicator, that the church may be pure from the impure leaven, or influence
- So, too, each one must cleanse his own heart

Immorality Defiles the Church (5:1-8)



- At the Passover, Jews were required to put all leaven from their houses (Ex 12:15)
- As we have a Paschal Lamb, slain for us, the church should cleanse out the leaven of sin
- It is always our duty to keep festival by casting out all leaven; either the old leaven of heathen vice, or of the leaven of wickedness or any sin
- Let us lead our whole life as it were a continual feast, honestly and uprightly

Immorality Must Be Judged (5:9-13)



- He had written an earlier letter which has not been preserved, probably a short one, to which reference is made
- The fornicator in the church must be shunned as an outcast, for the sake of the discipline
- He did not give directions concerning their conduct towards the heathen
- To apply the rule, it would require that the church have nothing whatever to do with the unconverted

Immorality Must Be Judged (5:9-13)



- Church members must not have social fellowship with a member who is guilty of the sins named
- Covetous: A greedy person, under the influence of passions, not only greedy for gain, but for self-indulgence
- Not to eat either at the Lord's table, or in friendly meals, which would imply a brotherly recognition
- It was not ours responsibly to judge the unbelievers

Immorality Must Be Judged (5:9-13)



- The authority of the church is over those who have been united with it. It can judge them
- The unconverted are left in the hands of God
- We are not asked to seek to inflict punishment on them but rather to go to them in the love of Christ to try to lead them to repentance
- A summary order to execute discipline upon the offender, an order that we know from the second letter was obeyed



Conclusion

- What was the nature of the immorality?
- What was the attitude of the church in this regard?
- Why does a church "deliver such a one to Satan"?
- Why should a church be diligent in exercising church discipline?
- How should we observe our "Passover"?
- Towards whom is church discipline to be administered?
- Who has the responsibility of judging whom?
- What expressions may help explain what it means to "deliver such a one to Satan"?