

The Challenge of Following Christ While Living in a Fallen Culture

1 Corinthians 5:1-13

Pastor Guy Gray

Living in a Fallen Culture

The culture of Corinth was a culture of extreme self focus, personal gratification and self indulgence of every conceivable kind. This approach to life was common throughout the ancient Roman Empire, but it seems it was especially prevalent at Corinth. Wherever this type of atmosphere is prevalent, sexual promiscuity will always become a major theme in society as well and so it was in Corinth. There was a virtual sexual free-for-all going on in Corinth. This is why the Book of Corinthians is so timely for our lives, for we are living in a culture much like the city of Corinth.

The Challenge of Following Christ—a Word for the Community of Jesus

Tragically, the values, attitudes and practices of the larger culture were prevailing in the community of Christ at Corinth. The attitudes and behaviors of many of the Christians at Corinth were exactly like those of the non Christians all around them—or even worse! The issue of sexual morality came into focus because someone in the church was indulging in a sexual practice considered questionable even by the liberal standards of Corinth—he was having sex with his father's wife. So Paul must speak to the issue of morality. There is no escaping it—our Christian faith must impact our morality. Please note carefully that the focus here is on the community of Jesus Christ. Paul is not telling the Christians at Corinth to go on a crusade of condemnation towards immoral people in the larger culture. Paul is talking to those who call themselves followers of Christ. This is a special word of challenge for the Community of Jesus Christ—the church.

The Trap of Tolerance and the Importance of Moral Boundaries

There are two problems addressed in our passage. One is the perverse sin of the man with his father's wife. The other is the larger issue—the attitude of "enlightened tolerance" that characterized the church community (see verses 2 and 6.) The church not only "overlooked" the sin, they were proud to do so. They wanted to be known as the church of tolerance, love and acceptance. In their effort to be that kind of church they threw out all moral boundaries. Maybe they thought that God didn't care about moral issues. Maybe they thought that the only moral issue that matters in Christianity is "love and unconditional acceptance." Maybe they thought that grace was going to cover it all anyway. Whatever they thought they were totally wrong! Paul reminds them that there are indeed moral boundaries and they really matter. They matter to each of us individually and they matter to the Christian community as a whole.

Nurturing and Protecting the Community of Christ

Radical measures are needed. Paul says that this man should be put out of fellowship (vs 2) handed over to Satan (vs 5) and expelled from the church community (verse 13.) It is called church discipline and it is intense! Why the extreme measures?

1. It's because this man is unrepentant and flaunting his lifestyle choice.
2. It's because these extreme measures might get through to him and help him come back to his senses.
3. It's because sin spreads like a cancer in the church community when it is both blatant and tolerated.

Paul wants them to remember that they are called out of the old life into a new life and identity in Christ. This is what the reference to Passover is all about (verses 6-8.) It is the story of Exodus as a model of the Christian life. It is freedom from slavery and a fallen culture—to know, love, follow and serve the LORD. The Church is to be a community of Christ followers living a new life. This new life can only be demonstrated by how we actually live—that means our moral choices are to be transformed. There are times in our life as a church when we must take action to protect the community of Christ, as difficult and unpopular as this may seem.

Relating to Those Inside and Those Outside the Church

Unfortunately Christians often take their concept of Biblical morality and apply it first and foremost to the fallen culture. Paul says we must focus on our own Christian community first and foremost when it comes to the issue of morality. As for those who don't claim to follow Christ, we should be reaching out to them, serving them, connecting with them to build relationships and share the love and truth of Christ. It is not up to us to enforce Biblical morality on the non Christian world. May the

Lord help us to get this right! May we be a community that answers the challenge of following Christ even while living in a fallen culture. May we, in the strength of faith and the power of the Cross begin to live transformed, to be more and more like Jesus.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

This week spend time in 1 Corinthians 5: 1-13.

As you read this passage, what strikes you? How is the LORD speaking into your life?

Culture, Christ, Community

The Corinthians seemed to be taking their moral cues more from the surrounding culture than from Christ and His Word. Is there an area in your life right now where you have become a bit lax or allowed culture to be your compass?

As far as you understand it, what was the problem with the kind of "tolerance" that was taking place in Corinth? Within the Community of Christ, is it "loving" to not have any moral boundaries? Why or why not?

How can immorality damage the community? How have you personally seen this in your Christian walk?

Coming Up...

TODAY

Women's Retreat

Sign up today in the Fellowship Hall!

FRIDAY 11/16

Friday Night Fellowship

7-9:00pm @ RWLG, It's movie night for all 4th & 5th graders. For more Information contact Lindsie at 699.2226 or lindsie@riverwest.org

SATURDAY 11/17

Ministry Prayer Time

8:00-9:00am @ RWLG, If you would like to take a more active role in the heart of our church through prayer, come join us during this amazing time of seeking & rejoicing in Gods plans for us as a church and community of believers. For more information contact Pastor Adam at 699.2226 or adam@riverwest.org

WEDNESDAY 11/21

Thanksgiving Eve Service

6:30-8:00pm @ RWLG, Join us for a special night of worship, fellowship & gratitude on the Eve of Thanksgiving.

SUNDAY 12/2

Introducing River West

7:00 @ RWLG, Want to know more about River West? Come have dinner & hear the story, the values & the vision of River West. For more information contact Pastor Adam at 699.2226 or adam@riverwest.org