

**VCBC SLG Fall Term 2023**  
**The Book of I Corinthians**  
**Lesson #4**  
**Second & Third Reports**  
**Part II – chs. 5-6**

**I. Introduction:**

**1: 10 – 6:20 Addressing reports from the Chloe’s Household**

**5: 1 – 5: 13 Second “report” – Tolerance of Sexual Immorality**

**6: 1 – 6: 11 Third (implied) “report” – Lawsuit among believers**

**6: 12 – 6:20 Concluding Remarks addressing reports—we are member of Christ**

As Paul ends his response to their error of elevation of human wisdom (*sophia*) pitching one leader against another, leading to divisions within the church with a very personal and passionate charge against them in chapter 4, he, in essence, reestablishes his apostolic authority and reclaims his unique relationship with them as their “spiritual father”. With that, he now exercises his apostolic authority to give them direct instructions to correct moral behavioral errors that he also heard, likely from the Chloe’s household as well.

**5: 1 – 5: 13 Second “report” – Tolerance of Sexual Immorality**

**5: 1 -8 The sin of tolerance**

**“It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that even pagans do not tolerate: A man is sleeping with his father’s wife. 2 And you are proud (puffed up)! Shouldn’t you rather have gone into mourning and have put out of your fellowship the man who has been doing this? 3 For my part, even though I am not physically present, I am with you in spirit. As one who is present with you in this way, I have already passed judgment in the name of our Lord Jesus on the one who has been doing this. 4 So when you are assembled and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present, 5 hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord. 6 Your boasting is not good. Don’t you know that a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough? 7 Get rid of the old yeast, so that you may be a new unleavened batch—as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. 8 Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old bread leavened with malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”**

Paul does not even debate if such an action by the “man” is a sin or not, for there is no debate about it. It is a sin, in fact, a horrible sin that even pagans—those who are outside of the church—would not tolerate. What he is accusing the church in Corinth is their sin of tolerance.

- The man and his sin:
  - It is obvious that this man is a believer among them and is still worshipping and having “fellowship” with them.
  - The sin is a sin of “incest”

- “sleeping with his father’s wife” is a dynamic translation of “having his father’s wife” which points to a continuous sexual relationship with his father’s wife, i.e. still living with her;
    - “father’s wife”: most believe she is either a concubine of his father, his step-mother, or his father’s widow—who is not the man’s biological mother;
    - Such “incest” was and is still not tolerated in virtually all human societies, let alone by God. Leviticus 18: 7-8, 29 stipulates that; **“Do no dishonor your father by having sexual relations with your mother. She is your mother; do not have relations with her...Do not have sexual relations with your father’s wife; that would dishonor your father...Everyone who does any of these detestable things—such persons must be cut off from their people.”**
  - The church and their sin:
    - Paul says the church should have
      - “Mourned”: which is a rather heavy word which normally denotes the mourning of the death of a loved one, and indeed, that brother in their midst is good as dead, spiritually speaking and they should mourn; and
      - They should have put this man “out of your fellowship” the meaning of which is clear:
        - **“Expel the wicked person from among you”** (v.13) which is more than stopping him from participation of the Lord’s Supper or a suspension of certain rights and privileges as a member of the church, but to kick him out of the church and regard him as outside: **“With such a man do not even eat.”** (v.11)
        - It is also likely that the woman in this case is not a believer, so Paul is silent as to her treatment.
    - What the church has done instead:
      - The church obviously has continued to allow the man to worship and take part of the fellowship of the church, as if either he has not sinned or his sin is too trivial to be addressed, and
      - Paul points out such an action (or inaction) by the church proves that the church is “puffed up”—which is the sin that Paul has accused them of in the first four chapters and especially in 4: 6-7.
        - As mentioned previously in 4:8, the Corinthian Christians likely take great pride in their giftedness, their philosophical sophistication and their elevated position in society that Paul mocks them as being satiated (lacking nothing), being rich (in giftedness and likely wealth), and acting like kings (that they can decide everything within the church without being held accountable by the apostles)
      - And that they are even proud of what they do in this respect
        - One wonders how could they be “proud” of tolerating such an obvious and heinous sin among them?

- Perhaps, this is a case where they seek to portray that this is a church of tolerance and love to a society that is known for its sexual immorality. Food for thought for today's church!
- Paul's Direct Instruction how to deal with offender:
  - **"Hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh"**
  - This instruction is similar to Paul's instruction in I Timothy 1:20: **"I have handed over (Alexander and Hymenaeus who have shipwrecked their faith) to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme."**
  - Although, Paul's exact meaning here is not totally clear to us today, at least we can understand that
    - Paul does not mean having him "magically" put to death like Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5 whose deaths were the act of the Holy Spirit;
    - And Paul does not say the destruction of the body, but the "flesh" which is his way of referring to sinful nature; and
    - It appears that this man was again mentioned in 2 Corinthians 2: 1ff and he seems to have repented as a result of the action of the church as directed by Paul here.
  - Thus Fee is right that this means "some kind of expulsion from the Christian community" (Fee, 208), as the world, outside of the church, is still ruled by Satan (1 John 5:19)
- Paul's Purpose for the offender:
  - **"so that his spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord."**
    - As harsh as the "punishment" is, the ultimate aim is the restoration of his spirit, and this is what is rightly called "tough love".
    - "On the day of the Lord...By this latter term Paul does not intend that he must wait until the final Day to be saved. Rather, this is one of Paul's ordinary ways of expressing salvation. Salvation is primarily an eschatological reality, experienced in the present to be sure, but to be realized fully at the Day of the Lord." (Fee, 213)
    - By being isolated from Christian fellowship and being assigned to "Satan", i.e. out of the fellowship of the active presence of the Spirit, a genuine believer would never have the peace he once tasted. As a result, he would in fact, having a taste of "hell" in his spirit which would nudge him to eventual repentance.
- Paul's Authority:
 

**"3 For my part, even though I am not physically present, I am with you in spirit. As one who is present with you in this way, I have already passed judgment in the name of our Lord Jesus on the one who has been doing this. 4 So when you are assembled and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present"**

  - "Verses 3-5 are one long and difficult sentence in the Greek" (Morris, 84) and it lends itself to at list six possible grammatical renderings, but most see "in the name of our Lord Jesus" being related to the authority invoked by Paul in passing his judgment on the offender. Allow me to render it more literally as follows:

- *“For I indeed, being absent in the body, but being present in the spirit, Have already judged the person who has done this, just like (os) being present. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, and my spirit and with the power of our Lord Jesus...(hand this man over)”*

In essence, Paul is exercising his authority to excommunicate the offender

- “In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” which is the basis of the power so exercised,
  - And though he is not physically present, his spirit is there (*as if* or *just like* his real presence), not saying that his spirit is really there (no one is omnipresent except God), but (as Fee alludes to), the reading of his letter publicly as they gather together conveys his presence, in the name and through the power of the Lord Jesus.
  - Therefore, it is also important to note that Paul demands that they obey such a directive as a community (as they are gathered together).
- Paul’s Purpose for the church:

**“ 6 Your boasting is not good. Don’t you know that a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough? 7 Get rid of the old yeast, so that you may be a new unleavened batch—as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. 8 Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old bread leavened with malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”**

- Using the instruction concerning the removal of yeast during the observance of the Passover in Exodus: **“On the first day remove the yeast from your houses, for whoever eats anything with yeast in it from the first day through the seventh must be cut off from Israel.”** (Ex. 12: 15) Paul highlights the importance of the removal sins from the community
- In the NT, yeast is often used as a metaphor for sin (Matthew 16: 11-12), and
- Paul reminds the Corinthian church that in Christ, we are like unleavened bread—a holy body of Christ and even a “little yeast” can work through the whole dough (Gal. 5:9) and contaminate the entire body of Christ, let alone by such serious malice (the tolerance of sin by the church) and wickedness (the incest in question of that offender).
- So, as harsh as the instruction is, it is ultimately for the good of the church in restoring their sincerity and truth as they continue to live a life in celebration of their freedom from sin through Christ, the Passover Lamb.

## **5: 9 -13 In the World and not of the World**

**“9 I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people— 10 not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. 11 But now I am writing to you that you must not associate with anyone who claims to be a brother or sister[c] but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or slanderer, a drunkard or swindler. Do not even eat with such people.**

**12 What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? 13 God will judge those outside. “Expel the wicked person from among you.”**

- Paul points out that such an instruction is not inconsistent with what he had previously told them in an earlier letter, except that perhaps, he senses that they consider such an instruction simply not workable, given the society in which they live.
- Paul then clarifies that
  - Such an instruction is directed at those within the body of Christ, not at the unconverted non-believers of the world, and
  - In an indirect way encourages us to still engage in the world and the reasons are obvious
  - We still have to make a living, but more importantly
  - It is our duty to be light and salt to this world of sinners, reaching them with the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- As Paul clarifies, he purposely highlights the marks of the world (in which they used to exhibit)
  - Being immoral, greedy, swindlers and worshippers of idols;
  - and so it is inconceivable that someone who claims to be a brother in Christ and yet still:
    - Being immoral, greedy, worshippers of idols, slanderers, drunkards and swindlers.
- Using the example of this man of incest, Paul commands them
  - Not only to expel such from the church, but
  - “Do not even eat with such people” which essentially amounts to cutting off social contact with such a person.

**Practical considerations:**

- Even in Paul’s days, one can imagine that the tolerance of such a person of incest must have been a decision by the leadership of the church after quite a bit of debates. To reverse such a decision would have meant loss of face and status by those in leadership and by those of have supported the offenders based likely on friendship, benefits (if the person was of a elite social status) and blood-relations. To heed Paul’s instruction (which presumably they did) would definitely lead to quite an internal turmoil (the withdrawal of some from leadership or from church attendance or involvement). But just the same, the removal of yeast is not to be compromised.
- However, it is important to note that the ultimate goal is the restoration of the offender and the communal decision is to be made in mourning and humility, involving the repentance of the entire community, not in a celebratory mood!

**6: 1 – 6: 11 Third (implied) “report” – Lawsuit among believers**

**“If any of you has a dispute with another, do you dare to take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the Lord’s people? 2 Or do you not know that the Lord’s people will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? 3 Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life! 4 Therefore, if you have disputes about such matters, do you ask for a ruling from those whose way of life is scorned in the church? 5 I say this to shame you. Is it possible that there is nobody**

among you wise enough to judge a dispute between believers? 6 But instead, one brother takes another to court—and this in front of unbelievers!

7 The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated? 8 Instead, you yourselves cheat and do wrong, and you do this to your brothers and sisters. 9 Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men[a] 10 nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

- The Context:

This response to yet another “implied report” is prefaced by these words as Paul finishes his instruction concerning sexual immorality: **“Are you not to judge (*krino*) those inside? God will judge (*krino*) those outside.” (I Cor. 5: 12-13)**

- We and the world:

- Although Paul has indeed passed a judgment on the person of incest, both determining his action as seriously sinful, and the determination of the appropriate punishment in the here and now—this, Paul sees as the inevitable obligation of the church in Christ—to judge those inside;
  - However, the final “judgment” for those “insiders” still belongs to Christ: **“For we (believers) must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.”** (2 Corinthians 5:10; also Romans 14:10)
- As to the world, those “outsiders”:
  - God will judge them, as Revelation 20:11 points out: **“Then I saw a great white throne and Him who was seated on it.”**
  - In fact, believers who will be resurrected, will also have the authority to judge with Christ: **“I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge.”** (Rev. 20:4)
  - Paul adds here that we will even judge (fallen) angels (I Cor. 6:3)

It is with this in mind that Paul addresses this next report he presumably received concerning lawsuits within the body of Christ.

- The problem reported:

- While the exact nature of the lawsuit is not explained, but Paul prefaces this section with an extremely strong word, “Dare” which actually marks the beginning of the sentence which the NIV’s positioning of word loses its punch and as Fee would translate: “The gall of such a man!”
- Irrespective of the nature of the lawsuit (which common sense seems to indicate that it is a matter concerning money or material possession), Paul says that
  - These pertain to “things of this life” and as a result they are “trivial cases”

- It would be quite hard to take, especially if it involves a large sum of money, like in the millions or in some cases that I have witnessed, the division of estate among children (even though they are all Christians!)
    - But just the same, irrespective of the monetary size, they are “things of this life”—things that are temporal and will pass away and as we like to say, “things that we cannot take to our grave”; so they are “trivial”!
  - The problems in Paul’s mind, are of two aspects:
    - That one brother takes another to court “in front of believers” is a disgrace to both the body of Christ and to the name of Christ, obviously; and
    - The church should also be ashamed that they would not step in to prevent the lawsuit, as if no one is competent to judge the case.
- The 1<sup>st</sup> problem: with the offender, i.e. the brother who takes another brother to court
  - The core issue with that offender is: **“Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated?”**
  - This is precisely the instructions given by the Lord in the “Sermon on the Mount”
  - **“38 “You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’[h] 39 But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. 40 And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. 41 If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles.”** (Matthew 5: 38-41)
  - Irrespective of the “size” of the dispute, the core issue is with
    - Our desire for fairness,
    - It is a matter of “face” as well
    - Not to mention our love for “things of this life”.
  - Frankly, without the attitude that Paul mentions: **“Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated?”**, there will not be any real solution, whether the case is presented to a secular court or being judged by competent member(s) within the church.
- The 2<sup>nd</sup> problem: with the church, **“are you not competent to judge trivial cases?”**
  - Given the complexity of today’s legal environment, it is understandable that most churches try not to get involved in lawsuits between members of the church, even they do have “competent” members who might be in the legal profession. However, this is not the point:
    - The church is still charged to teach them of the proper biblical mandates of “rather to be wronged or cheated”, and
    - The church is still charged not to bring shame to the church and the name of Christ and seek to prevent them from bringing lawsuit against one another.
    - Within the legal system in North America, most monetary disputes can be handled through a licensed “Mediator” instead of having to be resolved in court, and there are Mediators that are Christians.
  - However, if there is no desire to follow Christ’s teachings in Matthew 5, then even if the case is so-called resolved in court, through mediation or by leaders of the

church, there will not be true harmony between the disputed parties which will, inevitably spill over to the church. Indeed, even if one wins, one is “completely defeated already (by Satan)”.

- Therefore, Paul seeks to warn the “offender” as well of the seriousness of their sin:
  - By lumping cheating, wronging others within the church with the
  - **“Sexually immoral, idolaters, adulterers, homosexuals, thieves, greedy, drunkards, slanders nor swindlers.”**
  - Why? Because all of them will not inherit the kingdom of God!
  - The implication is:
  - **“But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”**
    - We are a completely new creation: triple-treated and transformed
    - Washed by the blood of Christ
    - Sanctified by the Spirit of God, and
    - Justified in the name of Christ!
      - if we choose to remain in any of these sins, it is a mockery to the power and name of God and might indicate if the person is really a believer who will inherit the Kingdom!

#### **6: 12 – 6:20 Concluding Remarks addressing reports—we are member of Christ**

**“12 I have the right to do anything,” you say—but not everything is beneficial. “I have the right to do anything”—but I will not be mastered by anything.**

**13 You say, “Food for the stomach and the stomach for food, and God will destroy them both.” The body, however, is not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. 14 By His power God raised the Lord from the dead, and He will raise us also. 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.”**

While the Pharisees have turned the Law of Moses into a list of “*Dos & Don’t’s*”, the Corinthians appear to have fused Paul’s teaching of grace with their favorite Greek idea of dualism to justify a “free-for-all” permissive lifestyle. This has prompted Paul to address this error of dualism as his concluding remark to addressing the reports he heard about them.



- Exercising freedom in the new life in Christ—Law versus grace
  - Paul gives them two very important principles in this respect
    - Within the realm of things that are right (the word used is that of being legal, i.e. permitted under the Law of Moses), the guideline is whether it is of benefit, and within the forgoing context, one must consider if it really benefits oneself and also the church community.
    - Also, it is important to understand what “beneficial” means: if such a law-permitted action or pursuit becomes the domineering focus of our life or one’s obsession, then it will become our master, and we its slave. Then we have lost our freedom!
- Paul then gives them a very practical example which appears to be their common saying: **“Food for the stomach and the stomach for food, and God will destroy them both.”**
  - It is important to distinguish ‘stomach’ from “body” in that Paul is not saying that “Food for the body and the body for food”.
  - Paul is addressing the “stomach” (Greek, “cavity”) which refers more to our desire of craving for food in this case:
    - As natural and valid for us to eat food and the stomach is designed by God as a means for our hunger to be satisfied and food is also meant by God to do just that, ultimately such need-satisfying means are temporal, and will “cease” (the Greek word for “destroy” is translated “cease” in I Corinthians 13:8)
    - So, as eating is such a natural and law-permitted act, to allow eating (of food) to be an obsession is not beneficial!
- Well, with their Greek’s dualist viewpoint, the same could be said of the body, since it is also temporal—whatever we do with it does not really matter, because it will “cease” too:
  - Paul answers: that is not the case. In fact what we do with our body, especially as Christians is of paramount importance because
    - Believers are united with Christ, not just in spirit but in body
    - **“Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? “**
    - **“19 Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?”**
      - By believing in Christ, we are united with Christ both in His death and resurrection (Romans 6:5)
      - Apart from the fact that Christ lives in us through the Holy Spirit, our body will be resurrected just as Christ is resurrected.
    - The implications are very clear:
      - **“The body...is...for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.”**
        - Unlike stomach and food, our body is meant for and totally belongs to Christ, and there should be no qualm about it;
        - But it is amazing to be reminded that the Lord is for our body, which means as we are united with Christ, what belongs to Christ belongs to us—we are His and He is mine!
      - **“The body, however, is not meant for sexual immorality.”**

- Here, Paul makes a strong distinction between sins outside of our body, and sins that are not
- while all sins lead to death, as pardoned sinners, our sexual sins are more heinous, as we sin against our body
  - which is the temple of temple of the Holy Spirit, and our sexual union outside of marriage will desecrate our union with Christ, and
- the consequence is dire, as Paul says earlier: **“If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy that person”** (I Cor. 3:17)—as much as this refers to the collective temple of God, the same is true of us being individual temples in which the Holy Spirit dwells.

As serious sexual immorality is and that it is an offense directly against Christ with whom we have been united, Paul ends with a heart-felt plea for them to “flee from sexual immorality” with these final words: **“You are not your own; 20 you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.”**

- Yes, the price is a not only great but precious:
- **“He bought (the church) with His own blood”** (Acts 20:28)
- **“You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seal, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God...”** (Rev. 5:9)

**Khalil Giran (1883-1931)**  
**O Love whose lordly hand**  
**Has bridled my desires**  
**And raised my hunger and my thirst**  
**To dignity and pride**  
**Let not the strong in me and the constant**  
**Eat the bread and drink the wine**  
**That tempt my weaker self.**  
**Let me rather starve,**  
**And let my heart parch with thirst**  
**And let me die and perish**  
**Ere I stretch my hand**  
**To a cup you did not fill**  
**Or a bowl you did not bless.**