

St. Andrew**Academy**

1 Corinthians: You think you've got problems!

Week 3

A Call for Community Discipline



A brief review – Unity and boasting

- ❖ Paul opened the letter with an appeal for unity
 - There is no place for factions or division in God's family.
 - Everyone is a servant of God.
- ❖ We are all given the responsibility to build God's church well . . . To protect it and to grow it. Our construction will be tested!
- ❖ There is no room for self-boasting. All that the Corinthians have is a gift from God. In the cross, as foolish as the message may seem, there is no room for arrogance. The cross is God's power to save.
 - The apostles themselves have walked a hard path . . . they are seen as the dregs of society. How dare the Corinthians think that they are worthy of more!



Shocking sexual immorality

- ❖ There is sexual immorality among the Corinthian Christians – so bad it is even beyond the pale for the Gentiles!
 - A man is “living with” his stepmother. This means having sex. The man is part of the Christian community but the woman is not.
 - Paul describes the woman as the “father’s wife” as a reference to Deuteronomy 27:20 & Leviticus 18:8, emphasizing the violation of God’s covenant.
- ❖ Notice that Paul is scolding the whole community for this one man’s behavior.
 - Some people are boasting. Could they be proud of the man’s newfound sexual freedom? Could they be boasting in spite of it?
 - The community is corporately responsible. This is hard for us individualistic Americans to hear, but it has always been true for God’s people.

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“Drive out the wicked person.”

- ❖ Paul is with them in this. They are to remove the man from the congregation, sending him to Satan (the outside world) so that he might set aside his sinful nature.
 - The community is to seek out and remove all the “leaven” just as Jewish households got rid of leaven at Passover. Jesus is the Paschal Lamb which sets them apart from the world outside.
 - See Matthew 18:15-20 – Jesus’ teachings on the protection of the community.
- ❖ In 2 Corinthians 2, Paul urges forgiveness for someone who has been “punished by the majority.” For Paul, discipline leads to repentance which leads to forgiveness and salvation.

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Not of the world, but in the world

- ❖ As the letter progresses, we might conclude that Paul wants them to turn inward, withdrawing from the world to protect the community. Even the Corinthians have misunderstood him.
- ❖ In verses 9-13, Paul is urging the Corinthians **not** to abandon the outside world.
 - How could they do that and still be the light to the world? (Matthew 5, the Sermon on the Mount)
 - Paul does expect the Corinthian Christians to discipline themselves.
 - Not "of" the world but "in" the world – see John 17:13-19



What do we do with this passage?

- ❖ Ignore it as having no usefulness beyond the immediate problem in Corinth? This is not an option.
- ❖ This is the question: ***Who are we?*** . . . We are called to claim our identity as a people of a distinct character and mission called and empowered by God.
- ❖ Discipline in the Body of Christ is necessary.
 - Paul – avoid what tears down the community or is a bad witness to others.
 - When Jesus saved the adulterous woman from stoning, he instructed her to repent – to stop!
 - Does caring really mean being completely nonjudgmental and inclusive? (What do parents mean by 'tough love'?)
 - How do we use our freedom in Christ?
- ❖ Passover is a central image here. We are the heirs of Israel's legacy. Deuteronomy speaks directly to us!



Handling legal disputes

- ❖ Paul is appalled that the Corinthians are turning to the courts to settle disputes, where the judges are gentile pagans . . . the unrighteous, the wrongdoers, the *adikoi* (same Greek word in 6:1 & 6:9).
- ❖ Can't they find someone who can settle these disputes within the community?
- ❖ Even better – give up all the disputes. If you are wronged, you are wronged . . . leave it at that.
- ❖ Paul reminds them they were once the *adikoi* (wrongdoers). But now they are part of God's covenant people . . . They've been washed and saved and justified. . . . The whole thing! SO ACT LIKE IT!

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“Glorify God in your body.”

- ❖ On the lips of the Corinthians: “I am free to do anything.”
 - In the Greek, the emphasis is on the individual's authority over all external constraints.
 - Since “nothing is unclean in itself” (Romans 14:14), it is easy to see how the Corinthians might conclude that anything goes.
- ❖ But Paul says *no*:
 - Not everything is beneficial
 - It is unwise to be dominated by any passion
 - God's raising of Jesus shows the value of the body and our bodies belong to Jesus (v. 15). Our bodies are temples of God!
- ❖ The church, the covenant community, is God's temple (3:16) and we, as individuals, are God's temples! God's Holy Spirit dwells in us (corporately and individually) just as his Spirit once dwelt in the temple in Jerusalem.

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We are not our own!!

- ❖ What are the implications of Paul's claim that we are not our own, but that we belong to Christ. And further, that we were purchased at such a high price . . . Jesus' own life.
 - Is this not staggering?!
 - Paul relates this to the body. Not only are our bodies God's temples, but they are not ours to do with as we please.
- ❖ Could it be that we are not free to do whatever we please, that we are not free to invent our own standards?
- ❖ What does this mean for those who are not Christians?



New Testament Timeline

