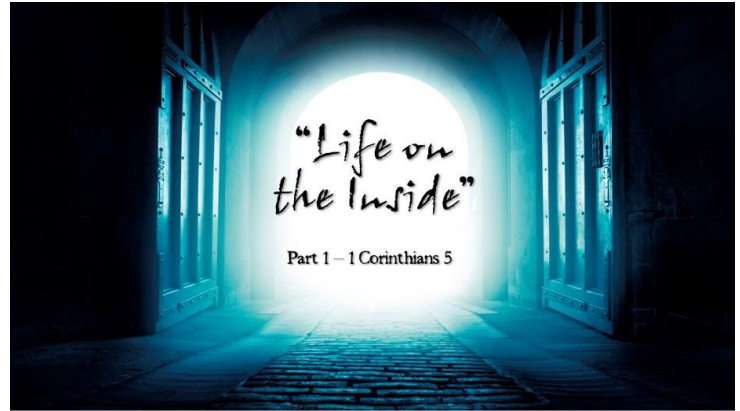


“Life on the Inside” – Part 1
- 1 Corinthians 5 –

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at JF Believers Church
in Menomonie, Wisc
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Chapter 5 *It is actually reported [that there is] sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles—that a man has his father’s wife! 2 And among you. 3 For I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged (as though I were present) him who has so done this deed. 4 In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, 5 deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. 6 Your glorying [is] not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? 7 Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. 8 Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened [bread] of sincerity and truth. 9 I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people. 10 Yet [I] certainly [did] not [mean] with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. 11 But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner—not even to eat with such a person. 12 For what [have] I [to do] with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside? 13 But those who are outside God judges. Therefore “put away from yourselves the evil person.”*

For 4 chapters Paul has spoken in general and spiritual terms, painting a picture with broad strokes of a dynamic Christian life and a righteous and holy church. In general terms he spoke of what kind of men and woman we are to seek to be in order to fulfill the mission of the church as well as our own personal calling and mission. He challenged us as to how we are to deal with each other, see our leaders, and interact with the world that surrounds us. We must know that the church is not a building but a living, breathing quorum of saints living in community. Thus Paul always understood that the world **INSIDE** God’s church *was* and *was to be* very different than the world outside. It unquestionably **had** to be. This seemingly obvious truth is strangely absent in the greater religious world today, wherein the church seeks...*sometimes with all of its strength*, to be a part of and get along with the world at large. But how can this be when Jesus said he was an offense to that world, and said that if we follow Him we will be too! Joining arms with the greater world is the opposite of our calling to “*come up from amongst them and be separate.*” (2 Cor 6:17)

Because of this dynamic, we here have essentially operated two churches: One that is evangelistic in nature, open to the larger community, asking nothing and requiring only the most rudimentary behavior. And a secondary one, that is the covenant community. **That** church is discipleship oriented and far more communal in its nature and practices. The latter has expectations and promises by all the parties involved. It is a family, with family expectations. There is joy and peace, and correction and discipline. There is interactions and activities reserved for them only, and relationships founded upon innate and proven faithfulness and holiness. A place to serve and be served. To love and be loved. It is to this latter church that Paul now writes. If you are on the

outside of that secondary church, you have the opportunity to catch a glimpse of the calling upon the lives that covenant promises one another and God... to be and do what the church is ultimately called to be and do. If you are already in that Covenant relationship here, we are herein reminded through these next few chapters what we are to be and what we are to do.

The first issue to be addressed is that of sexual immorality. Seems fairly fitting, for such is often the point of departure from biblical Christianity today. The greater Christian church catches a great deal of heat on this one subject, not to mention all of its various incarnations and ramifications. We live in a day that espouses the greater position that God and Christianity must allow for our wants, our emotions, and our cultural changes, when no such position is allowed sway anywhere in scripture. Just because we *want* to **do** something, or **have** something, or even **be** something does not mean we get to, and no, God's great desire is not to "see you pleased." How often we hear the phrase "well, God would want me to be happy right?" Of course such encompasses the premise that what will make me "happy" is to reject His mandates and indulge in the world and sin. And because it makes me "happy" I am to get a free pass. In Corinth, sexual immorality was resting comfortably in a pew, as it is in many churches today. You see, just like for the church to whom Paul writes, it has become a lot easier to *ignore* the sin, the *cancer* in our body, than to root it out and be healed. There simply is no version of Christianity that does not involve each one of us to having to say "no" to certain issues and practices.

As often is the case when scripture deals with the issue of sexual impurity, the translation is given as "fornication" (KJV), which means sexual intercourse between two unmarried adults. However this word, in its original form, has a broader language meaning. It is the word "porneia," which encompasses a vast array of illicit sexual issues and impure relationships. It is often easy to write off our sexual improprieties by claiming there was no "sexual intercourse," thus we still stand on firm ground. But to take that position is a feeble attempt to avoid the watchful eyes of our Creator.

A man who was, it appears, sexually involved with his step-mother had settled in among them. No doubt this was not a visitor or an unredeemed searcher, but one who professed a faith in God and counted himself as one of that body of Christ. Certainly there will from time to time come into our midst, one who is yet bound in sin, but that person has come with a curious, if not seeking heart. Such an individual is not to be removed from the fellowship, but loved, taught, and nurtured until he or she decides which way to go. It is the false professor of faith and allegiance to God and church who is to be disciplined and ultimately removed if no repentance is exercised.

1Co 5:11 *"But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner—not even to eat with such a person."*

2Th 3:6 *"But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us."*

2Th 3:14 *And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed.*

Ro 16:17 *Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.*

As often is the case in our human fallen state...*especially those unredeemed and even those who lack the Holy Spirits control*, instead of hearts of repentance and broken spirits, Paul had found instead pride and hardened hearts. In their pride...the most cancerous of sins, the people believed themselves to be beyond teaching and

correction. They saw themselves as having arrived at a perceived spiritual maturity and ironically *individualism*, and they were indignant at Paul on this issue. They should have practiced church discipline on this matter by removing these individuals. I realize that such a practice as this is almost unheard of in our modern age. When it is discussed, it is often shrouded in misinformation, secrecy, and rumor. Rarely is it looked upon as it truly is, nor is it accepted as God's mandate. Generally it is looked upon as the authoritarian thuggery of archaic and cultic groups. Never mind that the Bible...the living voice of God and the essential "handbook" of the church and Christianity *expressly mandates such action!*

Here, in the clear Word of God, the Lord is directing the church to judge themselves or reap the results. 1Pe 4:17 " *...For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God...*" and to remain pure and spiritually monogamous. " *...that I may present you (the church) as a chaste virgin to Christ.*" (2 Cor 11:2) Paul wrote in 1Ti 3:15 " *... I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, **the pillar and ground of the truth.***"

(5:3-5) Paul however was unflinching on this matter, even bearing in mind that he wasn't there physically. Apparently this issue was not a secret, and its reality was not being denied. Paul said this man needed to be **put out of the church**. The New Living translates Paul's words and attitude as, "*You must throw this man out...*" Please note that he does not do this with some imagined or self-proclaimed authority. He uses the name and authority of Jesus Christ, and he doesn't mince words describing how this man is to be dealt with.

I have no doubt that, *while we have only what we read herein*, such a move was not done lightly or callously. To do this is always painful for everyone involved. This act was not and *is not* meant to be punitive or elitist, but rather done in hopes of bringing repentance and subsequent restoration. Thus, that ultimate goal must always be offered to the offender clearly and graciously.

Let us absolutely understand what this means to us as a church today. This picture before us does not rule out patience and discussion, but entrenched and defiant sin within the church must be dealt with clearly and resolutely. No one has *ever* been asked to leave this body of believers without opportunity to repent, correct, and be restored. Usually, they will always run off long before we ever get around to showing them the door. And furthermore, if they are still gone today, it is because they refused to repent and have embraced their sin. This matter presents itself in a plethora of situations and actions, not just sexual sin. Even something as worldly acceptable as lying, which causes many of us to pause as we unilaterally judge what is a "big" sin and just a "little" one. Yet Proverbs 6 actually lists lying as one of the seven things that God *hates*. So it's not a small thing to God, even if it is to our modern culture!

(5:6-7) Ironically, it should be noted that the church in Corinth not only did **not** deal with this man according to God's Word, but they were actually proud of how they handled it! We use words today like tolerance, identity, love and acceptance. Yet to be clear: God was not tolerant on this matter, He says one's identity is what He says it is, He rejects man's version of love, and He clearly does not "accept" such behavior on any level. "*Perhaps they were proud of their tolerance in not disciplining the offender. Or perhaps they were so proud of the abundance of spiritual gifts in the church that they did not give serious thought to what had taken place. Or perhaps they were more interested in numbers than in holiness. They were not sufficiently shocked by sin.*" (Believers Bible Commentary)

Paul further drives home this issue by pointing out that if they kept this man in their midst, he would eventually corrupt the whole body of believers. In a way, he already had. Like yeast in bread, it would move into every part of the "loaf" and would dramatically change its nature and appearance. As a result of his actions and *interaction* with them, they were ready to abandon all they knew to be scriptural and holy in order to have their

way, whatever the individual reasons in each of them. The man's "yeast" of pride had permeated the whole body of believers.

Today we battle those who believe they have a better idea on how to handle all of this: the, "Let's just 'love' them" people. This ultimately means "*let's just accept them as they are,*" which includes their sin. *Let's not press them on the issue, and just accept them as there are, and they will hopefully get better.* Of course this defies not only scripture but moreover everything we know about God. Since when is God just ok with who we are today? If such was the case, what would be the point of the Holy Spirit, discipleship, and even the church itself?

This mindset also does not consider the other believers with which the individual has contact, and thus the perceived permission we are granting them therefore to indulge in such sin. For it appears...by our response to it, to be fine behavior within a Christian and a Christian community and furthermore, to be have no consequences. It gives a false picture of Jehovah God. It also excludes the cross of Christ, for Jesus did not need to die for sin if sin could be dealt with in this secondary manner. Lastly, *it doesn't work.* Passive acceptance will not change behavior. If it did, Paul is a liar, scripture is lie, and we all should go home and go back to bed.

(5:8) The feast Paul refers to here is the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This festival encompassed the people's practice of ridding their houses of all leaven, or what we would call yeast. Yeast, a scriptural picture of sin, was symbolically removed from everyone's home to represent a commitment to holiness and purity. This festival occurred in preparation for the Passover celebration, a feast that required a sacrificial lamb. Once again, there is no way around this without the cross. Jesus *died* for our salvation and purity, and thus for the sanctification of the body of Christ, the *church*.

The bottom line...as a church of God, we are not to allow sin to camp in our midst with our knowledge. If we do, we have tainted the body, and Jesus died for nothing. It's not enough for a person to experience *our* love; they must experience and further, embrace *His* love. His way is narrow, pure, and holy. We are told...*dauntingly*, in Matthew 18:18, that "...whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven..."

(5:9-13) Verses 9-13 is one of those passages we often wish we could forget or at least ignore. This is made clear by the fact so many of us try to get around it. This passage has two profound effects on our actions. Firstly, we cannot and *are not* to attempt to remove ourselves from the realm of the unredeemed. But oh, how many of us will try! We are not to live the church out in isolation. Many attempt to close themselves off from all sinners and evil people. What they ultimately fail to do is close themselves off from a sinful and evil *world*. Even if we *could* succeed, *and we can't*, we would be rendered useless for the kingdom of God.

Many will get rid of their TV's, newspapers, movies, and every remnant of the world's trappings. We claim we do it for our faith, but that is not the faith, nor the *separation* God requires. He calls for purity, holiness, and sanctification in the *midst* of the world. Am I to hide my light under a bushel basket (Mark 4:21)? This does not mean we are to *participate* in the works of an evil world, but we are not to (and cannot) remove ourselves *from* the world at large.

Secondly, we are indeed to judge those **within the church**. This does not mean judge to condemnation. I cannot and am not to damn an individual to hell. Meaning that I can't see a man's heart, only the manifestation of it, **his actions**. Clearly and absolutely, a confession of faith comes with a *responsibility of faith*. Jesus tells us in Luke 12:48 "*For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required...*" That fits the church and Covenant community to a tee.

We are not to keep company with those who claim to be reborn, yet present these attributes: That does not mean we are to shun them, treat them badly, or refuse to greet them in Wal-Mart. It means we are ***not to keep company with them***. This refers to those who are *sexually immoral, covetous, idolaters (placing other things before God), abusive to others (i.e. slander, gossip, a liar), or a drunkard*, while claiming to be a child of God. We are not to even sit down to a meal with these people. We are to put away such a person from us.

This is not a popular passage, nor a popular teaching. Whole segments of the body of Christ refuse this directive and have, perhaps with worldly albeit moral and courteous intentions, inadvertently helped many folks ultimately to spend eternity in hell. That is not love. That is selfishness. It is ultimately hatred and damnable. It may be ***your*** idea of love, but it is not God's love. If I love you with God's love, I will do everything in my power, even better, I will execute everything in *God's* power to bring you to repentance and subsequent holiness. If that means telling you that you are wrong, in sin, and failing in God's direction, I will do it.

If you are a visitor today or an inquisitive unbeliever, this all has little to do with you. But for those who are seeking a "life on the inside," this is just one aspect of what God has prescribed. Anything else is not His church.