

Paul deals with scandal

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[0 : 00] Chapter 5, reading from verse 1 to verse 5. 1 Corinthians chapter 5, 1 to 5.

Verse 1. It is actually reported that there is immorality among you of a kind that is not even a found among pagans.

For a man is living with his father's wife, and you are arrogant. Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you.

For though absent in body, I am present in spirit. And as if present, I have already pronounced judgment in the name of the Lord Jesus on the man who has done such a thing.

When you are assembled and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

[1 : 26] Amen. May the Lord bless us that reading. May we eat his praise unto his glory. We sing again, He became five. You can detect already there is a change in the temperament.

Because in the first four chapters, what he's been talking about is the problem of dissension and arguments are in the church. That's one thing. And he's attempting to deal with that in the first four chapters by bringing a sermon on Jeremiah 9, verse 24, which states, He who glories, let him glory in the Lord.

And the idea is that such people, when they are making a boast, should not boast of themselves, or who is the best preacher, or what gifts they might have.

They should boast in God. But now he's changed the tone to something else. And it's also part of this report. We find in verse 11 of chapter 1, it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarrelling among you.

But now we've changed from this atmosphere of dissension and quarrelling to the presence of scandal. And this is a word, surely, that applies to Christendom at large.

[2 : 55] Thank God we don't have it here. But it is in Christendom at large. And there is nothing calculated to empty the church more quickly than the presence of scandal in it.

So let's look at this report. It is actually reported that there is immorality among you of a kind that is not found even among pagans. For a man is living with his father's wife.

Now this, and what's happening here, is he's using a verb. The verb is *akul*, which we get acoustic from. And it means to hear, but in this sense here, it means to receive news of something.

And that's what's happened. This unsavoury practice is now being given, he's now being informed about it. But there's something else.

And that's something else occurs in the first word. It is actually. In Greek, the word not only means actually, but universally.

[4 : 09] So if that's true here, what he's telling these people is, this isn't a secret. This is something that has become known throughout the whole of the ancient world.

Now it is the case that the apostle was continually receiving reports of the work of God. Sorry. So for example, in chapter one of 1 Thessalonians, he says this, For they themselves report concerning us, What a welcome we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he had raised from the dead, Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come.

Now this is a great report. This is a report of multi-conversions, and as a result of the ministry of the word, because he says earlier in the chapter, Our gospel did not come unto you in word only, but in power.

And so it is that this report has been made by Chloe's people. As I've said before, the possibility is that she lived in Ephesus, she had Christian slaves who went to the church in Corinth, and it was they who informed the apostle about what was going on there.

In fact, they had more to say than just about quarrelling and dissension. In fact, what they have to say relates also to the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

[5 : 58] Now this is what he says in chapter 11. In the following instructions, I do not commend you, because when you come together, it is not for the better, but for the worse.

For in the first place, when you assemble as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you, and I partly believe it. For there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized.

When you meet together, it is not the Lord's Supper that you eat. In other words, they had brought the sacrament into a place of disgrace.

And what he says is, he says further, For in eating, each one of you goes ahead with his own meal, and one is hungry, and another is drunk.

Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? Shall I commend you in this?

[7 : 10] No, I will not. So there was something fundamentally wrong with their witness, with the way that they celebrated the Lord's Supper.

And there was something fundamentally wrong that they tolerated the presence of scandal in their midst. Now let's just go to what this is all about.

The nature of this immorality. It is universally reported there is immorality among you of a kind that is not found even among pagans, for a man is living with his father's wife.

So this is this unsavoury practice, this scandal that is going on. He says it's not even found among pagans.

So what is it? The word that covers it in English is incest. The English dictionary defines it as sexual intercourse between persons related within the prohibited degrees of matrimony.

[8 : 25] And that's precisely what was going on here. And the way that the apostle talks about this by saying a man is living with his father's wife, he's actually quoting the Levitical law.

Now listen to this in Leviticus chapter 18 verse 8. You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's wife, it is your father's nakedness.

And then in chapter 20 verse 11, the man who lies with his father's wife has uncovered his father's nakedness, both of them shall be put to death, their blood is upon them.

So the issue here is not adultery, it's immorality. And it may be correct to assume that the father of the man referred to here had either divorced his wife or perhaps he had died since no more is heard about him.

In verses 12 to 13, you may come to the deduction that the woman herself was not a Christian because there he says, what am I to do with judging outsiders?

[9 : 50] It is not those inside the church who you are to judge, God judges those outside. Now this kind of immorality, this incest that's been spoken about here, was something as I've already said that was condemned by the Levitical law.

And the practice is only also condemned by two pagan writers who lived in the time of our Lord. So what about the place of the Mosaic law as far as the book of Leviticus is concerned?

In his teaching, Jesus said this, think not, I have come to abolish the law and the prophets. I have not come to abolish them, but to fulfill them.

For truly I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota or a dot will pass from the law until all is fulfilled.

Now in that sentence, the word iota and dot refer to different parts of the Hebrew alphabet. The iota refers to the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet.

[11 : 15] It's hardly there at all. but the dot refers to a single little part of a Hebrew alphabet, a little overhang that's called a hook.

So that what Jesus is saying is this, that not even the minutest part of the text will ever pass away till all is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.

So the way that the apostle is talking about this, he is talking about it based on his understanding of what God is saying in Levitical law.

What else does God say there? In chapter 19, the Lord said to Moses, say to all the congregation of the people of Israel, you shall be holy for I the Lord your God am holy.

Does that still apply? Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5 48 said, you therefore must be perfect as your heavenly father is perfect.

[12 : 34] So when we examine this issue, not that it applies here, but it applies in Christendom at large, we find that we are dealing with an awesome and holy God whose standards are far greater than we could ever imagine.

But we have the privilege of coming to Christ, having our sins forgiven, and the way God sees us, he sees us in Christ.

You must be perfect as your heavenly father is perfect. Thirdly, this judgment on immorality, verses 2 to 5.

And are you arrogant? You are arrogant. Ought you rather not to mourn? Let him who has done this thing be removed from among you.

You are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Now, they're difficult to interpret these verses, but what do they mean?

[13 : 49] The first thing he does is to invite them to a state of mourning, a mourning that comes from repentance.

Did you not rather go into mourning that he who committed this deed might be taken away from you? So there's a distinct link between mourning, repentance, and the lack of it, which calls the expulsion of this man from the Christian community.

The Greek verb here means to mourn, to be sad, to experience sorrow. And that verb is used in a saying that we know very well from the Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. And we take it, in a sense, in bereavement.

And there's nothing wrong with that. Because God does comfort those who are bereaved. But in this setting here, in 1 Corinthians 5, what the apostle is trying to develop is that these people should mourn and repent because of their lack of action, because of the presence of sin in the midst.

[15 : 25] But they hadn't done this. And he says the reason they haven't done it is you are arrogant. They were taking the view as to why should we deal with this matter.

Why can't you just leave it alone? Why can't you just ignore it? God? Paul says no. You're arrogant.

And that arrogance means that there's a lack of spiritual progress. They were conceited and arrogant over their spiritual state.

And so we came across this a few weeks ago when we looked at the beginning of chapter four. He said I've applied all this to myself and Apollos for your benefit brothers and sisters that you may learn by us not to go beyond what is written that none of you may be puffed up in favor of one against another.

In other words he's transferred all the teaching he had been given about this situation to himself and Apollos. And as I said then I now say again that his model for so doing is the person of Christ.

[16 : 54] He humbled himself, emptied himself, became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

This is Paul, it's what you need. Your pride has prevented the action of the spirit of God in leading them to full repentance over this matter.

And so he comes to what's to happen. Verse 3 For though absent in body, I am present in spirit.

And as if present, I have already pronounced judgment in the name of the Lord Jesus Jesus, on the man who has done such a thing. Now the thing that is uppermost in that text is the judgment in the name of the Lord Jesus.

And so he goes on in verses 4 and 5 and says this, When you are assembled and my spirit is present, with the power of the Lord Jesus, you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

[18 : 16] In other words, there is a distinct connection between the lovely name of Jesus Christ and his power in the church.

And so when the church is gathered, he says, in this manner, in the name of the Lord Jesus, his power will be present.

And his power will be present to lead you all to a position of repentance. And that power is released through the ministry of the word, through the reading of God's word.

The spirit of God speaks through his word. All scripture is inspired by God.

That word inspired is a beautiful word because in Greek it only occurs once. In all the Greek language, only once. Theonistus, literally, God breathed.

[19 : 29] God is a power. God is a power. God is a power. God is a power to speak to the Corinthians, to lead that person to repentance.

What this means, what this last statement means, you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

this was clearly something that they did in the first century church. But the basis of it was that over a question of sin, such a person would be excommunicated.

But he doesn't want them to enter into any kind of judgment on this issue, because this is being done for the salvation of the man concerned.

So when we get to this issue, as we will do over the next few weeks, on the presence of sexual sin, let me remind you of this.

[20 : 41] There's only one example in the Gospels of Jesus dealing with sexual sin, and that's John 8. The woman caught in the very act of adultery.

and she's brought by the scribes and the Pharisees, and they say to him, Moses commanded us to stone such a person. And Jesus immediately didn't say anything.

He got down and wrote on the ground. What did he write on the ground? We don't know. but let me speculate.

Perhaps what he wrote on the ground is, where is the man? And he looked up, and they'd all gone, because he had said to them, let him who is without sin amongst you be the first to cast a stone.

And beginning with the eldest, they all went away. and the woman is standing there alone. And Jesus says to her, has no one condemned you?

[21 : 58] She says, no one, Lord. And he says, neither do I condemn you. We are committed to committing everybody into the ultimate mercy of God, which has no limits, and no boundaries.

We, in our judgment, we think it has, but it hasn't. We're committing everybody into the love and the mercy of God. Is there anything we can learn from this?

Yes, we can. We don't have this problem here, thank God. But we can take from this value of the Lord being present in the Christian community.

In the name of the Lord Jesus, where two or three are gathered, he is in the midst, he speaks by his word, he convicts by his spirit, he leads by his spirit.

If this is true for Corinth, it's also true for us. May God grant that we'll be led forward in grace, in mercy, and in peace.

[23 : 23] Amen. We'll stand and sing, if we may, all for a closer walk with God.