

Week of July 8-14

PERFECTLY CLEAR

Scripture Reading: Read 1 Corinthians 5

“Let me make this one thing perfectly clear.” Ring a bell? It’s a quotation from Richard Nixon. In his context, it meant one thing...cover-up.

There are times, however, when providing clarity is a helpful thing such as is the case with today’s chapter reading. Look at what Paul says: *“I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people-- 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. But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat.”*

Apparently, Paul had written a previous letter to the church at Corinth, a letter that preceded our I Corinthians. Unfortunately, they seemed to have misunderstood what he wrote in that lost letter and so, now, Paul writes again to be perfectly clear with the church. They were instructed by Paul to shun those who claimed to be believers but didn’t live like it. Paul is not speaking about those who are desirous of living for Christ but fail along the way. No, in the context of this chapter, he is referring to those folks who claim to know Christ but who knowingly, willingly, persistently and unrepentantly continue in their sin. We are not to have fellowship with these people. Paul gives the reason why earlier in this chapter. *“Don’t you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough?”* Paul understands that when evil is tolerated it spreads and will quickly infect the whole church. In addition, by tolerating sin, it lessens the pangs of conscience in the offending party. He or she feels “accepted” rather than convicted. The danger of such loose grace will be apparent in the day of judgment. Better, according to Paul, to deal with the issue even if it is painful in the short-term for the long-term gain will be salvation and life. Shooting the spiritually wounded or going on a witch hunt is not Paul’s point.

Paul’s challenge to the church at Corinth is just as applicable to the church twenty centuries later. The church is to provide healthy and redemptive spiritual discipline when it is necessary so that the sinful believer will be saved and the spiritual life of the body of Christ will be preserved. Such discipline would, of course, be offered up in accordance with the biblical principles of Galatians 6:1-2, Matthew 18:15-17, I Corinthians 5:1-13 and I Corinthians 6:1-7.

Action Step & Prayer Focus: Are you perfectly clear with what Paul teaches in I Corinthians 5? If not, reread the chapter in light of today’s devotional and pray for the Lord to show you how to apply its principles in your Christian life in dealing with unrepentant believers .

Take-a-way: *The focus of spiritual discipline is about purity and redemption not punishment or revenge.*