

## 1 Corinthians 5:1-13, 6:18-20 Immorality (Coalface 4) Fintry, 5/5/2013, pm

- A Church at the Coalface is one where....  
... we shun immorality

### We live in a sex crazed world

- Can't turn round but there is sex:
  - used to sell something, to entertain, to define fulfilment, to mark the beginning of adulthood...
  - some of the honesty and transparency in that is good, rather than the ignorance and fear of previous generations
  - but sex does seem to now be an **obsession** rather than a well balanced part of the way our culture views the world
- Corinth had a bit of that imbalance, too!
- But more generally, it was a **sin filled world**

### We are called to a different standard of behaviour (vs.12-13)

- Often, when Christians talk about morality, we have taken on a bunker mentality:
  - looking out from our nice, safe, traditional, upright churches at the morally corrupt world **out there** and bemoaning the dreadful standards
- But Paul isn't writing a letter about the world
  - he's writing a letter to the church!
  - and to a church that is as messy and real as, I'm glad to say, we are becoming
    - *(not because the mess itself is good, but because the mess is a sign of first people being real about their mess, and second people with real mess being around)*
  - and so his concern is not what non-Christians in society are doing, what harm they are coming to because of their behaviour, or anything like that
  - **his concern is with how the people of God are living**
- His starting point, his assumption, is this:
  - **because we are Christians we will live in a way that is different from those who are not Christians**
  - I wonder if that's an assumption we share?
  - perhaps one of the problems we have as a church is that in years gone by, roughly speaking, Christian sexual morality closely matched what society - at least in public - regarded as acceptable
  - so when Christians said "**marriage is the proper context for sexual relations**", society as a whole agreed; there wasn't a clash
  - I wonder whether this has led Christians into expecting that we will fit in?
  - **when in fact Paul's assumption is that we will stand out!!**
  - look at 5:12: **What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church?"**

#### Why?

- Because we are new creatures
  - because we have been bought at a price
  - because we are now in Christ
  - because our bodies are now Temples of the Holy Spirit...
  - we are a "**new batch**", not like the old batch
- **We are to live as citizens of the kingdom**
  - (immigration analogy - new country, new standards)

### We are called to discipline those who sin (vs.1-5)

- Paul is dumb-founded by the Corinthians in those whole affair!
  - not only that they seemed to have tolerated this going on in their midst
- But that they were **proud!**
  - the sense of this isn't clear: could be they were proud **of** the behaviour; as if they were saying "**we are above the merely earthly, now that we are in Christ - such**

## 1 Corinthians 5:1-13, 6:18-20 Immorality (Coalface 4) Fintry, 5/5/2013, pm

behaviour is of no importance!"

- or it could be that Paul is scandalised that they can still hold their heads high (proud) when such sin is in their midst
- In a sense it doesn't matter which is right, for what is clear is that Paul calls them here not to tolerate the sin, but to discipline the sinner
  - unclear what the nature of the discipline was
  - in this extreme case, certainly some kind of public acknowledgement of the sin and practical consequences
  - most likely it was an exclusion from the fellowship, perhaps from communion, worship, perhaps table fellowship;
  - its not so much a "your out on your ear" as "take time out to come to your senses"!
- The purpose - and so the prayer of the fellowship, and presumably the detail of the exclusion - was to win the sinner back to the Lord
  - the purpose was repentance, so that the offender would not become hardened in their sin, defiant of God's grace
  - rather they would be reminded of the terrible power of the evil, human nature that still battles to live within us, and they would come afresh in the power of Christ to the fray, to slay that sinful nature within them, to die to self and be ever more alive to Christ
- In years past in Scotland Kirk Session's did do this - and quite often went too far:
  - but we have probably gone too far the other way
  - in our individualistic society, we shy away from challenging people about their behaviour because it is uncomfortable (I'm speaking to myself here as much as anyone!)
- Power of such discipline lies in the attractiveness of being part of the fellowship
  - is being part of Fintry church fellowship so good that it would be a problem for us if we were to be banned?!
  - so the discipline is not merely "telling off" so much as an invitation into a better way of living - it will include challenge, but perhaps in our culture that will be articulated as "how would it look for God to be in charge of this area of your life?" rather than "you should stop doing this..."

### **We are called to flee from sin's influence (vs.9-11, 6:18-20)**

- Previous misunderstanding - see v.5:9,10
  - clarifying - don't associate with those who say they are Christians but who is a sinner
  - (sense of the is carries on, persists in, that's the way they are and they are content to stay that way)
- Paul is clarifying that his advice is to keep away from such Christians who persist in their sin
  - its clearer why in 6:18 - flee from sexual immorality
  - its a contamination issue!
  - we are to get away from those people, places and practises that will tend to influence us to live in a way that displeases God

#### **Practical examples**

- Depends on the sin!!
  - sex examples, porn, ex-SK at St Caths...
  - tired examples, late TV, turn it off beforehand, accountability to others
  - relationship ones, temper, etc - look at what precipitates it
- More positively, having reflected - ideally with others close to us in faith and life who know us well and who we trust - on when sin's influence is strongest, what can we positively put in place to forestall its influence?
  - eg, if a draw to watch porn online is when we are lonely, how can we build

## 1 Corinthians 5:1-13, 6:18-20 Immorality (Coalface 4) Fintry, 5/5/2013, pm

friendships?

- if draw comes when we are overwhelmed by tasks, how can we manage our diary or responsibilities better so we are less likely to fall prey
- if draw to criticising others comes when we are feeling rubbish about our own competence or value, how can we seek out people who will affirm us beforehand...

### **We are called to live to honour God (v.6:20)**

- All summed up in that last phrase!
  - our lives are mirrors for his glory - **lets polish the mirror!**
  - our lives are home for the Holy Spirit - **lets make him feel at home!**
- *Let us not be content with any kind of sin, but so thankful for what he has done, and committed to bringing glory to God, that we bring our "bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God - this is your spiritual act of worship."*  
(Romans 12:1)