

## 1Corinthians 5:9-13

I am going to start with a couple of reminders.

We are in the middle of a long letter to a church in Greece. Paul is answering a whole raft of questions that have come to his attention.

### Outline of 1Corinthians.

1. **1:1-9**                    **Greeting and thanksgiving.**
2. **1:10-6:20**        **Disorders reported to Paul.**
  - a. 1:10-4:21    Division in the church
  - b. **5:1-13**        **Sexual immorality (1)**
  - c. 6:1-11        Use of heathen law-courts.
  - d. 6:12-20      Sexual immorality (2)
3. **7:1-15:58**        **Problems raised by Corinthians.**
  - a. 7:1-40        Marriage
  - b. 8:1-11:1      Meat offered to idols
  - c. 11:2-14:40    Worshipping together
  - d. 15:1-58      Resurrection
4. **16: 1-24**        **Conclusion.**

Our current interest is in a section on immorality in the church. So today's reading follows on directly from what Ed said last week.

That brings me to my second reminder. What can you remember from last week?

Two statements stood out for me.

When speaking about sin in the church Ed used the phrase "That's not who we are!" we are saved and sanctified by God's grace, so we should live as holy people.

Ed also said that we should practice “Radical holiness and Radical inclusion” which I want to echo this morning.

### Lets dig in a bit to the situation in Corinth:

Dominating the city was the ‘Acro-corinth’, a hill of over 1,850 feet, on which stood a large temple to Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love. The 1,000 priestesses of the temple, who were sacred prostitutes, came down into the city when evening fell and plied their trade in the streets.

‘The cult was dedicated to the glorification of sex.’

In addition, there was the Temple of Apollo in the city itself—Apollo, the god of music, song and poetry; also, the ideal of male beauty. Nude statues and friezes of Apollo in various poses of virility fired his male worshippers to physical displays of devotion with the god’s beautiful boys. Corinth was therefore a centre of homosexual prostitution.

Corinth was the most populated, wealthy, commercial-minded and sex-obsessed city of eastern Europe. If the love of Christ Jesus could take root in Corinth, the most populated, wealthy, commercial-minded and sex-obsessed city of eastern Europe, it must prove powerful anywhere.

### Now lets look at the situation in Pond Park and Hivings:

We live in a society that is obsessed with sexuality. Wealth flows freely for some, the rest gather up crumbs. We measure people by their wealth status. Drug taking is a normal everyday behaviour and self-centredness rules. We are a fully liberated society, proud of our licence to do anything we wish. So when Paul talks of ‘*the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters.*’ he could be talking pond Park and Hivings. So what difference does the Good News of Jesus make in Corinth and what difference does it make here?

The Good news is that Jesus saves.

### **Four key features.**

1. **God loves you** and wants to give you new life. John 3:16

*<sup>16</sup> For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup> For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.*

God is not out to get you but rid you of sin. Both the guilt and the persistence of sin. The first he died on the cross to wash away your guilt, the second he sends his Holy Spirit to empower you to overcome sin.

2. **Turning from sin, turning to Jesus.** 1John 1:10

*<sup>10</sup> If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us.*

That is why we persist in having a general confession, to remind ourselves we are sinners.

3. **Accepting** the free gift of forgiveness and eternal life.

Romans 10:9

*<sup>9</sup> If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. <sup>10</sup> For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.*

Salvation is not automatic. It has to be accepted. Forgiveness requires repentance and believing Jesus, accepting his salvation. But it also means ...

4. **Living the Jesus way.**

Jesus brings moral change. Romans 12:1.

*Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and*

*pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. 2 Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.*

This was the key issue for the church in Rome, in Corinth and is the key issue for Hope Church as with every church. We are not saved to have fun at Jesus' expense, we are saved to demonstrate God's amazing ability to give new life and transform us into being like Jesus in thought, word and deed.

Romans 6:11-13

*<sup>11</sup> In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. <sup>12</sup> Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.*

So Paul challenges the church in Corinth because it is carrying on as if nothing changes in their lives when Jesus enters in.

Setting aside what the leadership should do in the case of gross and persistent sin, what should we do as church members?

This is where we return to Ed's phrase "Radical holiness and radical inclusion" Paul says in our passage:

*<sup>9</sup> I have written to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people -- <sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> But now I am writing to 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.*

**Accept non-Christians as they are, not as you would like them to be.**

We are not to be judgemental on visitors and new arrivals in church, and don't judge a church by the behaviour of them.

There will be drug-takers, adulterers, thieves idolaters slanderers, swindlers. and people who have make a mess of their lives. We are to welcome them in the name of Jesus and pray over them for salvation and transformation from death to life. In the age in which we live, that will get complicated as the Jesus way is alien to most people.

But for you, if you have put your faith and trust in Jesus **Let Jesus set the standard for your behaviour** as set out in the Bible for example Matthew 5-7.

In 1John 3:9, we are told

*9 No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in them; they cannot go on sinning, because they have been born of God.*

Just because everyone else is doing it, doesn't make it right. You are a child of God, so your actions should be aligned with Jesus, what would he do in the situation.

Or as it was expressed last week:

“That's not who we are!”

**Expect to be challenged by the church for persistent and obvious sin.** If what you say or do makes a mockery of God's values that you claim to follow then it is healthy to be challenged. But that is not an excuse for imposing your ideas on others however good your intentions are. I note that in 2Corinthians the *"Expel the wicked man from among you."* is replaced with 2Corinthians 2:7-8

*7 Now instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. <sup>8</sup> I urge you, therefore, to reaffirm your love for him*

We are too quick to write people off, forgetting that we are sinners, rebels against heaven, who have found forgiveness where we would least expect it, from the one pure and sinless person who ever lived, Jesus.

So to conclude we are invited by Paul to have a double standard, to judge ourselves much more strictly than we judge those who do not know Jesus. But always remembering that we are sinners saved to demonstrate God's ability to create new life in us.