

## 20260308 1 Corinthians 4 & 5 – The Leaven of Arrogance

In chapters 4 and 5, Paul will call out the arrogance the Corinthians have demonstrated through their carnal behavior. Essentially, they were having popularity contests with one leader or another. That is why his opening shots focused on different groups lining up under one leader or another, each claiming their leader was better. In these two chapters, Paul will say that this attitude of arrogance is like a little leaven (or yeast) that has great effects on the whole. It is dangerous and must be rooted out, or it can have devastating effects. The same holds true in our own lives. If we allow a little sin to creep into our hearts, it can have devastating effects.

In 1 and 2 Corinthians, Paul is answering questions he has been asked. Part of the challenge as we read Paul is that we're only hearing one side of the conversation. We can tell from these two chapters (4 & 5) that something tense is going on. Paul is talking about coming to them with a rod. There is a stern, exasperated tone in his words. You can tell that he's upset with them, and he's trying hard to set some things right. Much of the rest of the letters of 1st and 2nd Corinthians will be dealing with a multitude of issues that have gotten out of control there in Corinth. Those issues will include but not be limited to the following:

1. congregational divisions
2. worldly wisdom
3. arrogant people that didn't like Paul or his place of leadership
4. flagrant sexuality that the church wasn't dealing with
5. legal battles amongst one another in court
6. lack of grace towards those who were still learning in their faith
7. misuse of the Lord's Supper
8. grave misuse of spiritual gifts (chapters 12, 13, and 14)
9. confusion concerning the resurrection of Jesus

We will get into each of these subjects over the next few weeks. This was an immature, problematic church that was filled with problems. What Paul will repeatedly address is how the Corinthians were allowing sin to creep into their church. He uses the analogy of leaven (a small amount of sin) affecting the whole loaf (the body of Christ). Let's get into the text.

### ***The Ministry of Apostles***

***4 This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. 2 Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful. 3 But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. 4 For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me. 5 Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God. (1 Corinthians 4:1-5, ESV).***

Verse 1        Paul first addresses their attitude towards him and the other apostles (leaders). Paul says they should not be elevating different leaders and putting them on pedestals, but

should regard them as stewards of the mysteries of God. A steward is someone who doesn't own what he manages, but takes care of it. They are entrusted with something of value that belongs to his or her Master. As a pastor, I am responsible to God for what I teach out of the Word. I am a steward of the mysteries of God. I will be accountable to God for what I say or don't say. By the way, don't think that I'm the only one who will be held accountable. God will hold each of us accountable with the gifts with which we've been entrusted. He has given each of us gifts that don't belong to us, and we must use those gifts for His glory. Stewards are also routinely checked on by the boss and held accountable by superiors. It's the same with each of us. We will be judged by what we're doing with what God has put into our hands.

Verse 2 Stewards must be found "faithful" because they are handling someone else's property or goods. You and I have been bought with a price (1 Corinthians 6:20), and everything we have (gifts, talents, and treasure) comes from God. You are not your own. Stewards need to be found faithful, and Paul reiterates this so that all readers will understand that they will be held accountable for their stewardship of the things with which they have been entrusted.

Verse 3 Paul explains that he is a gift to them from God, and they'll be held accountable for how they're handling Paul. Paul says he is not overly concerned about how they are handling him. He's not being dismissive. He is just saying that what counts is how God will judge him. He says that he isn't even qualified to judge himself.

Verse 4 Paul states that as a steward in the ministry, he's not aware of anything he's doing wrong, but his opinion really isn't what is important. IT IS THE LORD WHO JUDGES AND MEASURES HIM. Neither are others competent to judge his ministry so he will leave the judgment of his work to God. He basically says, "I'm not judging myself and you shouldn't be judging me either."

Verse 5 Paul cautions them not to busy themselves in judging him. God will see into his heart, and He'll sort things out. Much of what we're looking at can't be clearly seen because it's still cloaked in darkness. When Christ comes, He will judge all perfectly. Note that each of us will not be condemned, but we will be commended for the faithfulness we've exercised in being good stewards. This is because there is no condemnation for those that are in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1). He already took all of our condemnation. You and I will stand before the Master at the Bema Judgment seat to receive not condemnation, but commendation for what we've done in obedience to Him.

***6 I have applied all these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, brothers, 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. 7 For who sees anything different in you? What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it? (1 Corinthians 4:6-7, ESV).***

Verse 6 Paul's telling them when and if they're judging anything, they shouldn't go beyond what the Bible says. If they do, they're doing it according to the flesh. The same holds true for

each of us. We can't see what is in another person's heart. Paul says that we're to limit how we measure people by what the Bible says. Paul asks three rhetorical questions. It's good to remember the purpose of a rhetorical question. It is to prove a point. These questions seem sarcastic, but they are meant to bring clarity to understanding. The Corinthians were forgetting that everything they had that's of any consequence was given to them by God.

***8 Already, you have all you want! Already you have become rich! Without us you have become kings! And would that you did reign, so that we might share the rule with you! (1 Corinthians 4:8, ESV).***

Paul is using this kind of language, as mentioned, sarcastically. He's saying, "You guys really think you're something. You really think that you're kings. He says they act as if they are already ruling and reigning. That day will come someday, but it isn't now. A day will come when all of us who are believers will rest, rule, and reign with Jesus.

***9 For I think that God has exhibited us apostles as last of all, like men sentenced to death, because we have become a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men. (1 Corinthians 4:9, ESV).***

He says you might think you're kings, but we apostles are, in fact, being treated like those people dragged behind horses in a victory procession. We're not being treated too well. In fact, they would all end up being killed. Paul says, "We apostles are like those poor people at the end of those great victory processions." That is the reality of what we are experiencing in our ministry.

***10 We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ. We are weak, but you are strong. You are held in honor, but we in disrepute. (1 Corinthians 4:10, ESV).***

Here is more sanctified sarcasm. He tells them the reality of what the Christian life is like.

***11 To the present hour, we hunger and thirst, we are poorly dressed and buffeted and homeless, 12 and we labor, working with our own hands. When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; 13 when slandered, we entreat. We have become, and are still, like the scum of the world, the refuse of all things. (1 Corinthians 4:11, ESV).***

He tells them about the life of an apostle. He says, we're like the scum of the earth. There's a day coming when we're going to rest, rule, and reign, but right now we're living out Jesus' humiliation. Sometimes, as Christians, we are put down in humiliation by others. When we don't come to our own defense or assert our rights, we too, can feel put down and like everyone is against us. Sometimes that goes with the territory of ministry.

***14 I do not write these things to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children. 15 For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel. 16 I urge you, then, be imitators of me. 17 That is why I sent you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you***

***of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church. 18 Some are arrogant, as though I were not coming to you. 19 But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I will find out not the talk of these arrogant people but their power. 20 For the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power. 21 What do you wish? Shall I come to you with a rod, or with love in a spirit of gentleness? (1 Corinthians 4:14-21, ESV).***

I hit the whole theme of pride hard last week. It is the disease that got into the world with Satan, and it is what works its way into the church. I want us to learn from watching the Corinthians. We need to be on our guard in every facet of this ministry so we don't feel we're the expert or that we have it all figured out.

### **1 Corinthians Chapter 5 (Church Discipline)**

***5 It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife. 2 And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you. (1 Corinthians 5:1-2, ESV).***

Paul heightens his attack on the Corinthians. Their carnality has crept to the highest levels. Some man was sleeping with his stepmother, and everybody knew about it and approved of it. He adds that they were falling into sin to a level that the pagans do not even do. And what Paul grieves is that they're not even concerned about it. He says, rather, that they are arrogant about it. I think they were proud of their tolerance and acceptance of sin. That's a word for this age today. The congregation was divided over whether to accept this, and that disunity must have been part of Paul's motivation for suggesting removing that person from the congregation. The purpose of withdrawal is always to bring the person to repentance and restoration.

***3 For though absent in body, I am present in spirit; and as if present, I have already pronounced judgment on the one who did such a thing. 4 When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, 5 you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord. (1 Corinthians 5:3-5, ESV).***

Paul was dismayed that they allowed the sin to go on without addressing it.

***6 Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? 7 Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. 8 Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. (1 Corinthians 5:6-8, ESV).***

He lets them know that evil creeps in quietly and gently. It grows in the same way that a loaf of bread grows with the tiniest bit of leaven (yeast) that is put into the dough. Interestingly, leaven is used in the Bible sometimes to mean a bit of a good thing and sometimes a bit of a bad thing.

The main idea of leaven is that a small amount of anything can have a great effect. This is the reality behind the symbolism observed today in Jewish homes before Passover. The family does extensive cleaning of *chametz* (leavened products). The search begins in the days and weeks leading up to the night before the Passover, when every corner in the house is ritually searched with a feather and a wooden spoon to gather any leaven that might have fallen in a corner. This is a picture of how we, too, must search the corners of our hearts and remove the smallest bit of sin. Paul continues.

***9 I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people— 10 not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. 11 But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one. 12 For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? 13 God judges those outside. "Purge the evil person from among you." (1 Corinthians 5:9-13, ESV).***

Paul again calls for holiness, urging us to disassociate from the leaven in our own lives. This includes sexual immorality, greed, cheating others, or those who have idols in their lives. We don't need to be condescending or hateful, but we do need to be careful not to get too enmeshed with those caught up in sin. And he's talking about fellow believers who are caught up in sin. This warning isn't about our association with unbelievers, but with believers who are caught up in perpetual ongoing sin. If we associate freely with them, we give assent to what they are doing.

What are some takeaways from these two chapters? First and foremost, it is a call to be very cautious about having spiritual pride. It is something that easily seeps into a church and always leads to trouble. There is a tendency in the heart of man that is prideful. We must guard against this. It always brings disunity. We must remember that our bodies are Temples of the Holy Spirit. We're to be super careful about setting ourselves up as the judge over others, but we must make any judgment based solely on the word of God and not on our own principles or standards.

When the body of Christ chooses to look the other way in the face of egregious sin on the part of a believer in our midst, we're allowing something in that can grow destructive. We're talking about OPEN FLAUNTED SIN IN THE BODY OF CHRIST. Church discipline is always for restoration. But there must be repentance before there can be restoration. It is not to have a whole group of people who believe they are "holier than another." He speaks about egregious sin that is divisive. I have always focused on teaching the word and letting the Holy Spirit work in people's lives. I do not teach or preach "sin management." But if someone is open and notorious, flaunting their sin, and rebellious in their handling of sin, I have confronted them.

Sin has a corrupting influence that is much like leaven. A small amount of corrupting sin in a church can have HUGE consequences. Pride is the worst corrupting influence of all. This applies to a church. It applies to a family. And it applies to each of us individually. Sins we ignore or gloss over can affect our church, our marriage, our relationship with our children, and ourselves. The charge is to "cleanse out the old leaven." We should be careful to esteem others over ourselves.

Let us pray.

Union Grove is one of the oldest Baptist communities of faith in the State of Texas dating back to 1844. Pastor Faber McMullen may be reached by email at uniongrove362@gmail.com or by snail mail at: 15301 FM 362, Navasota, Texas 77868. Tel: 936-825-1227 (Edited and proofed by Amanda Neese- Webster, Texas.) All financial gifts to this ministry are tax-deductible as a 501 (c) (3) Corporation.