A Church Out Of Step: Sex & Lawsuits – Doing Theology In Culture

Key Passage: 1 Corinthians 5 – 6

Summary: In the second major section of 1 Corinthians Paul is addressing four areas of conflict within the church. Division is a gospel problem. While the Corinthian church as many gifts, resources, and leaders they are immature in the gospel. The whole letter is focused on establishing the church by lining them up more fully with the gospel they already believe.

To work out the divisions and problems they are experiencing, they don't need some expert to uncover a deep hidden truth of scripture, they don't some new teachings to work things out, what they need to use the teaching they have already received, the foundation Paul has already given them. Paul isn't simply handing down answers or making official rulings to solve their problems; he is reasoning with the Corinthians and training them to think for themselves and work out how to line up with the gospel and the basic principles that guide us in lining up with Jesus and his ways.

Paul is reminding them of what they have already been taught and basically asking four questions:

What's happening? Paul rebukes the Corinthians for being tolerant of serious sexual immorality within the church while being intolerant of one another over lesser personal disputes, even taking each other to court. Instead of dealing with a primary issue they are suing each other over secondary issues and bringing shame on the whole community.

What has Christ done, and who are we now that we believe? Just as God rescued Israel from slavery and called them to live differently among the nations so the world could see who he is, he has rescued the church and called us to live as his distinct holy people in the world.

- For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed" (5:7)
- "…you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God." (6:11)
- " …You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body." (6:19-20)

"In Jesus we are a new holy community called to reflect the goodness and beauty of God in this world." SO BE WHO YOU ARE.

What principles have we already been given to guide us in living the gospel way of life?

a. We are to be family to one another, seeking each other's good and building one another up rather than harming one another for personal advantage.

   - “Why not rather suffer wrong? Why not rather be defrauded?” (6:7)
   - “You yourselves wrong and defraud—even your own brothers!” (6:8)
   - “Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ” (6:15)

   If we belong to Christ, we belong to one another. We share the same Father and Spirit and are family (6:11, 17, 19). Taking one another to court over lesser matters is a defeat that damages the family and brings shame on the whole community (6:5–7).

b. We are to glorify God with our bodies, and that includes avoiding sexual immorality.

   - “The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord” (6:13)
   - “Flee from sexual immorality.” (6:18)
   - “Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you” (6:19)
   - “You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body” (6:19–20)

What best aligns with these principles and reflects the gospel in this situation?

1. **Deal with the primary issue and remove the sexually immoral person from your gatherings.** Do this with a humble, broken heart and in hopes he will come to his senses over time. (note: if he were broken-hearted and repentant after sleeping with his stepmother, making an effort to change his ways, Paul would be praising him and encouraging the church to welcome him and support him.)
2. **Resolve disputes around secondary issues within the church family rather than in the courts.**
3. **Stay engaged with the world but avoid sexual immorality**. Don’t withdraw from the world or stand at a distance judging people. Instead, get involved, build relationships, befriend those who don’t know God, and model his ways while refusing to participate in sexual immorality (5:9-13).

Discuss in community:

How can you align with these principles and reflect the gospel in your situation?