



Study Guide: 1 Corinthians – Chapter 5

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This study guide provides an educational overview of 1 Corinthians Chapter 5 using a verse-by-verse structure, theological context, and application-oriented insights grounded in Scripture.

Introduction

1 Corinthians Chapter 5 addresses a serious issue of immorality within the Corinthian church and the appropriate response of the community. This chapter contributes to the overall flow of the letter by highlighting the necessity of church discipline and purity in the body of Christ. Readers should watch for how Paul balances confrontation with restoration, emphasizing both the holiness required among believers and the responsibility of the church to maintain its witness.

Context

The immediate literary context of 1 Corinthians 5 follows Paul's opening chapters where he addresses divisions and moral issues in the church. The letter is written by the Apostle Paul to the church in Corinth, a cosmopolitan city known for its moral laxity and diverse population. The specific issue in this chapter involves a man living in a relationship considered incestuous by Jewish and Christian standards. Paul's role as apostle includes correcting such behavior to uphold the covenantal holiness expected of God's people. The setting is a local church struggling with internal discipline amid a broader pagan culture.

Outline

The chapter can be divided into three main movements. First, Paul confronts the church about tolerating a grievous sin within their community. Second, he instructs them on the necessity of removing the offender to preserve the church's purity. Third, Paul clarifies the purpose of such discipline, distinguishing between judgment of those inside the church and those outside it, and urging a holy separation from immoral influences.

Verse-by-Verse Study



Verses 1–3: Paul expresses shock that the Corinthian believers are proud rather than grieving over a case of sexual immorality involving a man living with his father’s wife. He calls for decisive action, even though he is absent, demonstrating the seriousness of the offense.

Verses 4–5: Paul instructs the church to assemble and expel the immoral man, delivering him to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord. This paradoxical language emphasizes the goal of discipline as ultimately redemptive.

Verses 6–8: Using the metaphor of yeast, Paul warns that a little sin can permeate the whole community. He exhorts the Corinthians to remove the “old yeast” of malice and wickedness and instead celebrate the festival of sincerity and truth, symbolizing a new life in Christ.

Verses 9–13: Paul clarifies that his earlier instructions to avoid immoral people do not apply to unbelievers in the world but specifically to those within the church who claim to be believers yet persist in sinful behavior. He emphasizes the responsibility of the church to judge and remove such individuals to maintain holiness and witness.

Key Themes

One key theme is the necessity of church discipline to preserve the purity of the community. The chapter underscores the danger of tolerating sin and the impact it has on the entire body. Another theme is the redemptive purpose of discipline, aiming not to condemn but to restore the sinner’s spirit. The distinction between judging insiders and outsiders highlights the church’s unique covenantal responsibility. Finally, the metaphor of yeast illustrates how sin can spread if unchecked, calling for vigilance and holiness among believers.

Cross-References

Matthew 18:15-17 provides a parallel teaching on church discipline, emphasizing confrontation and restoration within the community. Hebrews 12:5-11 offers insight into the purpose of divine discipline as a form of loving correction. 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15 similarly instructs believers to avoid those living in persistent sin. Ephesians 5:3-11 highlights the call to holiness and separation from immorality, reinforcing the principles Paul sets forth in 1 Corinthians 5.



Application

Modern discipleship requires churches to address sin within their communities with both firmness and grace. This chapter challenges believers to cultivate an environment where holiness is valued and sin is confronted, not ignored. It calls for loving accountability that seeks restoration rather than mere punishment. Additionally, it reminds believers to discern between those inside the faith community and the wider world, maintaining purity without isolating from those who do not yet believe. The metaphor of yeast encourages vigilance against small compromises that can undermine spiritual health.

Summary

1 Corinthians Chapter 5 confronts a serious moral failure within the Corinthian church and instructs believers on the necessity and purpose of church discipline. Paul calls for the removal of an unrepentant offender to protect the community's holiness and to promote eventual restoration. The chapter balances judgment with hope, emphasizing that discipline serves the spiritual well-being of both the individual and the church. Through vivid imagery and clear instruction, Paul guides the church in maintaining purity amid a morally compromised culture.