

KEEPING THE CHURCH PURE

1 CORINTHIANS

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. In The Roman World Of Paul's Time, "Corinthian" Had Become Proverbial For Luxury, Lust, And Licentiousness.
- B. The Establishment Of The Church In Such A City Was A Notable Proof Of The Power Of The Gospel.
- C. Distressing Conditions, Threatening The Purity Of The Church In Corinth, Did Develop And Were The Occasion Of Instruction From Paul Which Is Invaluable To Us Today In Keeping The Church Pure.

II. AIM.

- A. To Show How Paul Dealt With The Defilements Of Division, Immorality, Disorderly Worship And False Doctrine.
- B. To Learn From These Principles How We Are To Keep The Church Pure Today.

III. OUTLINE.

- A. THE CHURCH IS TO BE KEPT PURE BY UNITY. (*Chapters 1 - 4*)
  1. By speaking the same thing. (*1:10; 4:17*)
  2. By being at peace on matters of judgment or human opinion. (*1:10*)
  3. By following Christ, not man. (*1:12-13*)
    - a. They were not to be impressed by the wisdom of men. (*1:18-20; 2:5; 3:18-23; 4:6*)
      - 1) Paul had avoided any display of human learning. (*1:17; 2:1, 4, 13*)
      - 2) The gospel was not designed to appeal to the self-sufficient "know-it-all," but to the poor in spirit.

- 3) After the greatest philosophers throughout the centuries had utterly failed to find a satisfying answer to life, it pleased God to announce to the world the saving message of abundant life, through humble men, in simple words. (1:21; 2:6-9)
- b. Allegiance to men, with its jealousy and divisions, was a sign of spiritual immaturity. (3:1-3)
- c. Members of the church make up the holy temple of God and any man who defiles the temple of God, by causing division, will be destroyed by God. (3:16-17)
- B. THE CHURCH IS TO BE KEPT PURE BY DISCIPLINE. (Chapters 5 - 10)
1. The church must administer corrective discipline to its own members. (5)
- a. Tolerance of moral impurity in the church is a grievous error.
- 1) The sin of incest in Corinth would not have been tolerated even by pagans. (ver. 1)
- a) They should have been overwhelmed with shame because of the disgrace brought upon the church. (ver. 2)
- b) Failure to punish the offender was criminal neglect.
- 2) Tolerance of such grievous sins leaves the soul involved in a state of condemnation. (ver. 5)
- 3) Tolerance of sin acts as a contaminating influence upon the whole church. (ver. 6)
- b. What must be done?
- 1) The assembled church must withdraw fellowship from this person. (vs. 4-5)
- 2) The contaminating leaven must be cast out. (vs. 6-7)
- 3) Christians must not associate with brethren who persist in sin. (vs. 9-13)

2. The church must arbitrate disputes within its fellowship. (6:1-11)

a. Members of the church are not to concern themselves with judging and punishing those in the world. (5:9-13)

b. But, in contrast, members of the church are not to take one another before judges of the world to settle their own disputes. (6:1-8)

1) Lawsuits among brethren in Corinth showed their lack of understanding of the high calling and destiny of a Christian. (vs. 1-4)

2) Lawsuits showed their lack of respect and concern for one another. (vs. 5-8)

3) Lawsuits showed their lack of understanding of the difference their baptism and sanctification in Christ was to make in their behavior. (vs. 9-11)

3. Individual members of the church must exercise SELF-DISCIPLINE. (6:12-20 and Chapter 7)

a. Even in matters of moral indifference, the Christian must exercise self-discipline lest he become enslaved to physical appetites. (ver. 12)

b. But fornication is not a matter of moral indifference and total abstinence must be maintained by the strictest self-discipline. (vs. 13-20)

1) The body is not for fornication, but for the Lord. (ver. 13)

a) The body will be raised. (ver. 14)

b) Our bodies are members of Christ. (ver. 15-17)

c) Fornication is a sin against one's own body. (ver. 18)

d) The Christian's body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. (ver. 19)

- e) Our bodies are not our own. (*vs. 19-20*)
- 2) We must glorify God in both body and spirit. (*ver. 20*)
- c. Purity is to be preserved through marriage. (*Chapter 7*)
  - 1) The husband and wife are responsible to and for one another's moral purity. (*vs. 1-4*)
  - 2) Fulfillment of sexual needs in marriage is not only a right, but a duty. (*ver. 5*)
  - 3) It was good in the distressful time in which Paul wrote the Corinthians to remain unmarried, but it was better even then to marry than to be aflame with passion. (*vs. 9, 26-38*)
  - 4) Christ himself, while here on earth, taught on the subject of marriage. (*vs. 10-11*)
    - a) In all of Christ's personal teaching on marriage, he was speaking to Jews who knew the law of God on marriage.
    - b) One of the best known and best kept laws of God was that they were not to marry unbelievers.
    - c) Therefore, in Christ's instruction on marriage, He did not deal with marriage to unbelievers.
  - 5) At the time Paul was writing to the church at Corinth, there were some Christians married to unbelievers. (*vs. 12-13*)
    - a) Paul came into a heathen city and preached the gospel.
    - b) In some families, one mate obeyed the gospel and the other did not.
    - c) Evidently some thought they must leave their unbelieving mate. (*ver. 14*)
    - d) Because Christ did not personally deal with such a predicament (*vs. 12 & 25*),

Paul, by inspiration, gives the answer. (vs. 12-38)

6) Paul dealt with the subject of a Christian marrying an unbeliever in other scriptures.

a) The unmarried Christian is not to be "mismated with unbelievers." (2 Cor. 6:14)

b) The widow is to marry "only in the Lord." (1 Cor. 7:39)

4. Not only self-discipline, but self-sacrifice is required to keep the church pure. (Chapters 8 - 10)

a. Paul sacrificed certain personal rights for others.

1) Paul was willing to sacrifice his right of eating meat. (8:13; 9:4)

2) Paul sacrificed his right to a wife. (9:5)

3) Paul sacrificed his right of remuneration from the Corinthians. (9:6-15)

b. We must avoid any hindrance to the moral purity of others or ourselves.

1) We must be willing to sacrifice much which may seem innocent to us to avoid causing a brother's conscience to be defiled. (1 Cor. 8:9-13; 10:24, 28-33; 11:1)

2) We must be as willing to exercise self-control in winning the Christian race as an athlete is in winning the Olympics. (9:23-27)

3) We must not be so self-confident that we carelessly indulge in certain things that could lead to impurity. (10:1-12)

C. THE CHURCH IS TO BE KEPT PURE BY DECENT AND ORDERLY WORSHIP. (Chapters 11 - 14)

1. Behavior of women in public worship.

- a. The freedom and equality of women in Christ was not to be abused by defying prevailing customs in the community which signified woman's subordination to man.
  - 1) There is still an established chain of authority which was not done away in Christ. (11:3)
  - 2) In public worship in Corinth, women were not to throw off their veils. (11:5-6)
    - a) These were coverings worn not just for worship, but in every public place and symbolized subordination.
    - b) Veils are not worn in public places in America today and do not symbolize subordination.
- b. Even though customs change, the abiding principle involved in the chain of authority established by God remains the same.
  - 1) In public worship today, women are not to dress or behave in any way that would suggest an attitude of insubordination.
  - 2) Even seemingly insignificant problems of dress and decorum must be solved by considering eternal principles.
- c. The subordination of woman to man is not inconsistent with personal equality and mutual dependence. (11:11-12)

## 2. The observance of the Lord's Supper.

- a. The observance of the Lord's Supper had been corrupted by the Corinthians.
  - 1) They had combined it with a common feast, making it predominantly social rather than spiritual. (11:20)
  - 2) The divisions in the church were apparent at these feasts. (11:18, 21)
  - 3) The poor seem to have been excluded from the feasts. The affluent ate before them and became full and drunk. (11:21)
- b. Paul rebukes them for such deplorable conduct. (11:22)

c. Paul instructs them as to the seriousness of desecrating the Lord's Supper.

1) The Lord had given Paul detailed instructions concerning the institution and observance of the Lord's Supper. (11:23-26)

2) Their conduct was bringing them into condemnation. (11:27-32)

a) Their behavior in worship (not the worthiness of the worshiper) is the subject being considered. (11:27)

b) Partaking of the Lord's Supper without thinking of its meaning and significance was eating and drinking damnation to themselves. (ver. 29)

3) They were to correct such corrupted worship.

a) When they came together to observe the Lord's Supper, they were to observe it together. (11:33)

b) They were to satisfy their physical appetites at home. (11:34)

### 3. The use of spiritual gifts.

a. The spiritual gifts given to build up the church had become the occasion for pride, envy and jealousy.

b. Paul shows them that they are all dependent upon the one source for the different gifts and they are all dependent upon one another in the one body.

1) The one source of all the different gifts was the Spirit. (12:4-11)

2) They were all members of the one body of Christ, and therefore dependent upon one another for the life and well-being of the body. (12:12-31)

a) Paul, by his illustration of the human body, shows the absurdity of a

member of the church being so immobilized by envy that he refuses to render the service which is within his power to contribute. (12:15-20)

b) It is equally as foolish for one member to be proud and feel that his contribution is more important and necessary and dismiss, without thought, the importance of the function of the seemingly less gifted. (12:21-30)

c. Paul shows the Corinthians a more excellent way. (12:31 & Chapter 13)

1) Envy and jealousy over spiritual gifts is antagonistic to love.

2) Without love any gift or sacrifice in the Christian religion is vain. (13:1-3)

3) Thus the foolishness of envy and strife over temporary spiritual gifts, is contrasted to development of the enduring quality of love. (13:4-8)

d. They not only put the emphasis on the wrong thing, but on the wrong gift. (Chapter 14)

1) The gift of prophecy is of more value than the gift of tongues. (vs. 1, 3, 5, 12, 19)

a) Edification of the church is the most important consideration. (vs. 3-5, 19, 26)

b) Understanding what is being said is necessary to edification. (vs. 6-20)

2) For decent, orderly worship, Paul limits the use of spiritual gifts. (vs. 26-40)

D. THE CHURCH IS TO BE KEPT PURE BY REFUTING DOCTRINAL ERROR. (Chapter 15)

1. Some Christians in Corinth were denying the resurrection of the dead.

2. Paul makes a powerful defense of this doctrine, so fundamental to the Christian faith.

- The church is to be kept pure by meeting its financial commitments.
- a. Christ was seen alive after His resurrection (on numerous occasions) by many different people. (vs. 5-9)
  - b. The gospel message, the Christian religion, salvation from sin, and the faith and hope of all believers would be vain without the resurrection. (vs. 12-19)
  - c. Paul reaffirms the resurrection of Christ which assures the fulfillment of the whole redemptive purpose of God. (vs. 20-34)
  - d. Paul uses illustrations from the physical world to show the reasonableness of the resurrection. (vs. 35-44)
  - e. We have victory over death through our Lord Jesus Christ. (vs. 45-57)

3. We must hold fast to the truth.

- a. Faith determines moral conduct. (15:32b-34)
- b. Abounding in the work of the Lord depends upon steadfast faith. (15:58)

E. THE CHURCH IS TO BE KEPT PURE BY MEETING ITS FINANCIAL COMMITMENTS. (16:1-3)

1. By giving regularly - upon the first day of the week.
2. By giving individually - each has a responsibility.
3. By giving proportionately - as God has prospered.

### III. CONCLUSION.

A. Summary Of Principles For Maintaining The Purity Of The Church.

1. The church is to be kept pure through unity by following Christ, not men.
2. The church is to be kept pure by discipline; corporate discipline as well as individual self-discipline and self-sacrifice.
3. The church is to be kept pure through decent and orderly worship.

4. The church is to be kept pure by refuting doctrinal error.

5. The church is to be kept pure by meeting its financial commitments.

B. Even In Changing Times And In Various Cultures The Purity Of The Church Will Be Maintained By Following These Principles.