

1 Corinthians 5:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife.

Analysis

It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you (ἀκούεται πορνεία ἐν ὑμῖν)—the Greek *porneia* (πορνεία) encompasses all sexual immorality, but here refers to incest. **Such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles**—even pagan Corinth, notorious for sexual licentiousness, condemned this sin. Roman law explicitly prohibited marriage to one's stepmother (Gaius, Institutes 1.63). The phrase **that one should have his father's wife** describes a man living with his stepmother, likely after his father's death.

Paul's shock is palpable—sexual immorality existed in the church that pagans rejected. The Corinthians' inflated spirituality (*phusioo*, "puffed up") had produced moral blindness. Their tolerance wasn't grace but compromise. The case was public knowledge ("reported commonly"), demanding immediate action. This verse introduces the chapter's theme: the church's responsibility to maintain purity through discipline, not to punish but to protect the body and restore the sinner.

Historical Context

Corinth was a Roman colony rebuilt by Julius Caesar in 44 BC, notorious for sexual immorality associated with Aphrodite's temple. While the extent of temple prostitution is debated, sexual ethics were lax—concubinage, prostitution, and divorce were commonplace. Into this context, Paul planted a church calling believers to radical sexual purity as temples of the Holy Spirit (6:19).

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. When does tolerance of sin become complicity? How do you balance grace with the call to holiness?
2. What 'reported commonly' sins might exist in your church that require loving confrontation?
3. How does understanding your body as a temple of the Holy Spirit shape your view of sexual ethics?

Interlinear Text

Ὅλως	ἀκούεται	ἐν	ὑμῖν	πορνεία	καὶ	τοιαύτη
commonly	It is reported	among	you	fornication	and	such
G3654	G191	G1722	G5213	G4202	G2532	G5108
πορνεία	ἥτις	οὐδὲ	ἐν	τοῖς	ἔθνεσιν	ὀνομάζεται,
fornication	as	not so much	among	the Gentiles	as named	
G4202	G3748	G3761	G1722	G3588	G1484	G3687
ὥστε	γυναικὰ	τινα	τοῦ	πατρὸς	ἔχειν	
that	wife	one	his father's	should have		
G5620	G1135	G5100	G3588	G3962	G2192	

Additional Cross-References

Revelation 21:8 (Parallel theme): But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.

Revelation 2:21 (Parallel theme): And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not.

Colossians 3:5 (Parallel theme): Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:

Ephesians 5:3 (Parallel theme): But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints;

Leviticus 18:8 (Parallel theme): The nakedness of thy father's wife shalt thou not uncover: it is thy father's nakedness.

1 Corinthians 5:11 (Parallel theme): But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.

Galatians 5:19 (Parallel theme): Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,

Acts 15:20 (Parallel theme): But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood.

Acts 15:29 (Parallel theme): That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well.

Jeremiah 2:33 (Parallel theme): Why trimmest thou thy way to seek love? therefore hast thou also taught the wicked ones thy ways.