

1 Corinthians 5:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators:

Analysis

I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators—Paul references an earlier, now-lost letter (the 'previous letter') instructing the Corinthians to avoid close association (*synanamignum*, "mix together with") sexually immoral people. This verse clarifies that church discipline isn't new; Paul had previously taught separation from persistent, unrepentant sin. *Pornos* (πόρνος, "fornicator") denotes those practicing sexual immorality as a lifestyle.

The instruction "not to company with" didn't mean zero contact (that's impossible, v. 10) but refusing intimate fellowship—particularly shared meals, which in ancient culture signified acceptance and unity. The church must maintain boundaries distinguishing it from the world while remaining in the world as witnesses. This verse introduces Paul's critical distinction (vv. 10-13) between judging insiders versus outsiders—the church disciplines its members but doesn't police the world.

Historical Context

First Corinthians isn't Paul's first letter to Corinth; he references a 'previous letter' here and possibly in 2 Corinthians 2:3-4, 7:8. Ancient Christians often shared meals (agape feasts, love feasts) expressing unity (Acts 2:42-46). Refusing table fellowship was a strong statement of non-recognition, similar to Jesus eating with sinners to show acceptance (Luke 15:2) versus the church's refusal to eat with the immoral 'brother' (v. 11).

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How do you maintain relationships with non-Christians without endorsing or participating in their sin?
2. What does it mean to be 'in the world but not of it' in your specific context?
3. How can you show both grace to unbelievers and standards for church members without hypocrisy?

Interlinear Text

Ἐγραψα ὑμῖν ἐν τῇ ἐπιστολῇ μὴ συναναμίγνυσθαι
I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company
G1125 G5213 G1722 G3588 G1992 G3361 G4874

πόρνοις
with fornicators
G4205

Additional Cross-References

Ephesians 5:11 (Parallel theme): And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.

2 Thessalonians 3:14 (Parallel theme): And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.

2 Corinthians 6:14 (Parallel theme): Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

2 Thessalonians 3:6 (Parallel theme): Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.

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