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[Do not associate](#)

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This came from a post I made on a discussion group

I have a couple of thoughts on what Paul may have been saying in 1 Corinthians 5 about "not associating" with certain people.

But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any SO-CALLED BROTHER if he should be an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler - not even to eat with such a one. For what do I have to do with OUTSIDERS? 1 Corinthians 5:11-12 (NASB)

It has been suggested that Paul had the "incestuous Christian brother" in mind as he wrote this, and it is an excellent observation for it is right within the context. Of course, it is often assumed that he was a Christian brother. I have learned that to suggest that he was NOT a Christian brother easily causes one to go on the defensive and assume that it violates the truth of salvation by grace. We might argue that since believers can fall into all kinds of sinful behavior and therefore to say that this man was not saved comes from a *works for salvation* viewpoint. But what if that had nothing to do with what Paul was saying?

What if the situation with the Corinthian believers was that they failed to distinguish the wisdom of the Spirit from the wisdom of the world? What if, in doing so, they came to the place of trying to mesh the two wisdoms together? What if it was because they were swayed by the claims of men? Paul made his point clear when he said, "I wrote you not to associate with any so-called brother". KJV says, "a man that is CALLED a brother". Here's what I'm getting at: Paul was NOT suggesting that they disassociate with any and all who fell into sin, but only with those who claimed to be brothers. This was not something new that Paul just brought up in this place, but was merely the continuation of the distinctions he had been making the whole time.

The fact is that when believers find themselves falling into sin their words usually reflect their own disillusionment with themselves. Such believers rarely make much noise about being brothers, but will instead either steer clear of mentioning it altogether (out of shame) or if pushed to it will speak only of their failures. Haven't you been aware of the huge difference in those who realize the futility in trying to come across as spiritual, and simply come as one who is accepted in the righteousness of Christ? Ah, grace, wonderful grace. For here we have the privilege of reminding one another what Christ has done for us and is doing IN us! And in this, we ourselves are blessed for we end up reminding ourselves of our true righteousness at the same time. And then, when that brother (or sister) is restored all are encouraged and reminded that this life is indeed miraculous.

But this is not what Paul was referring to here, is it? It sure doesn't sound like it to me. He clarified by saying, *I'm not talking about disassociating with the immoral of the world, but with those who are claiming to be brothers while falling into these sins*. So, do we conclude that we might as well disassociate with ALL believers since we could CERTAINLY find cause based on the LIST: immoral, covetous, idolater, reviler, drunkard, swindler? Or do we realize the obvious insinuation that Paul was warning them about empty talkers? In other words, watch out for brothers (those claiming righteousness) who are overly concerned with convincing you that they are, and don't associate with these brothers whose lives were (unashamedly) characterized by immorality. But what is this association that he says not to join in?

Do not be deceived: 'Bad company corrupts good morals.' Become sober-minded "righteously" (that's the literal), and stop sinning; for some have no knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame
1 Corinthians 15:34

The believers in Corinth had given so much credibility to words (as we do today) that they accepted the CLAIMS OF MAN on an equal par with the life of God. They were adopting the life principles (the wisdom of the world) of those who were good at making a verbal case out it as if the basis upon which the smooth talkers lived was the same as that of the life of Christ.

Become sober-minded righteously, and stop sinning; for some have no knowledge of God. Paul wasn't shaming them because they allowed unbelievers to hang around them, but that they were not even aware that some of those they associated with had NO knowledge of God. They had adopted a basis of fellowship that made good logic just as valid as the life and righteousness of God through Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. It's not that we need to go around challenging every claim, but that we never make claims an issue in the first place. How so?

For I determined to know nothing among you except Christ and Him crucified 1 Corinthians 2:2

Those who stand on their own righteousness stick out like a sore thumb when believers refuse to judge righteousness based on verbal claims but ONLY on the reality of the righteousness of Christ. Once we give into even one duty or performance-standard or acceptable claim then we create a place for the righteousness of man to hang out and blend among us. And once that happens we also begin creating loopholes by which we ALSO can appear righteous, and that is law, and the power of sin is the law.

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; 1 Corinthians 15:56

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