

## *Temple Life*

### **Sin in the Christian Assembly**

Things were busy at the temple of God in Corinth. The place was exciting. The Christian conversions were thrilling. Some who had been blind pagan idolaters, also some local party drunks as well as some involved in immoral sex were now forgiven and clean. The grace of God was amazing. Without any works or penance they were being fully accepted by the Lord – now and forever – based on Christ being crucified (judged) in place of them. Results were happening. And further, the church had quite a bit of gift (spiritual ability) in their service for the Lord.

So they were glorying in all this grace and love of God. Who wouldn't!

But in a personal letter from their Lord through His apostle, they were told, "*your glorying is not good*". They should have been grieving, not rejoicing. There is a time to laugh and a time to cry. Somehow they mixed up the two. For with all their positive results there was a believer among them involved in sexual immorality – and they tolerated such in "love". But sin was likened to yeast that spreads. The assembly was instructed to remove the active yeast by excommunicating the sinning brother: discipline.

Brothers Rufus and Beni were shocked. Rufus disagreed at first and said, "Isn't this legalistic judging"? Isn't it like an army shooting their wounded – unloving without grace? But Beni said to look at it more like spiritual surgery: cutting out a cancer to bring healing – tough love. And didn't the letter teach that it was to destroy the flesh of the brother, restoring the testimony of the holy house of God? The assembly obeyed.

Therefore, the next time the church assembled together, it was a different kind of meeting. There wasn't any glorying this time. In fact Rufus and Julia shed tears. And it was in the very name of the "*the Lord Jesus Christ*" (his authority and wisdom) that the sinning brother was publically renounced, and that he wouldn't be an active part of the church fellowship for the present. The assembly was told to not even eat with him. He was to taste life without Christian fellowship and experience the heartbreak of sin and Satan's world – like the prodigal. Perhaps this would destroy his fleshly pursuits.

Though the church had known great grace, there was great fear that day. And it was healthy. The assembly renewed its calling as a holy temple. Some feared and repented of their apathy toward sin. By dealing with sin, the church had cleared itself before God.

The church was told that God would judge the outside world but they were to judge those that were inside the Christian fellowship. They were not to withdraw from worldly contacts nor try to change the world but they were to withdraw from Christians living in sin to purify the holy temple of God. Pacifists in the world but activists in the church.

But one day there was a time to laugh and glory again. The punishment had taken place. The brother had evidently learned his lesson God's way. Now even though he had sinned, it was time to forgive and comfort in love: grace!

{Some Scriptures for the truth of the above story. "... Judge them that are within ... put away from among yourselves that wicked person" 1Cor. 5:12, 13. The problem and God's solution, 1Cor. 5. Also 2Thess. 3:10-15. The punishment and then the receiving back of the sinning brother, 2Cor. 2:1-11. The clearing of the assembly before the Lord in dealing with sin, 2Cor. 7:8-12.}