

Friends and fellow travelers,

I think it's time I wrote a thank you letter: a thank you letter for this extraordinary past year.

I am grateful for the faces of my family and friends: their smiles, frowns, and smirks, unmasked, alive, joyful, expectant. I am grateful for the times I see those faces in person and perhaps even more grateful when I know those faces have overcome the frustration of Zoom links to show up in their little square.

I am thankful for the perseverance of the saints. I don't mean that in the theological (TULIP) way; I mean it literally. I am grateful for those who keep leaning into the word, into the body, into the still small voice of the spirit, into the way of Jesus. Their perseverance sparks my own.

I am grateful for the catastrophic state of our national politics. Never before has it seemed so clear the type of king that is needed to lead, to judge, to save, to unite the nations, to unite heaven and earth. His name won't appear on our ballots, and still he rules through the surrendered hearts of his people.

I am grateful for toilet paper and fresh produce and bleach wipes and light switches that do what they should. How much and for how very long, I have taken the extraordinary blessing of ordinary things for granted. May I never go back.

I am grateful for God's presence that does not flee from chaos but rather calms the storm, stills the waves, abides, and invites us to abide with him.

I am grateful for the church that has never closed, but has listened and watched and waited and shifted and moved into the cracks of a broken world.

I am grateful for what's to come, because I believe in the one who was and is and is to come.

I am grateful for all the ways this life has been disrupted, for it has made clear the life that cannot be shaken.

I could keep going. But I should also say I could draft a complaint letter just as quickly. This year has blessed; this year has broken. What is needed is the wisdom to see, to discern the foolishness of the world from the glory of the kingdom.

In this chapter Paul is calling on the Corinthians to lay hold of this wisdom (and to lay down foolishness), to discern the blessed from the broken, to hold fast to one and turn quickly from the other.

Good bible readers will do the work to recognize the unique features of Paul's original audience, their time and place. Spirit-filled bible readers will also hear the word that speaks to our time and place.

*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

It's been a heck of a year. There is much to be grateful for. There is much great work yet to do.

Unified, spirit-filled, servants of the Lord, stewards of the King, let us give thanks and go to work.

Matthew

## **1 Corinthians 5 Outline**

*1It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife. 2And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you.*

- Remember that the "you" here is plural. What might at first seem like Paul calling out an individual is in actuality Paul calling out the church for a lack of discernment
- Note a pattern here: immorality stems from arrogance; arrogance is countered by mourning and removal of the offense.
- What strikes you in this passage?

*3For though absent in body, I am present in spirit; and as if present, I have already pronounced judgment on the one who did such a thing. 4When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, 5you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.*

- Paul has already spoken of unity, spirit-filled lives, and apostolic authority. Here the three come together in a consequential way.
- By the spirit, believers are unified and empowered to discern such matters.
- Pay close attention to verse 5, especially the “so.”
- What stands out to you in this passage?
- What connections might we draw to our own church body?

*6Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? 7Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. 8Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.*

- Boasting stands in the way of cleansing.
- Christ's sacrifice is cause for celebration.
- Malice and evil evidence one kingdom; sincerity and truth mark another.
- What challenge, encouragement, comfort, or command do you see here?

*9I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people— 10not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. 11But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one. 12For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? 13God judges those outside. “Purge the evil person from among you.”*

- Follow carefully Paul's exhortation here.
- What should we expect from the world?
- What should our response look like?
- What should we expect from inside the church?
- What should our response be?