

1 Corinthians 5

Good evening and thank you for joining us. Would you please turn in your bibles to 1 Corinthians chapter 5?

Last week we saw Paul calling the Corinthians to faithfulness, and to forsake their desire for success as how the world defines it.

As we've seen several times in our study, the Corinthian believers were divided over issues when they should have been united. Here in chapter 5, we'll see the church united when they actually should have been divided.

Tonight, we see Paul tackle issues of immorality head on, and he pulls no punches as the apostle deals with the subject of church discipline in the Christian community. And it's no random fact that this comes after Paul's pleading of need for unity, because a drastic action in the church body couldn't take place if there wasn't first unity in the body.

The title of tonight's message is PRACTICAL CHRISTIANITY, PT 1

Let's pray

Now if you'll recall, several times Paul has urged and pleaded with the Corinthians to be unified, to stop the silly divisions and the favoritism and all those things-do you recall that? And as much as Paul has been gentle with his beloved church, the gloves begin to come off as Paul points to a specific instance of tragic failure in the Corinthian church...

1 It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named^[fn] among the Gentiles—that a man has his father's wife! Paul expresses his shock-a young man in the church was having sex up with his

step-mom. **SHOW PIC** This was something you'd see on Jerry Springer, not at church. And Paul was appalled... **CLOSE PIC**

Even as wicked and sinful as the culture of Corinth was, the entire city was abuzz about the member of the Corinthian church who was living in immorality with his stepmother.

Even today, the world loves to see Christians involved in immorality don't they? They lick their chops when Christians become entangled in some salacious sin because it eases their conscience and justifies their own immoral lifestyle.

Because of the affect a Christians fall has on those around them, one of Satan's favorite tactics is to get Christians involved in immorality. Satan runs the same plays over and over again because they're so effective.

It's very easy for Satan to bring Christians into temptation in the area of sexual sin because he knows our desire to show agape love—the caring, sharing, tenderness, concern, and compassion in which believers are called to walk—the agape. But Satan will try and twist the agape into the area of eros, or sensual love.

I believe the simple solution of Scripture to this subtle strategy of Satan is for men to disciple, encourage, and counsel other men, and for women to do the same with other women.

Tragically, lots of Christians think they are immune from falling into sexual immorality. Remember David was a man after God's own heart, a man who loved the Lord deeply and was honored by the Lord. But hey if it can happen to David, it can happen to us! **1**

Corinthians 10:12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

2 And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you.

Paul's not only upset about this despicable sin, he's grieved at the church's response to the sin.

The Corinthian Christian's weren't only tolerating this awful immorality, they were proud of their tolerance of it!

You can almost hear the Corinthians boast, 'Jesus said judge not lest you be judged! Far be it from us to tell someone else what's right and wrong. We teach grace!'

And this is the mistaken attitude of many Christians in America today.

3 For I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged (as though I were present) him who has so done this deed. " Notice, Paul isn't afraid of judging! And he never spoke to this fellow personally - or heard this mans heart. Without even listening to the man's rationalization for his sin, Paul calls the man on the carpet.

Chapter 4 warned us about making superficial judgments of another man's ministry. But this particular judgment in chapter 5 had nothing to do with motives or ministry - it's about morality-right and wrong.

This man was clearly and willfully engaged in sin. It wasn't an issue about culture or personal preference. This is not a gray matter. God is clear here about His will regarding sexual sin, so Paul is emphatic.

Like you, I can hear the critic's: 'hey Jesus said not to judge.'

And that is right. Where the Bible already judges a sin; then our condemnation of it, is not our judgment, but God's judgment.

Paul isn't afraid to take a stand where God takes a stand, and to speak up where God has clearly spoken.

Today's church should follow Paul's example. We weaken our witness when we tolerate immorality.

Boxing story? I wanted to stay down-it was the easy thing to do! But I've found that most of the time the right thing to do is never the easy thing to do!!!

And Paul is about to tell the Corinthians to do something that is never easy, but it's the right thing to do

4 In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, 5 deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.[fn]

Now its critical to remember that what's taking place here isn't a struggling believer trying to straighten out their life and get victory over sin. We help the person who wants to overcome.

Rather, this was a Christian who has deliberately ignored God's commandments and is living in open rebellion and defiance. That type of attitude isn't to be allowed in the church.

You've heard of the right hand of fellowship, but there's also the left foot of disfellowship.

But notice the goal at each stage of the discipline process is to bring the brother to repentance. Even when he's kicked out of God's family, it's said in verse 5 he's being "delivered to Satan for the destruction of the flesh."

The idea is let them taste the full consequences of their rebellion - without the safety net of the Christian community. Hopefully, that'll convince him or her of the error of their ways. The point of it all is repentance!

When a person is part of a church certain protections are inherent. He or she is surrounded by support, and

encouragement, and resources. To a degree the church is sheltering that person from the magnitude of his sin.

Church discipline is letting them learn the hard way how much they need to humble themselves and submit to God's way.

The Church always does a disservice when we keep a rebellious person from reaping the full brunt of what they sow.

It's interesting, later in Paul's second letter, he encourages the church to receive this man again into their fellowship. **2**

Corinthians 2:8 Therefore I urge you to reaffirm your love to him.

So we learn in 2nd Corinthians they obeyed Paul and kicked him out, and it produced the desired effect! The season of separation from the church caused the incestuous man to repent. Church discipline isn't easy, but it's necessary - and it works

Talking about church discipline, Warren Weirsbe said 'Church discipline is not a group of 'pious policemen' out to catch a criminal. Rather, it is a group of brokenhearted brothers and sisters seeking to restore an erring member of the family.'

Now a lot of folks have never heard the topic of church discipline taught before, so we should explain in from the scriptures for a few minutes.

What Is Church Discipline? Church discipline is very closely connected to discipleship (learning from and following Jesus Christ), and has to do with helping believers deny themselves and take up their crosses to follow the Lord.

While every disciple is a true believer, it's not always true that every believer is a disciple of Christ. Because of the world, the flesh, and the devil, the possibility of willful and continued sin is present with us.

Church discipline is the sometimes necessary process of dealing directly with willfully sinning and unrepentant members of the body of Christ.

When a Christian is hardhearted and refuses to deal with his or her sin, and demonstrates no desire for repentance, then it may be necessary to ask them to leave the church.

If or when this happens, the reasons for such dramatic actions are openly explained to those who know the errant brother or sister. In addition, specific instructions are provided concerning how to relate to the disciplined individual, according to the instructions given in the Bible.

Why Haven't I Heard About Church Discipline Before? The basic answer is that it has become very rare for churches to practice church discipline. Some have suggested that the decline of church discipline is among the most visible failures of the contemporary church.

This may have to do with the way many churches "do church." Much of the church in America today sees itself as a mere gathering of self-governing members, with minimal moral accountability to God, much less to each other.

But the other reason churches avoid talking about church discipline is that the church in general is becoming increasingly accepting of the surrounding culture, just like what happened at Corinth.

This of course is creating a very combustible situation for the church. Without church discipline, and Biblical standards to guide our behavior and lifestyle, the church will continue its slide into moral dissolution and relativism.

Where Do We Find Instructions for Biblical Church

Discipline? Specific instructions are found in Matthew 18:15-20, Romans 16:17, 1 Corinthians 5:1-13, 2 Corinthians 2:6-8, Galatians 6:1, 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15, 1 Timothy 5:19-21, Titus 3:9-11, 2 John 1:9-11, and 3 John 1:9-11.

To be clear it's not just areas of sexual immorality that can lead to church discipline. Areas of continual and unrepentant sin which lead to church discipline mentioned in these passages include: unwillingness to resolve personal conflicts, causing divisions or stumbling blocks, sexual immorality, covetousness, extortion, idolatry, reviling, drunkenness, disorderliness, laziness, unwillingness to work and provide for oneself, confirmed accusations against a church elder by two or three witnesses, heresy, rejection of the doctrine of Christ, and power mongering.

From this list, it's easy to see that it's not difficult to remain in good standing with the church. All a person has to do is avoid the continued practice of any of these areas, and to maintain a soft and humble heart before God.

How Church Discipline Is Administered

We believe in church discipline administered within the Church in a spirit of meekness and appropriate confidentiality. The first purpose of such discipline is the restoration of the believer and/or the purification of the Church. The steps of discipline include one on-one private confrontation, private confrontation with witnesses, and finally ask them to leave the Church, in hopes that separation, at some point in the future will lead to repentance and restoration back to the fellowship. See **Galatians 6:1 Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.**

When a congregant is disciplined, he or she is without the protection provided by being in the body of Christ. Now the person is all alone. Hopefully, his fleshly nature will die so that his spirit can be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

Authority of the Church to Discipline

All authority has been given to the Lord Jesus Christ **Matthew 28:18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth."**

Having all authority, He may give it to whomever He wishes. It is clear from the New Testament that He has given the authority to exercise church discipline to the church, specifically to its leadership.

2 stories??

6 Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? How the modern church needs to take this to heart!

Folks in America today are tolerant of everything except intolerance. But just because the world loses its moral bearings - and gets blurry eyed and confused over what's right and wrong - doesn't provide an excuse for the Church to follow suit.

If you recall from our earlier studies, the church at Corinth was in disarray because they allowed the culture to infiltrate and impact the church! But it should be the church that impacts the culture for Jesus Christ!

Remember, we cannot be for God, and we cannot love people, if we're not against sin.

Here Paul gives the warning, “Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?”

SHOW PIC In the bible, leaven is always synonymous with sin. Sin is like yeast. It works beneath the surface to permeate and infiltrate the whole lump. And you don't need a bunch of it, in fact just a little bit of leaven infects the bread from the inside out.

CLOSE PIC

Blatant, unrepentant sin in the church can be like a cancer - if allowed to spread, sin can destroy the whole body. But if it's caught early, it can be cut out to minimize the damage

Tolerance or apathy to sin will in time prove that it's lethal. If stubborn sins aren't cut out they will metastasize and grow stronger

7 Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.[fn] 8 Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

Notice Paul calls Jesus "Our Passover." When the Hebrews exited Egypt, and slavery - the day before, God told them to not inject yeast into their bread. They were leaving the next day, and there wouldn't be time for the bread to rise. The unleavened bread and their obedience was symbolic of their faith in God's promise.

That was just one of many symbols in the Passover Seder that spoke of Jesus. He's also our sacrificial lamb, our hidden matzo, our cup of redemption... As the Hebrews celebrated Passover with unleavened bread, we Christians should celebrate our freedom with sincere devotion and the avoidance of deliberate sin.

The day before Passover was called the Day of Preparation, in which the Jews would rid their homes of every trace of leaven in preparation for Passover and the six-day Feast of Unleavened Bread. Paul draws on this well-known understanding as a call for a recommitment to holiness and purity on the part of the Corinthian body.

The picture for us is that we have left Egypt—the world—through the blood our Passover Lamb shed for us on the Cross. So we ought to move forward without leaven—without the secret sins that puff up and spread throughout our fellowships so easily.

9 I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people. What epistle does he mean? We're not sure. We call the letter we're reading, "First Corinthians," but there must have been a letter prior to this one.

10 Yet I certainly did not mean with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. 11 But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner—not even to eat with such a person. The Corinthians had gotten it all backwards. They were building up walls keeping the sinners outside, while allowing the pervasiveness of the culture to enter into their fellowship.

Whenever a church views the lost people that God wants to reach as the enemy, we know they have lost the heart of Jesus.

When we became Christians, when we come out of the world, we're not supposed to shut the door behind us!

In the effort to make sure we're not letting sin in our camp, the tendency is to begin to make the church a country club. I know you, you know me, we're all on the same page, and things are

comfy. But that's not the heart of Jesus. He sends us out INTO the world to make disciples, not rally the wagons and keep out the folks who desperately need Him.

Remember, our enemy is not the sinner who doesn't know Jesus. They can't change even if they wanted - they lack the power. They can't live holy on their own without the Holy Spirit! So why do we hold them to that standard?

Our enemy is the person who Paul reminds us the church needs to shun, not the heathen, but the one who claims to know Jesus, yet stubbornly holds on to his sin with no desire to change.

And here we see not only the pastor or the leadership have a responsibility in church discipline, but so does every Christian in the fellowship!

The Greek tense of this passage makes it clear that we are to no longer fellowship the one who knowingly, stubbornly, perpetually practices them.

The first reason is to correct the offender. If a tumor is growing in my body, no competent doctor would say, "I'm not going to operate on you because I don't want to be too harsh with you." No the doctor will say 'I'm gong to inflict pain on you, for the betterment of your body.'

We're actually doing more damage to our fellow Christians who are mired in sin when we fail to take the sword of the Spirit and show them where they are wrong.

If I really care about someone, I'll say, "I'm not going to fellowship with you—not because I'm mad at you or don't love you. On the contrary, I care about you so much that I cannot allow you to go on as though there's nothing wrong in your life, because sooner or later the tumor of sin within you will take a terrible toll on you."

The other reason we are not to fellowship with believers are stubbornly set in their sins is we are to protect the body.

We begin to think like, talk like, and act like the folks we spend time with. We assume the flavor of those around us. Hey a little leaven leavens the whole lump! Therefore, Paul says we are not to hang around those Christians who are persisting in their sin of coveting, drunkenness, idolaters, or fornicators.

12 For what have I to do with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside? This is why I get weary of pastors always railing at and condemning the ungodly - pointing out the evil in the world. What do we expect? Why are we surprised when sinners sin, and the lost act lost? Our responsibility isn't to condemn lost people, but to love them and reach them.

If Christians wanna take up the hobby of judging someone, we should start with ourselves.

Remember, nowhere in the gospels do we see Jesus rebuking non-believers. No, He rebuked the religious folks.

13 But those who are outside God judges. Therefore "put away from yourselves the evil person."^[fn] Paul reminds us that God is the ultimate judge. The sinner who refuses Christ, God will take care of them

But for us, as believers and the body of Christ, we have the difficult responsibility of calling out sin in the lives of our brothers and sisters.

Notice what's missing in these 13 verses. The Bible gives detailed instructions about removing the man from the fellowship, and exacting church discipline, but what about the woman, the stepmother? Why didn't Paul deal with her? Evidently, she wasn't

a believer. “We don’t judge unbelievers,” says Paul. “God will take care of them.”

I find this interesting because there is a tendency on the part of Christians today to want to judge the world, to change the culture. All too often, we’re activists against the world’s wickedness, but we fail to judge our own congregation. We march, petition, crusade, vote, and talk about the world’s sin as we turn a blind eye to our own. We’ve got it exactly backward. We’re to deal with the Christian community and let God take care of the world’s iniquity.