



gracefellowship

Series: Crossroads: Between Kingdom and Culture
Title: Responding to Shocking Sin

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Passage: 1 Corinthians 5:1-13

Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 5:1-13

Well, you just heard the chapter read that we are going to look at today and I can't begin to tell you how excited I've been to preach on this chapter! When Paul says, "It's actually reported that there is sexual sin among you that even pagans do not tolerate," you know you're in for a messy topic! So, let's see if we can make this easy: Is anyone here sleeping with your step-mother? No? Good! Let's pray and go home!

If only it were that simple! I hope you're glad you came to church this morning because we are going to dive into the second issue facing the church in Corinth. If you're new to the series, Paul has written a letter to the church in the city of Corinth, which he had started several years before. This church is dealing with a lot of issue because the city is a very corrupt place and helping people trust in Jesus and then turn from their sinful lifestyles is difficult. What ends up happening is they bring their sinful behaviors and beliefs into the church. The letter Paul writes is basically four essays addressing the four major issues the church is dealing with.

Beginning today and for the next few weeks we are going to looking at how to deal with sexual immorality, how to live as Christians in marriage and in singleness. Paul is going to confront the mistakes we make in these areas and he's going to respond with the gospel to paint a picture of living under God's grace.

Now, let's look at the text together and see what God may have to say to us today. I want to read the entire chapter, even though we just heard it read a few minutes ago because I'm going to be jumping around in the text tying pieces together and hopefully helping us understand what Paul was saying to his friends in Corinth while we also listen to what the Holy Spirit wants to say to us today.

:: 1 Corinthians 5:1-13

5 It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that even pagans do not tolerate: A man is sleeping with his father's wife.

2 And you are proud! Shouldn't you rather have gone into mourning and have put out of your fellowship the man who has been doing this?

3 For my part, even though I am not physically present, I am with you in spirit. As one who is present with you in this way, I have already passed judgment in the name of our Lord Jesus on the one who has been doing this.

4 So when you are assembled and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present,

5 hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord.

6 Your boasting is not good. Don't you know that a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough?

7 Get rid of the old yeast, so that you may be a new unleavened batch—as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.

8 Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old bread leavened with malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

9 I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people—

10 not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world.

11 But now I am writing to you that you must not associate with anyone who claims to be a brother or sister but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or slanderer, a drunkard or swindler. Do not even eat with such people.

12 What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside?

13 God will judge those outside. “Expel the wicked person from among you.”

Our starting point, again, is that a man is sleeping with his father's wife- most likely his stepmother. And Paul tells the church that this behavior is so wicked that even the pagans- people who don't follow Jesus- look at this and knows it's wrong! But what is the church's response?

- They aren't ignoring it and just acting like it isn't happening so they don't have to deal with it.
- They are proud! They are celebrating the behavior.

How have they gotten to this point? Most likely because of a misunderstanding and abuse of grace. Here's what we need to understand as followers of Jesus:

Freedom in Christ is not freedom to sin.

Paul has had to address this same idea in his letter to Christians in Rome. It's such a prevailing thought to believe that because Jesus has given us grace and paid for our sins we can do anything we want and grace covers us.

:: Romans 6:1-7

6 What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?

2 By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?

3 Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

4 We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his.

6 For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—

7 because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.

Grace is not a get out of jail free card to abuse any time we want. In fact, grace leads us to repentance and the word “repent” means, turn around. The issue in the church at Corinth is that there is no measure of remorse or repentance. Paul even said, “Shouldn't you rather have gone into mourning and have put out of your fellowship the man who has been doing this?” (vs. 2). We have talked throughout this series about the idea of the church as a body and how we should see ourselves collectively rather than individually. Your sin affects more than just you- it affects all of us! So, when we know about unrepentant sin in our ranks, it should grieve our hearts!

Now, maybe the sin your dealing with isn't the same as what Paul is addressing here. Good lawyers say you should never ask a question in court you don't already know the answer to! So, I took a calculated risk earlier asking the question if anyone in the room is sleeping with their stepmother! Thankfully, no one raised their hand. But we aren't off the hook! At the end of the chapter Paul brings up a whole list of sins that do damage to the Church.

:: 1 Corinthians 5:9-13

9 I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people—

10 not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world.

11 But now I am writing to you that you must not associate with anyone who claims to be a brother or sister but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or slanderer, a drunkard or swindler. Do not even eat with such people.

12 What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside?

13 God will judge those outside. “Expel the wicked person from among you.”

Paul is going to put very specific parameters around something that was apparently misunderstood in a previous letter he had written which has been lost to history. In the previous letter he had instructed the Corinthians not to associate with sexually immoral people. The Greek word typically used for sexual immorality is “porneia,” we get our English word “pornography” from this word and it was very broad in it’s meaning including sexual behavior such as prostitution, extramarital sexual intercourse or adultery, paedophilia, promiscuity homosexuality, lesbianism, incest, premarital sex and bestiality. But Paul had to clarify that he wasn’t talking about Christians avoiding relationships with the people of this world who lived that way, otherwise we would have to leave the world! Paul was specifically addressing people who called themselves brothers and sisters in the family of Jesus, yet lived with sexual sin.

But Paul doesn’t stop there, because as much as we like to make sexual sin the only truly sinful thing in the world, probably because it’s more easy to recognize, he also goes on to include being greedy, an idolater or slanderer, a drunkard or swindler. Every person in this room is sinful. Let’s not pretend that we’re not! The question is, are we repentant of our sin or are we boastful and proud like the Corinthian church?

So, here’s the question that the chapter really deals with:

What should be done in the local church when there is unrepentant sin?

We’ve already read the answer a couple times, but buckle up because you’re not all going to like what Paul has to say! On it’s face it sounds really harsh- and my job is not to soften the blow- but I do want to make sure we truly understand the aim of Paul’s guidance to us when we come against someone living in open sin who is unwilling to repent.

So, what should be done in the local church when there is unrepentant sin?

:: 1 Corinthians 5:3-5

³ For my part, even though I am not physically present, I am with you in spirit. As one who is present with you in this way, I have already passed judgment in the name of our Lord Jesus on the one who has been doing this.

⁴ So when you are assembled and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present,

⁵ hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord.

Paul tells the church, “If you want to know what I would do, here it is...” But he is also telling them not to wait on him to get there. This needs to be an issue that is taken seriously by the church. He says in verse 4, “When you are assembled and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present...” He spent the first four chapters dealing with the unity of the church. Now he is going to say, if

you're truly unified, come together and make a decision about how to handle a man who is living in sin and is unrepentant. And what is the decision?

"...hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord."

Our flesh is generally described in Scripture as the wicked, sinful side of us. Paul is saying this man should be put out of the church into the hands of Satan and the culture that Satan controls with the goal being he recognizes the weight of his sin. But what is the ultimate goal? So that his spirit may be saved! Paul desires to this person to feel the weight of his sin and to lose the protective covering of the church in hopes that he will come to his senses, repent and be reconciled to God and his brothers and sisters in the church.

We don't often like to talk about these things because of how the culture has influenced the church.

Culture says: You can't judge me!

Kingdom says: Judgment brings discipline as an act of love.

:: Hebrews 12:5b-6

**^{5b} "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline,
and do not lose heart when he rebukes you,
⁶ because the Lord disciplines the one he loves,
and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son."**

As a parent to my sons there were times when they were little that we had to take steps to protect them and set boundaries around them they didn't always like. And if they didn't listen to us we would have to discipline them so they understood the importance of our boundaries. The discipline wasn't because we were angry at them, it was because we were trying to protect them.

Illustration: One of my sons had a life goal of catching a bird when he was little. He had heard on one of his shows that birds are descendants of dinosaurs, so he wanted to catch a dinosaur! Where is the best place to do that? The Wal-Mart parking lot! I suspect from the air the big parking lots look like bodies of water, so they land there a lot. If you have a better scientific explanation, let me know. But whenever my son got out of the car as a pre-schooler, his impulse was to run and chase birds. The problem is that there are cars in the parking lot! It was dangerous for him to run after birds because he could run in front of a car. We had many trips to Wal-Mart that began with some discipline being doled out in the parking lot, then having to deal with a frustrated, crying toddler as we went into the store. But we would discipline when he disobeyed us, running after birds in the parking lot,

not because we wanted to hurt him, but because it was the best way to ensure his ultimate safety!

If you are repentant when you sin, there is no need for such action that Paul requires. This is for an unrepentant heart. This is for someone who doesn't honor the death of Jesus to pay for their sin and walks in arrogance and pride in their sin rather than with a heart of repentance.

The goal is not relational death- we aren't trying to say that the person who is undergoing discipline shouldn't be loved and cared for by the church.

The goal is not relational death but relational reconciliation.

Discipline is always done in the hopes of returning the person to fellowship with the body. This is where the gospel comes into play. Earlier we read verse 11: But now I am writing to you that you must not associate with anyone who claims to be a brother or sister but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or slanderer, a drunkard or swindler. Do not even eat with such people.

That sounds really constrictive and unloving, right? How are we supposed to help reconcile and restore relationship with someone we can't have anything to do with? But let's look at that in context of the passage and the church culture.

:: 1 Corinthians 5:6-8

⁶Your boasting is not good. Don't you know that a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough?

⁷Get rid of the old yeast, so that you may be a new unleavened batch—as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.

⁸Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old bread leavened with malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

When the early church would come together it was most often around a meal. The meal was intended to point back to the Exodus from Egypt and escape from slavery and use imagery of Jesus as the Passover Lamb who helped us escape from sin and death. When Paul instructs the church in Corinth not to even eat with unrepentant people, he is talking about not allowing them to participate in this meal when the body of Christ gathered.

Paul uses the illustration of yeast in dough to make his point as to why this is the case. The night before the Passover in Jewish homes they get rid of all yeast in the house and they sweep their houses to make sure all the yeast is out. Why? Yeast is representative of sin. Just like a little yeast makes its way through a whole batch of dough, a little sin can work its way into the church if we aren't careful. After all, if this specific sin Paul has been addressing is being celebrated or they are boastful about it, why wouldn't others begin to participate and see nothing wrong with it?

The answer to this issue is being reminded of Jesus as the Passover Lamb.
The Gospel: Christ has been sacrificed on our behalf to pay for and remove our sin. Walk in His grace, but take seriously the sin that cost Him his life.

Let me end with a few practical things for us to consider if and when we end up dealing with cases of unrepentant sin with a brother or sister in Christ.

1. Encourage them to walk in repentance (repent = turn around)

Luke 15:7 I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.

2. Desire reconciliation

The big question we would need to ask in this conversation is, “does this work?” Many biblical scholars point to Paul’s next letter to the church in Corinth to show the reconciliation took place.

:: 2 Corinthians 2:5-11

⁵ If anyone has caused grief, he has not so much grieved me as he has grieved all of you to some extent—not to put it too severely.

⁶ The punishment inflicted on him by the majority is sufficient.

⁷ Now instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow.

⁸ I urge you, therefore, to reaffirm your love for him.

⁹ Another reason I wrote you was to see if you would stand the test and be obedient in everything.

¹⁰ Anyone you forgive, I also forgive. And what I have forgiven—if there was anything to forgive—I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake,

¹¹ in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.

(Satan’s scheme is separation and division- a lesson they hopefully already learned)

3. Demonstrate the grace of Jesus

Sin is serious, but the grace of God is ridiculous and abounds toward us! Think of the encounter Jesus had with the woman who was caught in adultery and brought to Him. After no one was willing to throw a stone at her, what did Jesus say? “I do not condemn you. Go and sin no more!”

If you have sin in your life that has not been confessed, take the time to do that. Reject the sin that has a grip on your life and begin to walk again in the ways of Jesus.