

## 1 Corinthians 5:1-13: Confronting Immorality in the Church

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1 Corinthians / 1 Corinthians 5:1–13

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### Introduction

- Picture of Clemson stadium - Who's welcome at a Clemson game? Anyone who's willing to pay for a ticket - regardless of your team allegiance, if you pay you get in.
- Who's welcome to attend a church gathering? Anyone - Followers of Jesus certainly are welcome. But, even if you are not a follower of Jesus, you are welcome to attend our worship gatherings because we want you to hear the Gospel.
- The church should be the most welcoming place on the face of the planet because we genuinely desire that all might hear the truth of the Gospel.
- However, there are rare times when someone might not be welcomed to gather with the local body any longer. That's what Paul addresses in [1 Corinthians 5](#). In this chapter, Paul instructs the church at Corinth to excommunicate someone from the membership of the church. There is one in the church that is no longer welcome.
- We're looking at a subject that we don't talk about a whole lot: church discipline. How should we respond when a believer chooses to openly live a lifestyle of rebellion against God and refuses to leave? Should we tolerate it? Excuse it? Overlook it? Or, confront it?
- This is a difficult passage because it makes us uncomfortable. We don't want to ask someone to leave the church, but there are times when it is

necessary. When is it necessary? Why should we discipline? How should we do it?

- Three reasons for church discipline:

## **Explanation of [1 Corinthians 5:1-3](#)**

- Church in Corinth was spiritual immaturity. The church should have been an influence in their city, but instead, they were influenced by their city.
- Sexual immorality a huge problem in Corinth. Temple prostitution was rampant along with all kinds of sexual immorality.
- In [1 Cor. 5-7](#), Paul addresses sexual immorality that crept into the church. He's appalled by one situation in particular: a man sleeping with his stepmother (she's probably not a believer). ([Leviticus 18:8](#)) A sin pagans would not even tolerate!
- The sin was bad enough - but Paul seems even more concerned that the believers don't care. Again, accuses them of being arrogant. Perhaps their attitude was "love is love." Or, "We're affirming and accepting." They likely had a distorted, sinful view of sexuality. Or, they thought that it didn't matter because God was gracious and forgives. If they knew God forgave every sin, why not keep on sinning? (See [Rom. 6](#)).
- Maybe the man who is sin was an influential church member. He likely held a lot of sway with the congregation. Perhaps a big giver. A whole lot easier to ignore the sin, tolerate the sin, or even embrace his sin than deal with it.
- Whatever the situation, the sin was known, tolerated, and accepted, and even boasted about (vs. 8). And, the sinner was defiant and not repentant.
- Instead of tolerating, they should have been grieving over the sin of this brother. Paul's instruction: remove the man from your congregation.

Harsh! BUT... in line with what Jesus taught in [Matthew 18:15-20](#). Jesus lays out a process for how to minister to someone who is in unrepentant sin: private correction, small group correction, church correction, and if the sinner does not respond, excommunication.

- vs. 3 - Even though Paul is not present, as an Apostle who is entrusted with authority from Jesus, he has already judged the man ([Deut. 27:20](#)). (Objection: You might be thinking we're not supposed to judge - [Matthew 7](#) - However, Jesus is talking about judgment where try to sit over someone and condemn them as if we are God. Paul is not condemning. Rather, Paul ultimately wants to see restoration.)
- Why would Paul want someone to be removed from the church? Wouldn't it be better for him to actually be in the church?
- But, first, remember, we're talking about someone who is openly defiant to the Lord who persists in their sin and refuses to repent. We're not talking about someone who struggles with gossip and is trying to overcome yet is having a hard time.
- Three reasons:

## **Church discipline is an act of grace towards sinners ([1 Cor. 5:4-5](#))**

- vs. 5 - Hand over to Satan? Sounds pretty severe, and it is, but it is also hopeful. Remove the person from a place of grace and compassion and put him in a place where he can experience the full consequences of his sin. This person is already living consistent with the world, so let the world have it's way with him so that he might ultimately come to his senses and see how much he needs the grace and compassion that the church offers in the Gospel message. "So that his spirit might be saved..." The hope is that by removing the man, he would come to his senses and repent and return to the Lord and His church with a repentant heart. A good reminder:

- **God wants to wake you up.** If you're stuck in sin this morning, God wants you to see how serious your sin is. He wants you to see the destruction it causes to yourself and to others.
- **God wants to heal you.** He wants to deliver you from that sin. He doesn't want you to stay in it. The problem is that sin hardens our hearts towards God. Will you listen to Him this morning, or are you too prideful to listen?

## Church discipline shows the glory of the Gospel ([1 Corinthians 5:6-8](#)).

- Paul addresses the church's arrogance and boasting (vs. 8). A little leaven - simple analogy - sin spreads. You've seen it happen in your own life. If you constantly associate with people who rebel against God, you will be influenced to rebel.
- Paul's analogy takes the reader back to the Passover. At the Passover in [Exodus 12](#), the Hebrews were marked by the blood of the lamb placed on their doorposts, and they were to eat a meal in haste as they prepared to leave Egypt. Part of that meal was unleavened bread. Leaven causes the bread to rise - a little leaven is all you need to make the bread to rise. It permeates throughout the bread causing it to rise. They weren't to use leaven to save time.
- In the Bible, leaven became a metaphor for sin. A little sin can spread and destroy.
- vs. 7 - Jesus is our Passover lamb. His blood has been applied to your life. He has removed your sin (the leaven) from your life and cast it as far as the east is from the west. We are an unleavened (holy people). Live as who you are cleaning out the leaven - ridding your life and your church from sin.

- vs. 8 - The Christian life is a continual festival. In a sense, we keep the passover every day as we live as who we are - a people who are holy.
- Church discipline shows the glory of the Gospel. When we're willing to correct someone in their sin, it's because we are convinced that Jesus came to transform us. He came to not simply forgive us for our sins, but to remove sin from our lives. He is making us into a holy people, distinct from the world.
- **Tolerance and acceptance of sin is not the goal, rather holiness is the goal.** NOT look at how open-minded we are, or how embracing we are of different lifestyles, or how affirming we are, but how holy are we? Don't tolerate sin in your own life.
- **Let's be gracious, but let's also be willing to deal with sin.** We want to be a church that is known for what we are for rather than what we are against, but being for Jesus, means you are against what grieves His heart. We need be gracious - extending hope and forgiveness to all people. At the same time, what a witness to the Gospel when we're willing to call sin what it is and deal with it rather than embrace it or overlook it.

## **Church discipline protects the body of Christ ([1 Corinthians 5:9-10](#)).**

- Vs. 10 - Apparently, in a previous letter Paul told them to not associate with the sexually immoral. He clarifies. He did not mean the immoral of the world. If you're around lost people, you are going to be around immoral people. You can't help that - that the immoral, lost people you are around need your Gospel witness. You would be ineffective in your calling if you isolated yourself from lost people.
- Instead, Paul wants believers to not associate with people who claim Christ yet live openly defiant, non-repentant lives. Do not associate with people who claim Christ but live as unrepentant sinners.

- Do not even eat with such a person - This is a hard word. Paul may be referring to not allowing someone who is in defiant, unrepentant sin to share in the Lord's Supper with other believers. (More on this in [1 Corinthians 11:17-34](#).)
- The Lord's Supper reminds us of who is in the family. Followers of Jesus take the Lord's Supper. Someone who lives in unrepentant sin - even though they may claim to be a follower of Jesus - may actually not be regenerated. To exclude an unrepentant sinner from Lord's Supper communicates that those who are part of the church are people who are actually followers of Jesus. A follower of Jesus is known by the fruit he/she bears. An unrepentant, defiant sinner bears the fruit of a lost person.
- vs. 12 - Paul concerned with the holiness of the church and the mission of God. He knows that lost people are going to act like lost people. He will share the Gospel with lost people and let God judge their hearts. But, for those inside the church, he will judge. We have a responsibility to keep watch over each other's souls, to hold each other accountable, and to confront sin when necessary ([Galatians 6:1](#)).
- Vs. 13 - quote from [Deuteronomy 17:7](#) - God desires a holy people. That's what He wanted from Israel in OT. That's what He wants for His church. Sometimes it's necessary for the protection of God's holy people (the church) to remove what is unholy. Why?
- **Church discipline protects our personal holiness.** Church discipline serves as a warning to all of us that God takes sin seriously.
- **Church discipline protects our witness.** If we accept and affirm sin, how are we distinct from the world? Where is the power of the Gospel message if we embrace what Jesus Christ died to take away?
- A hard passage. How should we respond?

- **Embrace God’s plan for your spiritual growth.** You need to be a part of a church that takes God’s Word seriously, even [1 Corinthians 5](#). Being a member (not just an attender) is a willingness to submit yourself to a church that wants to help you grow, even when that means confronting you in your sin. Is hard heartedness keeping you from letting us invest in your life to help you identify sins you need to confess?
- **Look inward before you look outward.** You might be thinking, “So and so needs to hear this message. They are so unrepentant.” What about you? What sin do you need to repent of?
- **Pray for your leadership.** We want to lead with gracious as leaders, and we also want to be faithful to passages like [1 Corinthians 5](#) and [Matthew 18](#). We want to be a hospital for sinners, but we also want to be able to act faithfully when sin is so defiant that it needs to be dealt with like Paul describes. Ask God to give us wisdom to apply this passage with obedience and grace.
- **Trust that God’s way is better.** Jesus, the Passover Lamb, came to take your sin away. There’s a better way to life than defiant, unrepentant sin, and that’s deliverance from sin. Let the Gospel penetrate your heart. Believe that Jesus died and rose again to save you from your sins and give you new life. Repent and believe.