

1 Corinthians 5:1-13

"Put Away Sin, Purify The Body"

"Divided where I should be united, united where I should be divided. Who am I?" Sounds like a riddle, doesn't it? But such was the state of the Corinthian Christians. Division & indifference was disgracing them. Divided over teachers/preachers, ministers & ministries. Yet altogether indifferent, even somewhat *endearing* toward willful, unrepentant sin w/in their congregation...

Rather than dealing w/the sin, or disciplining the unrepentant person, they were implementing the politically correct perspective of "love & acceptance" & were proud of the position they'd adopted on the matter...

& Paul writes to inform them that not only is this disgracing *their testimony*, it's also a blight upon all of *Christianity*. Not only were they *entertaining* sin, they were being inconsiderate of the *impact* of sin & how it affects the body of Christ.

It's so easy to deceive ourselves into believing that our sin is no one else's business because it has nothing to do w/them. Truth be told, no one sins unto himself/herself. Our sin *always* impacts/influences those around us... God has called us to lead holy lives. So what then are we to do when a member of the body of Christ is engaged in unremorseful, unrepentant sin? Let's turn our attention to Vs 1

Vs 1

We get the impression here (& rightfully so) that Paul is beside himself, flabbergasted to hear what's happening there in the church! "It's *actually* reported..." & When we read the word, "actually", it's not like, "Someone had the audacity to actually say this!" It's more accurately understood as, "It's *factually* reported", meaning that it's not something that's suspected or only running through the rumor mill. It's common knowledge. Not only w/in the walls of the church, but it's a buzz around town as well. He's saying, "It's a publicly known fact!"

& What is that fact? That there is "sexual immorality" among them. Now; this word "Sexual immorality" is 1 word in the Greek, it's the word "porneia" from which we get our word, "pornography" or "pornographic". It's a very broad word. It refers to any/all types of sexual activity or impurity outside of marriage.

& Though any moral failure w/in the Body of Christ is grievous; this particular immoral activity was so depraved that even the *ungodly* saw it as something horrific! & This is a huge statement because the city of Corinth was *famous* for immoral activity! Remember? 1,000 temple prostitutes combed the city streets every night looking for immoral activity in the name of worshiping their pagan goddess.

But generally speaking, even the unbeliever has some form of moral fiber... A line they won't cross. But this "Corinthian Christian" stepped right over it & the Corinthian congregation wouldn't do anything about it!

Paul says, "A man has his father's wife!" It's like, "Are you kidding me!?" & We note the word "has". What that means is that it wasn't a one-time isolated event (as bad as that would be)! But that it's an ongoing sexual relationship that everyone is aware of. A man engaging immorally w/his step-mom (his father's wife). – Now; the fact that there's no mention of adultery leads us to believe that his father had died & the fact that she's not even addressed leads us to believe that she wasn't a believer (but evidently, *he* [the man being referred to] was).

Now; the man already had 2 stops in front of him (only one that was necessary). For one (as I already mentioned), even the worldly/ungodly culture around him saw this as something offensive & forbidden. Listen, if as a believer, you're engaging in something, or taking part of something that even ungodly people see as wrong... It's probably wrong! (So that's the 1st check he should've received).

But even if it's acceptable culturally or it's something you can take part in legally that doesn't necessarily indicate that it's right scripturally... How many of you realize that what culture or society deems as right & wrong isn't what constitutes right & wrong? It's not man's word that forms the parameters for acceptable or unacceptable, right or wrong, appropriate or inappropriate (moral or immoral). – It's God's Word that does that... & I might add, just because something is "legal", doesn't make it "right".

You see, we have to be real clear where it is that our standards of "right & wrong" come from. Because we're seeing society become more & more "tolerable" to perversity & what the Bible would classify as sinful activity while simultaneously increasing in hostility toward scriptural standards. So, who defines "right & wrong"? Does man do that? & If so, what's the basis for the decision he makes? Why do *you* get to determine what's right for *me*? I wanna determine what's right for *you*... *Who get's to decide? Whoever gets the most votes? Does might make right? Does the mob rule? How do we do this? It's a slippery slope isn't it? There needs to be an authority that's higher than me, if there's to be any say over me. That's where the word of God comes in. It's not man's word that sets the standard. It's God's word. Mine is to choose; obedience or disobedience & the ramifications which follow...*

Of course, in this case, even *culturally* what this man was doing was taboo (inappropriate). But if that wasn't enough, the scriptures are clear.

*"The nakedness of your father's wife you shall not uncover; it is your father's nakedness."*¹ & Again, *"A man shall not take his father's wife, nor uncover his father's bed."*² One more, *"Cursed is the one who lies with his father's wife, because he has uncovered his father's bed."*³

Now, what's it called when we go in a direction contrary to the word of God? It's sin. If we do so *knowingly* it's called *transgression*. & This was the situation w/this man in the Corinthian congregation. We might throw on top of it that since this woman wasn't a believer, not only is this man sinning egregiously, he's also seeking to be yoked unequally!

But check it out. Paul's primary problem doesn't revolve around the man specifically. (Don't get me wrong, he will speak to the situation pointedly). His problem primarily is how it was handled by the *body*, notice.

Vs 2

Up to this point, Paul has dealt mainly w/what we might call the "misaligned mindset" of the Corinthian Christians (their wrong ideas about God's power, His work and His servants). Now he moves in on their "misaligned morals". But let's not miss the connection. Morality is connected to the mindset. What we *believe* will determine how we *behave*.

Rather than making light of this man's behavior, or somehow *minimizing* the situation, (he says) they should've *mourned* over his sin. Discipline should be in order, but indifference is at work instead. Actually, it's beyond indifference. He says they're *proud* of it, puffed up over it.

Today, the Corinthians would be seen as a liberal, progressive congregation. Politically correct, open minded, understanding, "who are we to judge love" & all. They were "tolerant". It's unbelievable the things people will accept in the name of "Love" or "tolerance". Yet the bible is clear, *"But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting,"*⁴ & Again, *"And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them."*⁵

Does love allow cancer to continue to invade the body because to deal w/it & get rid of it will be painful or uncomfortable? No! The opposite is true.

¹ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Le 18:8). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

² *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Dt 22:30). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

³ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Dt 27:20). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁴ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Eph 5:3-4). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁵ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Eph 5:11). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Faithful are the wounds of a friend. Love is willing to confront sin for the sake of the eternal well-being of the one being ensnared. Paul says, “You’re glorying when you ought to be grieving!”

He says, “This man ought to be taken away from you!” Translation? “You’re not even considering the impact that his sin is having on everyone else. You should be zealous to preserve & protect the purity of the body.” Somewhere in their minds they thought this reflected *well* on them! They were so gracious, so understanding, so loving. But they were allowing sin to influence & infect (to poison) the body...

Vs 3-5

Wow... Paul isn’t pulling punches is he? Btw, let me just point out that we spent some time last week (which was just a few Vs ago) speaking about this attitude that we can adopt, “God is my judge!” Because Paul was saying that what their estimation & evaluation of him was, didn’t really make much difference (didn’t determine the course of his ministry).

& I encouraged you w/the fact that we can’t take a part, apart from the whole. Paul was saying that we don’t have the appropriate insight to judge the motives of a man’s heart. Who’s being used mightily or minimally by God... praising one ministry, putting down another. But nowhere does the bible forbid recognizing sin as sin. (Or seeing a sinful situation for what it is). Here he says, “Look, I don’t even need to be there & I already know the appropriate course of action! I’ve already ‘judged’ the man who’s done this deed!” – So, when there’s something wrong going on... there’s something wrong going on! & We don’t have to pretend it’s not for the sake of offending the one who’s choosing to rebel against the ways/word of God.

& Let me just add that when Jesus said, “Judge not, lest you be judged.” (Matt 7) He wasn’t saying (again context) not to recognize sin for what it is. He was saying not to judge hypocritically. That is, don’t accuse in someone else what you’ll *excuse* in yourself. If you’re going to hold someone else to a certain standard, that same standard will be held over you... So motives/ministries, I can’t always know. Conduct is what it is & it’s appropriate to confront it & deal with it.

Now; private sin (meaning something that not everyone is aware of) can often times be dealt w/privately (no need to announce the news). But public sin is dealt w/publicly. If everyone knows of the sin, then everyone needs to know it was handled scripturally. –

This sin in particular was a well-known fact by everyone in the church & many people outside of the church. (& BTW I might just add, this is important information not only w/in the walls of the church, but many times w/in the home. Parents, you don't serve your children well by allowing them to live in sin apart from any repercussions [in the name of love]. **There comes a time when a person needs to be free to reap the ramifications of their own ways (perhaps you live a/an addict), otherwise we become enablers. People know that if they start to crash, you'll be there to put a pillow under them & soften the blow till they get back up on their feet.)**

Now; Paul says, "In the *name* of the Lord J.C., & w/the *power* of the Lord J.C. deliver such a one over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." Few things that are important here. #1 What we do, we do in the name of Jesus (meaning, in His character, w/His heart, not out of anger, not being vindictive, but out of love for them, w/a view toward the eternal). #2 **It's w/the power of Jesus. I have no power in & of myself to determine your discipline spiritually speaking. Spiritual discipline is rooted in the power of J.C. #3 We note that the ultimate aim of spiritual discipline is not for the purpose of *condemnation*, but for the persons *restoration & salvation*. "That his spirit may be saved." (Today we might call it, "Tough love").**

Question: what does it mean to "deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh"? Listen, I don't want you to think too "mystically" about this. As though it's some weird ceremony or some radical thing ritualistically. He's simply saying, "Put him out of the church." The church is the Lord's "domain", the world is the devil's "domain". Jesus (Jn 12:31) referred to Satan as "the ruler of this world". Paul in 2 Cor 4:4 called him the "god of this age". John (in 1 Jn 5:19) said that the *whole world* lies under the sway of the wicked one.

There are certain benefits afforded to believers by being under the covering of the church. It's simply something God has ordained. A spiritual protection of sorts, not to mention a social comfort. – When Paul speaks of delivering him over to Satan, he's not speaking of an infliction of evil, but a removal of that spiritual blessing/benefit that comes from being a part of the body of Christ.

To what end? "For the destruction of his flesh." Not for the destruction of his *body*. Remember we spoke of "the flesh" a couple weeks ago. That inward desire that's woven into the fabric of our being that wants to express itself in self-seeking, sinful kind of ways. This was a man given over to the sins of the flesh. Paul says, "Remove the false sense of security, give him over to consequences that come..."

The hope is that by wallowing in the results of his sin, those impulses of the flesh will be wiped out... Today, it seems people leave churches & have little to no thought about it. – That probably says 2 things. #1 It speaks to the weakened state of the church. #2 It says something of the spiritual condition of the individual... if they can willingly neglect the assembling together of the saints & prefer isolation.

Of course, there's one more thing that can make this disciplinary procedure difficult today & that is that someone can be removed from a particular assembly & just go down the road & melt into another church who is completely unaware & just speak of how horribly that other church treated them...

However, regardless of those things. We follow scriptural protocols because we want to see people repent. Again, restoration is in view, not condemnation. I like what Warren Wiersbe said. He 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.” (Wiersbe)*

Does it always work? No. People don't always repent. But that's the heart behind it. Having said that, it's not just that person *individually* you're looking out for, it's also the well-being of the body *corporately*, notice.

Vs 6

“Your glorying is not good.” They were proud of their tolerance, pleased to ignore his sin & pretend that they were being gracious & loving. But again I ask, do you show “love” to a body by being tolerant of a cancer?

Yes, the sin of the individual was horrible, but the sin of the church & the leaders therein was even worse. They were catering to the man & being inconsiderate of the body. Paul says, “Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? We all know what leaven is, yes? We're not talking “yeast” per say, but that old batch of dough used as a starter to a new lump (sourdough). & The leavening process isn't really seen initially, but eventually it's influence seen quite easily. The whole batch of dough begins to rise. It's being infected, influenced as the leaven permeates the entire lump.

So “leaven” in scripture becomes a “type” or a “picture” or a “symbol” of sin. It's just a little pinch of that old dough. But when it's left unchecked, it affects the whole lump. That little bit spreads to corrupt the whole batch. Even so, that one individual's sin was impacting the whole church. & That's what sin does. Now again, we all fall short. We're not talking about the occasional stumble, or something we're seeking to gain victory over.

The reference is to the perspective; “I know it’s sin. I know it’s wrong. I’ve been made aware, I just don’t care. I like it, I want to continue in it... I’m not going to change.” That mentality, left unchecked will eventually (negatively) affect everyone else. Time forbids us, but if you’d like a little more insight on this, write it down & read it later, Joshua Ch 7.

Vs 7-8

“Purge out the old leaven.” “Hey, that lifestyle, those sins. They’re identified w/the old life. The life of sin & feeding the flesh. Purge that out from among your assembly.” Of course, Paul isn’t saying that you can’t be around sinners (we’ll see that). To the contrary. He’s talking here about someone who’s made a profession of Christ, but isn’t living Christ-like. But rather they’re living like they don’t know Jesus at all!

He brings up Passover. Before Passover, all the leaven was to be removed from the house & nothing w/leaven was to be eaten for a week. But his point is that even as the Jews were to remove all leaven from their midst, even so the church should be removing these kinds of unrepentant sinners from *their* midst.

He says, “Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.” We’re a new lump, new life, our sin has been washed away. Jesus is the Lamb of God, slain for the sins of the world. His blood was shed that God’s wrath might “pass over” us. We’re a new creation, we’re to purge the sins of the old life. Get rid of malice & wickedness & replace them w/sincerity & truth (or transparency, not trying to cover things up). There’s to be a holiness/purity about the church. Listen, we’re to *live* unleavened because we *are* unleavened. The basic message of the NT for Christian living is, “Be what you are in Christ”.

Vs 9

Guys, let’s not weird out about the fact that Paul wrote letters that we don’t have. Not everything he wrote was meant for the entire church throughout time & eternity. It was for them, but not for us. If it were for us, God would’ve preserved it.

But he says, “Look, you’re missing my point. I *told you* not to keep company w/the sexually immoral. So you quit hanging around unbelievers. That’s not what I was talking about!” Check it out.

Vs 10-13

You see? He’s clarifying what he’d previously communicated. We *want* people to see Jesus. To come to *know* Jesus. They can’t do that if you’re not around them! We’re *in* the world, just not *of* the world. We’re to be *separated* from the unbeliever, but not *isolated*. It’s like a boat in the water, no problem. Water in the boat, big problem.

But most believers are more like this. They isolate themselves from the very ones God wants to reach, but accept the same kind of sins in people who call themselves believers!

Listen, don't be surprised, shocked or chagrined when the ungodly act ungodly! It's what they do! If you don't want to be around ungodly people, you'd need to leave the planet! But sexual immorality, greed, thievery, partying... These kinds of things are going to happen among the unbelieving. But they shouldn't be tied *to*, or found *in* the Christian community (the body of Christ). You find someone who claims to be a Christian, but their lives are defined by these kinds of things... Have nothing to do w/them. Don't associate or even eat w/them... **(Closing)**

He says, "What have I to do w/judging those outside (the body of Christ)." Too often that's what we do, all the while neglecting purity & holiness on the inside. – God will deal w/the ungodly. We're to hold accountable our own brothers & sisters in the Lord. But you find Christians marching, petitioning, picketing, crusading... pointing out the world's sin as we turn a blind eye to our own. *We're to deal w/the Christian community & God will take care of the world's iniquity. – Could it be that one reason the church (today) has so little influence in the world is because the world has so much influence in the church? Let's pray & ask the Lord to purify our hearts, & purify this place...*

Prayer Points:

Father we thank You for the faithfulness of Your word. God, You search us & know us. Help us God to lead a life of holiness. Purity, sincerity, truth & transparency. Renew our hearts, we turn from our sin. We want to be a "new lump" "unleavened" leading lives that glorify Your name.

Listen, the purpose of a message like this, isn't condemnation. It's exhortation leading unto restoration. Let's not play games w/God. Let's get our heart right w/Him today. & Maybe your life is defined w/sins like unto those we just read about, or something altogether different. Today God wants to purge & purify your life, give you new life in J.C. by grace through faith in Him.