

"Biblical Judging"

1 Corinthians 5

Last week the apostle Paul confronted the Corinthians about their judgmental attitudes based on their personal preferences. He pointed out that their judgmental attitudes toward fellow believers who had different opinions that were outside of Scripture was dividing the church. We're all grace recipients. We're all different, thank the Lord for that; don't make your opinion on unbiblical matters something to divide about.

And yet now he does make a judgment in Ch. 5 about a professing believer in a sinful relationship. What's the difference? Earlier he was confronting judgmentalism about non-Scriptural things; here he's confronting a lack of biblical judgment about people disobeying Scripture. Big difference.

Many Christians are quick to misquote Jesus and say, 'We're not to judge.' Jesus didn't say that. Jesus judged the Pharisees. He rebuked Peter, James and John at times. Jesus said in Matt. 7

"Do not judge, or you too will be judged. ² For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. ³ "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? ⁴ How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? ⁵ You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

Jesus said don't judge hypocritically. Before we judge another's problem or sin, have we judged ourselves first? And if we judge ourselves first we will judge others less and more graciously when we do.

Paul doesn't sound gracious here and there's a reason: the church failed to judge blatant sin, so he has to act on it for everyone's spiritual health. This is the point people often miss when it comes to discipline, the goal of which is restoration. So as we go through this unpleasant passage of Scripture we're going to learn how to judge ourselves as well as judge others biblically when necessary.

Back in Ch. 1:11 Paul wrote that some from Chloe's household gave a report on some of the problems going on. Here, Paul begins to deal with some of these problems:

It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans: A man has his father's wife.

Our English translations are trying to give us a sense of the shock of what was going on by the phrase "It is actually reported". This is incredibly bad! A man "has" an ongoing sexual relationship with his step-mother. If it was his actual mother it would have said that but clearly she is his stepmother and since Paul makes no judgments on the father or the stepmother, they are not part of the church. And as bad as Roman society was in regard to sexual promiscuity, incest was an unacceptable practice. This is worse than the world. What a terrible testimony this is.

As bad as that, Paul is even more shocked by the church's tolerance of this. They had become arrogant and were not grieved by this sin and were tolerating evil among their church family. I think

there's a great principle here that we can all apply when it comes to porneia (the word for sexual immorality). It refers to any sexual practice outside of a husband/wife context. Pre-marital, extramarital, same-sex relationships but also any form of sexual enjoyment (visual only, mental only) that is pursued outside the marital relationship. And in our world today, followers of Christ,

Need to Have a Zero Tolerance Attitude **With Sexual Temptation** **(5:1-5)**

Paul's biblical judgment on this situation is to expel the person. That's a good principle to apply when wrong thinking enters our minds or images cross our views; to put as much distance from it as we possibly can. As simple as turning away or turning off or stopping your reading or thinking about something else. The longer we linger the more intolerant we get, which means the greater risk of committing sin. As Paul says here for the stepson, we too should

Withdraw immediately (vv.1-2)

When tempted or convicted. This must end now. The church was too tolerant of this relationship even though we're not told why. Were they proud of their freedom in Christ that they could allow this? Was the stepson fulfilling an obligation that the father was no longer capable of? Whatever the reason, it was tolerated and excused. It's amazing how we can justify our sinful attitudes and actions sometimes. We need to work on immediate rejection or withdrawal of these temptations when they come upon us. Why is this so important? Paul explains in vv.3-5

³ Even though I am not physically present, I am with you in spirit. And I have already passed judgment on the one who did this, just as if I were present. ⁴ When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present, ⁵ hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord.

'When you are assembled in the Name of the Lord.' We assemble in the name of the Lord because we've been set apart by the Lord for a new way of life, a holy life. Paul points out we must deal with sin in our lives and in our church

For holiness' sake (vv.3-5)

We bear Jesus' name. We gather in Jesus' name. Therefore we must live by the standards set for us by Jesus and His Father to reflect how they change us when we are saved. In the next chapter Paul will remind them of the holiness of Jesus' church;

⁹ Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders ¹⁰ nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹ And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

"That is what some of you were." 'Many of you have come out of a life of debauchery, but Jesus has changed you. Why then, are you tolerating this sin in your church?' Paul says, as your spiritual father I am taking action even though I'm not physically present. But because we share in the same Spirit we need to act by the Spirit and remove the sinner from the congregation, which is what 'hand this man over to Satan' means. Each church has to demonstrate holiness so they will attract the world to a better life in Jesus. So what should we do to maintain our holiness?

Search and Destroy Sin in Your Life (5:6-8)

Paul's going to use a familiar metaphor with leaven and the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

⁶ *Your boasting is not good. Don't you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough?* ⁷ *Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast—as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.* ⁸ *Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth.*

'Boasting' is like leaven, it puffs you up. It fills you with air. Each year Israel was commanded to keep the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread. Passover was the 14th day of the first month of their year (Mid/late March) while Unleavened Bread began the next day for a week. During this time they were commanded not to eat any bread with leaven in it. They were to rid their houses of leaven for that week as a reminder that God saved them from the Egyptians in one night when they had to leave quickly with what they had, Don't bother waiting for bread to rise; we got to go now!

Like leaven, sin affects everything and everyone. So remove the leaven [i.e. the sin] in your midst

For other's sake (v.6)

Your sin and my sin doesn't just affect only us. There's always a residual effect on our family and church family. This sin gave the Corinthian church a bad testimony. Your church allows what? Many Christians only live to the level of their peers because if they think someone's sin is okay, then it must be. We need to search for sin in our lives and remove it. We need to pray as David did in Ps. 139:23-24

²³ *Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.* ²⁴ *See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*

What's interesting about David's prayer at the end of the psalm is that he begins the psalm saying,

- ¹ *O LORD, you have searched me and you know me.*
- ² *You know when I sit and when I rise;
you perceive my thoughts from afar.*
- ³ *You discern my going out and my lying down;
you are familiar with all my ways.*
- ⁴ *Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD*

He knew God had already searched him and dealt with sin in his life, and then he asked God to search his heart again. The Jewish practice of cleaning out the leaven in their house prior to the Feast is one of meticulous searching and removing any sign of leaven. This is what Paul is telling his listeners to do; then and now. Be thorough. Go deep. Search every corner for sin and destroy it, remove it.

Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast—as you really are.

We are a new creation. We're saved. We're in Christ. Become what you already are. Become practically what you already are positionally. Identity informs behaviour. Remove sin in your life

Because Jesus died for that sin (v.7)

When we're tempted to sin, remember that our sin was why Jesus died. Jesus died on the cross for every sin we have committed and will commit. Jesus became the Passover Lamb so that, we who chose to believe God's promise that Jesus' death pays for our sins, has promised to pass over judging us eternally for that sin. So let's celebrate our forgiveness not by sinning (malice & wickedness) but sinning less and acting with sincerity and truth. Clean out the sin in your life

For the joy of being saved (v.8)

Remember David's prayer of confession in Ps. 51:12

*¹² Restore to me the joy of your salvation
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.
¹³ Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
so that sinners will turn back to you.*

When we deal with our own sins we are then in a position to help others with theirs. Take out our own log first and then take out your brother's speck. Paul wants to see sinners turn back too. So here now is his command to the church:

⁹ I have written 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 you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat.

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 man from among you.

Paul uses military imagery at times to describe the spiritual life. Paul very much affirms the military code of honour

Leave No One Behind **(5:9-13)**

While Paul commands expulsion from the fellowship of the church it's his prayer is for the brother's restoration. We know this from 2 Cor. 2:6

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 for him. 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 The reason I wrote you was to see if you would stand the test and be obedient in everything. ¹⁰ If you forgive anyone, I also forgive him. 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.

They would carry out Paul's command but they were too severe. It sounds like the person repented but they were unwilling to accept him back. We often forget that

Discipline is a form of discipling (vv.9-11)

Disciple and discipline are in the same word family. There are spiritual disciplines like prayer, bible reading, verse memorization, worship but repentance and correction are as well. We grow from our mistakes/sins. Using Old Testament phrases from Deut. 19:19; 22:24 about purging the evil from among them, Paul said to expel the sinner from the community where he is no longer surrounded by affirming brothers & sisters in Christ. Paul commanded his church family not to associate with him, especially not to eat with him. Did that mean as a community and even individually? He doesn't specify. But 2 Thes. 3:14-15 gives us a balanced approach. There he warned the church not to associate with the lazy and disruptive in the church:

¹⁴ If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of him. Do not associate with him, in order that he may feel ashamed. ¹⁵ Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother.

Somewhere we have to find a balance between temporary removal from church family and functions so as to communicate the seriousness of the sin, yet not to cut off all ties because he/she is not an enemy, they are a child of God. We want to see them back. Perhaps Paul's lack of preciseness is intentional because we have the tendency to become legalistic about church discipline. We all sin still. Different sins have different consequences.

Pray that separation leads to repentance (vv.12-13)

It is our responsibility to graciously and carefully practice church discipline when public sin affects public testimony. We are the temple of the Spirit of God. When people come here they should see how broken and now forgiven people live like in their journey of holiness. All of Scripture is inspired for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness so that men/women can be thoroughly equipped to serve God. Rebuking and correcting our negative forms of discipleship. Clean out the leaven. Remove sin and sometimes the sinners, temporarily Lord-willing.

Again, going through books of the bible forces us to deal with all of Scripture, even the unpleasant parts. But it's all profitable especially when we obey it. Let's prepare for communion by examining ourselves and taking a few minutes and asking the Lord

²³ Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. ²⁴ See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

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