

# Deal with unrepentant sin: 1 Corinthians 5v1-13

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[ 0 : 00 ] And it's page 1147 in the Church Bible. So that's 1 Corinthians chapter 5 and it's verse 1 to 13, page 1147.

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, and you are proud. And shouldn't you rather have been filled with grief and have put out of your fellowship the man who did this? Even though I'm 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.

When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus, and I am with you in the spirit, and the power of the Lord Jesus is present, hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed, and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord.

Your boasting is not good. Don't you know that little yeast works through the whole batch of dough? Get rid of the old yeast, that you may be a new batch without yeast, as you really are.

[ 1 : 23 ] For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Therefore, let us keep the festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with the bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth.

I have written to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people, 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. But now I am writing to 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. What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? God will judge those outside.

Expel the wicked man from among you. Thank you very much, Stephen.

[ 2 : 37 ] That's great to read. And as we listen, I'm sure you realise that it's not an easy one, what we're going to be looking at this morning. And I want to say that we can't cover everything as we go through a text like this, so there may be lots of questions that you have, and therefore I encourage you afterwards, and even Wednesdays, come along on Wednesdays, as we seek to maybe apply some of these things a little bit more.

But certainly don't leave without asking or talking to me, if any questions arise. Before we do look at it, we're going to pray, and ask for God's help.

Our Father God, we thank you for your word.

We thank you for the Bible that we have, that we've just read in our own language, so that we can hear your voice to us today.

And yet to hear, we need your help. And so we ask for your Holy Spirit, that we may have understanding with our minds, but that you would take your word and apply it to our hearts, impress it upon us, so that we become the Holy Church of God that you call us to be.

[ 4 : 13 ] Living in the light of your amazing forgiveness, knowing and experiencing the joy when we confess our sins, and living lives that reflect you.

Please help us, we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Well, according to the World Health Organization, we all need to watch our diet.

You see, what we eat has a direct effect on our physical health. Red meat, we've been told, and processed meat, raise the risk of cancers.

They also tell us that too much salt and too much sugar accelerate heart problems. It's so serious, we are told, that we need to take action now.

We need to cut out what is unhealthy and get rid of the foods that cause health problems. You see, if we don't cut out and get rid of the unhealthy foods, we will become physically sick and we will die. [ 5 : 33 ] It's shocking, but yet it is sound advice. Well, what about the church's health? Not the physical body, but the body of Christ.

People like you and me who have trusted and followed the Lord Jesus. You see, sinful behaviour in the church has a direct effect on the spiritual health of the church.

It's so serious, we are told, that we must take action now. Look what it says at the very end of verse 13.

Expel the wicked man from among you. Cut out the sinful behaviour. Get rid of the sin in the church. You see, if we don't cut out and get rid of the sinful behaviour, the church will become spiritually sick and die.

Remember, we are the holy church of God. Have a look back at chapter 1 and verse 2.

[ 6 : 50 ] This is how the whole letter starts out. This is the big theme, remember, of 1 Corinthians. Chapter 1, verse 2. It says, To the church of God.

So the church isn't belonging to any person. The church belongs to God. So to the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus.

Those who are sanctified simply means those who have been made holy. Through Jesus Christ, our sins have been forgiven. We have been made clean.

We have been made pure so that we now belong to God and are acceptable to God. That is what the church is. But more than that, look at the rest of verse 2.

It is the church of God in Corinth to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy. In other words, in other words, we are now to live out a holy life in this world.

[ 7 : 51 ] Become what we are. Start living as God's pure and blameless and clean people in the world in which you live. So to be a holy church means dealing with unhealthy behaviour.

It seems there are two sinful behaviours that need serious attention in the life of the church.

The first one is this. Persistent and unrepentant sin. Let's go back to chapter 5 and verse 1.

It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans or among unbelievers.

A man has his father's wife. You see, the sex that God counts as pure is between one man and one woman always in the context of an exclusive married relationship.

[ 9 : 06 ] But for this man that we read about in chapter 5, it seems that while his dad is at work or perhaps his dad is out of town on business, he's sleeping with his father's wife.

He's sleeping with his stepmother. Now this is doubly shocking. It's a shock because of the behaviour that's involved.

Look what it says. It doesn't even occur among pagans. You wouldn't find this kind of behaviour amongst anybody. But worse than that, here's the deepest and biggest shock.

Look at the beginning of verse 1. It's actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you. This is going on in the life of the church.

So, someone who claims to be a Christian, somebody who's serving in the life of the church, is sleeping with his dad's wife, his stepmother.

[ 10 : 10 ] Now the problem is, this is persistent and unrepentant sin. Again, if we look closely at verse 1, the structure of the sentence implies that this is ongoing sin that has not been dealt with.

He says, there is sexual immorality. A man has his father's wife. This is a regular pattern of behaviour and it seems he has become immune to the seriousness of his behaviour.

He's become blind to the sin in his life and he's carrying on as if everything is normal. And that's what makes this sinful behaviour so serious. It's not that he has sinned, although that is serious. It's that he persists in his sin and remains unrepentant. You see, all of us, every single one of us, sin.

We all fall and fail and sometimes sexually. But when the Christian, when the follower of Jesus does sin, we repent. We take ownership of our sin, we confess our sin and we do everything to make sure we don't continue in the same pattern of behaviour.

[ 11 : 34 ] We make ourselves accountable to the church, to one another. We look for support, we look for that care, we look for that help. The problem here, as we are reading in chapter 5, is it is persistent and unrepentant behaviour.

But there's also another unhealthy behaviour in the life of the church. it is tolerated and ignored sin.

Look at the end of verse 1. A man has his father's wife and you are proud. Shouldn't you rather have been filled with grief and have put out of your fellowship the man who did this? Do you see what's going on? The church has become tolerant of the man's behaviour, which is also sinful. Rather than deal with the sin that's going on and wrecking the church, they've ignored the sin.

In verse 6 we're told your boasting is not good. It's a big secret that everybody knows about. [12:52] So this guy in the church, he turns up each Sunday, he's singing his hymns, he's taking part in communion, communion, and everybody knows what he's been up to the night before.

The problem is nobody's saying anything. It's a secret, but we all know. They've become tolerant. Oh, we don't judge people in this church.

Sure, aren't we all sinners? Oh, we must learn to accept people as they are. We can't all be perfect. They are ignoring the situation.

Sure, it's his own life, as long as it doesn't affect me. Well, isn't he young? We all did silly things when we were his age. No, we cannot ever afford to be tolerant and ignorant of sin.

It is far too serious a matter. the church has a responsibility and when I say the church, it is the believers, the family of God's people.

[14:01] Together, corporately, we have a responsibility to deal with persistent and unrepentant sin in the life of the church. So, that's the unhealthy behaviour.

But what is healthy behaviour? You see, when someone in the church family continues in a pattern of sinful behaviour, the church must act.

We cannot stand back. We must separate the sinner. Look what it says in verse 2.

God is and you are proud. Shouldn't you rather have been filled with grief and put out of your fellowship the man who did this?

But Johnny, aren't we all sinners? I mean, I've sinned multiple times this week. Does that mean I'm going to be put out of the fellowship too? Well, let me pause and also include myself in that.

[15:14] Yes, I have sinned in this past week. We all fall and fail. But this is not about our continued battle with our sinful nature where we seek in repentance and come back to God and look to Christ in faith.

This is about someone who is rejecting the call to repent and refusing to deal with their sin. And let's be clear, it's not just the sex sin that's highlighted.

Look at the end of verse 11. It's all kinds of persistent sin. Look what it says at the end of verse 11. The sexually immoral or greedy that is a Christian who has more than they need but never gives to those who are in need.

It includes the idolater so that is a believer who replaces God with someone or something else and never changes. It includes the slanderer so a member of the church who continually gossips about people behind their backs and puts them down.

sin. It also includes the drunkard a follower of Jesus who continually drinks too much. It also means the swindler so a worshipper of God who's always fiddling his taxes and trying to be dishonest.

[16:52] You see this is about persistent and unrepentant sin. This is not easy is it? Separating the sinner only happens as a last resort.

It comes at the end of a lengthy process as we'll see in a moment after gently pursuing people with grace treating them with mercy and longing before God that they would turn in forgiveness.

And while those times are always sad if it has to be done there is good reason for it.

The first reason is the salvation of the sinner the person concerned. Have a look at verse four.

Again it's talking to the whole church.

This isn't just an individual thing. When you the church verse four are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and I am with you in spirit and the power of the Lord Jesus is present.

[18:01] Hand this man over to Satan so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord. These are very strong words and we must understand them carefully.

To hand the person over to Satan means to regard them as an unbeliever to treat them as if they were not a Christian and the desire is that they would come to their senses and see the mess in their lives and turn to God in repentance or as it says in verse five so that their sinful nature may be destroyed that they would turn to God and ask God to deal with their hearts it's a little bit like the story of the lost son or we know it as the prodigal son that Jesus told remember in that story how the son deliberately and intentionally turned away from his father he wished his father dead and

took his inheritance early and he left and he went off and he lived however he wanted but eventually he came to his senses in the pig sky and he returned to his father he ran back to his father seeking forgiveness and restoration well in the same way just as the father let the son go we need to let the unrepentant sinner go that doesn't mean to say we give up on them we simply pray that they will come to an end of themselves that they would come to their senses that they would turn in repentance and know the restoration of

God's amazing grace cleaning them and washing them afresh of course the purpose of all of this is their salvation look what it says at the end of verse five next that he would be saved on the day of the Lord one day the Lord Jesus will come again and the longing and the desire is that they will be in such a position before God that they are ready to meet him that they know the forgiveness of sins they know what it is to walk in fellowship with God so separating the sinner is not pleasant but it may be the means of bringing about their salvation the second reason is the protection of the church have a look at verse 6 your boasting is not good don't you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough

I don't think we do much baking of bread anymore but I think you can get the illustration here a tiny bit of yeast can affect the whole batch of bread so undealt with sin can affect the whole body of the church you see the nature of yeast means that it spreads it works itself into the dough in the same way sin also spreads affecting the spiritual life of the whole church not just the one person but the whole family so instead of dealing with sin we begin to ignore it and so patterns of behaviour are tolerated by everyone so what does it matter if somebody does that what does it matter if that's the way they live verse 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 let's remember this great truth that Jesus is our true and ultimate sacrifice for our sin just as the Passover lamb with God's means of redeeming and rescuing

God's people from Egypt so Jesus' death on the cross has become our means of redemption for our sin this is the good news when Jesus died he took my sin and your sin on himself he was the one who was separated from God he was the one who was shut out from God and experienced hell for us so that we don't have to so that we could be drawn into his family and accepted so if Christ has made us clean and pure and blameless in his sight shouldn't we also want to keep the sin from spreading and affecting the whole church see what it says at the end of verse 7 this is what you really are you're a clean people you're a pure people and if you really are that well then start cleaning the church up separating the sinner is never easy but it is the means of protecting the church the third reason is the mission to our community to those around us look verse 9 he says [ 23 : 42 ] I have written to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people and then a clarification verse 10 not at all meaning the people of this world as in unbelievers who are immoral or the greedy and swindlers or idolaters in that case you would have to leave this world let me take you back to the behaviour of Jesus in the gospel do you remember how the religious leaders looked down on Jesus with disdain with the people who he mixed with do you remember what they said he even eats with sinners they didn't like the fact that Jesus was meeting with ordinary people with sinful people sharing dinner with them talking with them you see Jesus was very clear in his mission he came for sinners Jesus came for people like you and for me and the way to meet people like you and me was to sit down with them and to share with them now as a church if we are believers we should be doing exactly the same we don't withdraw from the world and hide ourselves into a nice little cosy corner we go out into the world we go out with the good news of Jesus Christ we mix we get to know people and so we should all be eating with sinners one sinner sitting with another but we need to make sure our witness is crystal clear verse 11 but now I am writing to you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother so again it's coming back to anybody who says

I'm a Christian I'm a follower of Jesus but is sexually immoral or greedy or an idolater or a slanderer or a drunkard or a swindler with such a person do not even eat you see what kind of witness is it if on the one hand we're talking about Jesus who loves us who died for our sin if we say sinful behaviour in the church doesn't matter what are we saying if we're telling people you need to repent of your sin but we can behave as we like it's hypocritical it's making a mockery of Christ's death it's saying Christ died for nothing with such a person do not even eat you see by sitting down and eating and socialising with the unrepentant and persistent sinner we are saying well we accept your behaviour it's alright you can behave as you wish it really doesn't matter no for the sake of the

church's mission and our witness to the wider community we must take a step back not because we're superior or better because we see that we've got sin in our own lives and we need to repent so that is healthy behaviour in the church how do we then keep the church healthy well there are two ways to keep the church healthy here's the first we don't judge those outside the church have a look at verse 12 look what it says what business is it of mine to judge those outside the church are you not to judge those inside you see I think we get this round the wrong way all the time we spend our time pointing fingers at those who are not Christians and expect them to behave as Christians we look down with a superiority we talk about the affair that our colleague had at work or our friend who gets drunk every weekend well I want to say well what do you expect they're not believers they're not followers of Jesus so why do you expect them to behave as believers what business is it of mine to judge those outside the church our responsibility is to bring the good news of Jesus Christ his death on the cross and the amazing offer of grace and forgiveness we're to point people to Jesus we're not to sit as

Lord justice over their sin we're to offer grace and mercy love and forgiveness we're not to write them off God will judge so it's not our business to go pointing fingers at other people but this is our business we are to judge each other inside the church have a look at verse 12 we'll read verse 12 and 13 what business is it of mine to judge those outside the church are you not to judge those inside God will judge those outside expel the wicked person from among you now this doesn't mean judgmentalism where we all go around pointing fingers and looking for every little mistake and every little flaw and fault and going you did this and you did that that's judgmentalism where we look down in superiority and go

I'm not like that but you are like that now this is this is to sit in judgment where we come alongside another person and help them deal with their sin as we expect them to deal with our sin you see the real issue here is not the sin of the world but the sin within the church Jesus died for messy people like you and me so that we could become his holy church and because we now share in his holiness we now bear his name and we're to live as holy people in a unholy world so what do we do if you see me in a sinful way what should we do with each other if we see sinful behaviour in the life of the church well turn with me please back to Matthew's gospel chapter 18 Matthew's gospel chapter 18

I think this passage that we're going to just briefly look at here is perhaps a background to what Paul has been writing in Corinthians so here's some very practical and helpful steps for all of us to take when we see sinful behaviour in the life of the church we're not to ignore it and tolerate it we're to deal with it and while it's talking about a sin against you and an individual I think there are principles here that we can apply to ourselves so let's read from verse 15 of chapter 18 so what should we do if we see sinful behaviour verse 15 if your brother or sister sins against you go and show him his fault just between the two of you so if we see something that's not right we simply go to the other person privately we don't do a big song and dance about it privately to the other person and explain to them and show them what has gone wrong if he listens to you you have won your brother over in other words you have sat with them talked with them gone to the cross with them to pray for them and to show them the way of repentance and the way we can know forgiveness again one on one that's how we're all to behave with each other and you should do that with me and I should do that with you so that's the first thing we should do look at verse 16 but if they will not listen so you've been praying with them you've been talking to them if he will not listen take one or two others along so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses and I think in that case there it's saying well go to a mature older Christian perhaps an elder or leader within the church and talk to them about it again it's keeping it private it's keeping it with a couple of people and then they can go to the person and address the issue and say can you not see that this behavior is wrong let us go to the cross together and seek forgiveness and a restoration that God can bring and know the joy and the fullness of life that he has come to give us verse 17 but if he refuses to listen to them then tell it to the church and if he refuses to listen even to the church then treat him as you would a pagan or as an unbeliever can you see that separating the sinner only happens as a last resort it's not something we rush to immediately and go out you go no it comes at the end of a lengthy process after gently pursuing them with grace treating them with mercy and longing that they turn in forgiveness just as God has been patient and pursued us in grace and come to us to reach down to people like you and me who are sinners longing that we turn to him so our behaviour to each other should be the same we don't need permission to go to one another to address each other over these things

[ 34 : 35 ] God has given us the permission the church is God's holy church we are his holy people and we are to reflect his character to the world and so we must take it seriously we take it seriously because we want to see our brother or sister ultimately saved we want to see the church protected so that people grow and develop in their faith and we want the church to be a clear witness where people not only hear the good news of Jesus but see a life of Christ likeness within their community let's pray together our father

God we do not pretend to come before you as guiltless or innocent we are all aware of our own failures and falling this past week and we all need forgiveness we thank you for the wonderful promise that when we confess our sins you do forgive and we pray father that if we are persisting in some particular sin if we are unrepentant in one particular area that by your holy spirit you would point your finger clearly upon our hearts and upon our lives and cause us to run to you the loving father who longs to forgive and longs to restore and longs that we would be transformed to know the joy and the love and the welcome of our heavenly father father would you please help us as a church to live as we should and reflect you to the world in which we live for your grace and help we pray in Jesus name amen we're going to sing so to place