

Winning your brother - church discipline (2)

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[0:00] Taking the plank out of your own eye before taking the speck out of your brothers. Matthew 18, which is the one about go to your brother, see if you can win him over, if not take one or two other people, so there's two or three witnesses, and then if he won't listen, tell it to the church, and if he won't listen to the church, let him be as if he were not a Christian.

And then the 1 Corinthians 5, which is what we're going to look at this evening, and this is what our current church documents say.

Do you know, I do hope I've got the right slides up here, because I thought I'd, let me just have a look. Yeah, I think I'm on the right one, because I thought I'd deleted this, but anyway, there it is. This is the, this is what's in our current documents. This discipline arises out of the responsibilities of church membership. Its purpose is to uphold the glory and the rule of the Lord Jesus Christ in his church, to maintain its purity here on earth, to sanctify each member, and to reclaim and restore those who err.

It is one of the means God has provided for the perseverance of the saints. Any action must be carried out in the spirit of Christian love and humility, with a prayerful concern for the full restoration of the offender.

[1:27] Matters of personal offence should be settled by members according to the procedure laid down in Matthew 18. Any member who willfully neglects the responsibilities of church membership, who falls into doctrinal error or into open sin, will be subject to this ministry of love as exercised by the elders and church.

Action may take different forms according to the seriousness of the case. In some cases, great discretion is required, and therefore the elders are not obliged to give the church all the details, but must be trusted with the government of the church.

In difficult cases, the advice of other elderships should be sought. So, that's what's been in the church documents for years and years and years. It can be improved on, and that's what we're planning and hoping to do.

What do we mean by church discipline? This was my rough and ready description, definition.

What do you mean by church discipline? Church discipline is that exercise of the heavenly authority of the Lord within the body of Christ on earth at local church level, by which professing Christians are advised, rebuked, penalised, or excluded if they will not repent of definite sin or sins.

[2:46] This is exercised informally by individuals, through the elders, and under the authority of the Lord Jesus as expressed through the gathered church.

All Christians are meant to submit to this discipline and be prepared to exercise discipline. It is spiritually demanding, but ultimately for the good of all concerned.

That was my sort of working definition. And the Matthew 18 we went through last time, I'll just click through that because I think I've given enough reference to that.

I will simply remind us that in Matthew 18, the last half of the chapter is about this instinct that the Christian must have a good idea.

It is a good idea.

[4:13] It is intrinsic to the way we view one another in the Christian life. We have a pre-disposition to forgive. And that summed up, or the thought of it summed up, in that quote from the story of the king who was

settling debts.

Do you remember the story of settling debts? and the guy came to him and owed him thousands and thousands which he couldn't possibly repay. And the master says, I cancelled all that debt of yours.

And that sort of casts its light over the Christian life. Who are we? We're people who've had a huge, huge debt just cancelled. And therefore, how can we in our hearts be pernickety and say, well, that person owes me a fiver and I'm going to be on his back until he pays me back for it?

That was Matthew 18. I think it's enough on that, isn't it? We saw that last time. So let's do 1 Corinthians 5. And you might say, actually, I could have worked that all out for myself.

And perhaps you could. But let's do it together and we know that we've done it. So 1 Corinthians, let's begin by looking at the flow of the letter, the context of it.

[5:42] Worth getting the context. 1 Corinthians 1 verse 4. Well, Corinthians are such an interesting church. Sometimes they're held out as being the sort of vanguard of what the early church ought to be like.

If you look at them more closely, they're really wacky. You know, I wouldn't like to be one of the elders in the church at Corinth. But Paul is incredibly gracious.

And he says, verse 4, I thank God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. For in him you have been enriched in every way, in all your speaking, in all your knowledge.

Because our testimony about Christ was confirmed in you. Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift. So he builds them up and says, you're a genuine church. God's enriched you.

You don't lack any. He doesn't say spiritual gift. He says charisma. So it just means gift. But perhaps it was spiritual. But the translator puts that in. But you don't lack anything.

[6:45] You're a fully equipped church. And then Paul puts at the end of that sentence, as you wait eagerly for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed, which is a little hint of what they have actually forgotten.

Because they've forgotten that it's all about the future revelation of Jesus Christ. And in 1 Corinthians 15, when he gets the resurrection, he'll actually confront this and say, some of you don't even believe this is going to happen.

How can you possibly live the Christian life if you're not looking forward to what happens when the Lord Jesus is revealed? Okay. And he talks about verse 8.

He will keep you strong to the end, so that you'll be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. And again, he's sort of flagging up quite early on. We're looking long term.

We're looking to the end. That's where our horizon is. Okay. And then he launches in verse 10 pretty quickly. I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another, so there's no divisions among you, and you may be perfectly united in mind and thought.

[7:54] So one of the features of this church is division. And we'll find it all the way through the letter. You can find it at the Lord's table that the, what are they, the intelligentsia, the conosciante, are eating at one table, and they've brought their caviar sandwiches and a nice bottle of something or other, and they get on with that, while the other people who haven't got, can't even scrape together a packet of crisps are at the Lord's table, and there's a division when they eat together.

So he flags this up at this point. This is a real problem. You're a divided church. And he is going to link this to all sorts of things, but in verse 18, he stretches out one hand to say, let's bring ourselves in contact with the cross, because the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to those who are being saved, it is the power of God.

And the themes he's going to be picking up here are power and wisdom, because the Corinthians are going to be dead interested in anything that's powerful. They're going to be dead interested in anything that's wise.

And that is going to bring about divisions and cliques and competitiveness and looking down on one another because they think power, power, and wisdom.

And Paul straight away, or early on, says, look, the most powerful thing that we have as Christians is the cross where Jesus died in his weakness. And the wisest thing we have as Christians is the cross where Jesus died in apparent foolishness.

[9:49] That's the thing that we measure everything by. Anyway, chapter 3, verse 1, we find Paul saying, having said that they are fully spiritually equipped, he says, actually, in some ways, you're completely immature.

I could not address you, chapter 3, verse 1, as spiritual, but as... Well, whether the word worldly is in that sentence, I looked at some of the texts and they weren't quite sure whether the word was there.

The next word is infants. I think in our talk, in our speak, we would say, you're babyish. We would actually say, you're immature. You know, you think you're so powerful and wise.

You're really immature as Christians. And he talks... So in verse 3, there is the word fleshly. You are fleshly.

There's jealousy and quarreling. Aren't you fleshly? Your... The dynamic of your church is not as it should be from the cross and in the power of the Spirit, but it's in what the human flesh is all about, which is a very different dynamic.

[11:05] Power, wisdom, competition, looking down on one another, dividing into groups because this is our sort of person and those are those sort of person and that sort of thing. And he...

He... works this through in terms of leadership. So some of them are... I follow Paul, I follow Apollos, and they divide up on those sorts of lines.

Moving into chapter 4, verse 8, a key text, another text flagging up they are not looking forward to the resurrection as they should.

Already you have all you want. Already you have become rich. You have become kings and that without us.

So the Corinthians are saying these apostles like Paul... A little bit... A little bit behind the curve.

[12:09] Paul... Seems very impressive, but actually when you see him, he's weak. And all he does is talk about the cross. And I... You know, I can think of half a dozen more powerful speakers just in Corinth than the apostle Paul.

You can see how... What the sort of thing they're thinking. And Paul says, you know, you're kings, are you? You're ruling and powerful, strong, and you think we're sort of on the scrap heap?

You haven't got that right. Because the time when we rule as kings is in the future. Not now. We are in the midst of a spiritual battle, spiritual warfare at the moment.

And to think that you've already conquered and arrived is a real miscalculation. Verse 4... Chapter 4, verse 18, you have become arrogant.

You think you know better than the apostle Paul. And so... That's the sort of way the church is shaping up. They are, verse 17, forgetting the apostolic teaching and the apostolic ways.

[13:23] So he says in chapter 4, verse 17, for this reason I'm sending to you Timothy, my son, whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church.

Sort of a rather humbling thing for the Corinthians because they're thinking, well, we're a bit special actually. We've gone a step ahead of these other churches. And Paul says, no you haven't.

You're immature. And if you think you've gone a step ahead, you're quite mistaken. Actually, you've forgotten that I, Paul the Apostle, embody the gospel and teach the gospel.

And that's what you've got to come back to. So it's a genuine living church where the Holy Spirit is at work, but it's also an immature flesh-driven church as shown by their division and their arrogance.

So having sort of led up to that and you've got a little bit of a flavor of the sort of people that they are, let's do in detail chapter 5.

[14:32] So he says, it's actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you and of a kind that does not even occur among pagans. A man has his father's wife.

There's some sort of incestuous relationship. And he says, you know, this is known. It's not a secret. And this particular sin is a known outward, it's not just an imagination, you know, these two have shapped up together.

It's a gross sin because he says, even your non-Christian neighbors would say, really? Can't believe that.

Even they would be shocked by this. It's a known outward gross sin. Just for interest, chapter 15, 33 is what happens, he talks about those who have not a wobbly on the resurrection.

And it's quite interesting that he doesn't say, cast them out of your fellowship. What he does do is reason with them and he says, don't be misled.

[16:00] Bad company corrupts good character. Come back to your senses as you ought and stop sinning for there are some who are ignorant of God. I say this to your shame. I mean, different situations are different and there's a call for the church to make a judgment on the relative magnitude of sins including doctrinal sin.

But it's just interesting here that the thing that he does single out for this discipline reaction is a gross outward obvious sin.

Okay, let's move on. Now then, what does he say about their reaction? You are proud. Well, not surprising with the Corinthians actually. Shouldn't you rather have been filled with grief and shouldn't you have put out of your fellowship the man who did this?

That's what they should have done. They should have put out of their fellowship. They should have lifted out from their midst the person who's done this.

make sure I'm probably going to anticipate my remarks but it assumes that there is a midst to be in. There is a group defined in some reasonably well understood way and that they could take this person and say you no longer belong to this group.

[17:36] You are excluded from our midst. So, that has some implications about belonging and saying that you belong to a particular church and knowing who belongs and who doesn't.

Now, what's the remedy? He says, shouldn't you rather have been filled with grief and put out of your fellowship the man who did this? He says, even though I, that's I, Paul, the writer, the apostle, 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.

So, one component of what happens is the, this absence presence of the apostle. He says, physically, I'm absent from you, wherever he's writing from.

Is he writing from Rome? I don't know. He's somewhere else physically but he says, in a genuine spiritual sense, I am with you there is an apostolic influence and an apostolic presence amongst you and then he says, as an apostle I judge this, I can do this, I can see the rights and wrongs of this, it's an open and shut case.

It is not right for a Christian man to take as his sexual partner his father's wife.

[19:11] It's not right. Open and shut case. There's nothing debatable about this. And then he says, verse 4, when you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and I am with you in spirit and the power of our Lord Jesus is present, hand this man over to Satan.

Let's look at that a bit at a time. So he says, there is a way of the church assembling in the name of the Lord Jesus and in this assembling there is the presiding presence of the apostle or apostles and there is the power of the Lord Jesus present.

Now I venture to say that there are some ways of the church meeting that don't have that. So I would say that if we went for a picnic we could do that as a church but it wouldn't have the same gravity as this sort of meeting here.

Have a think about that. There's some ways that the church can get together together which isn't quite like this but there's some ways that the church get together that is like this.

So in our way of doing things as an independent Baptist church we have particular members meetings to do spiritual business and seems to me that that meeting definitely qualifies as being like this here.

[20:59] We gather in the name of the Lord Jesus we have the presence of the apostles through their writing and we are told that the power of the Lord Jesus is particularly present.

So there are meetings where you couldn't describe it quite like this but there are meetings where this is exactly what happens. And he says at such a meeting hand this man over to Satan so that

the sinful nature will be destroyed for the ruin of the flesh.

Sounds a very harsh thing doesn't it? You'd say how can that be Christian? But let's understand what he's saying. He's assuming that the circle which includes the Christian people that's the church the kingdom of Jesus Christ is the kingdom where Christ rules where it's his people belong to him he's present there and outside of that is the ordinary world where Christ lordship is not recognized and in a sense is disputed and this he calls the kingdom of Satan or the place where Satan has his plans going and he says that's where this person now finds themselves and for the ruin of the flesh which does sound pretty harsh but I think what he's saying is that outside the church there are not the comforts and encouragements and support of Christian brothers and sisters and I suppose you could say if you put it the other way around what a valuable thing it is to be in the church to have the safety the security the prayerfulness the looking out for one another that happens within the church and that affects our flesh it affects us physically mentally really and to be outside that is the place where as he puts it here there is the ruin of the flesh it's a harsh statement but the and let me just say that outside the protection of the church there are multiple paths down which your flesh can actually be ruined aren't there there are multiple paths that you can go down if you think in terms of alcohol if you think in terms of drugs if you think in terms of promiscuity think in terms of all sorts of ways and there's no particular fence stopping you going all the way down but in the church there is and he says that handed over to Satan that the sinful nature may be ruined and that his spirit saved in the day of the Lord so the aim of this is therapeutic it isn't just to give this person a good spiritual punch in the eye the aim is that even if they have to learn the hard way that they will come back to the Lord that's what the aim of it is so before we move on let's look at this the presence or absence of the apostles the apostles in the sense that Paul means it are dead they are the people who wrote the Bible there is no blank pages at the end of the Bible for extra bits to be inserted know what I mean I've got in my diary I've got one of those clicky things like that and you can buy extra pages!

to put in and I do that from time to time Bibles aren't made like that are they do know what I mean it's clicky like a lever arch file you put more pages in the Bible because there are no more apostles to write the pages so you're saying well Paul can't possibly be present with us but I think the application of it is where scripture rules where we submit ourselves to the apostolic writing the apostles do rule do have the apostolic presence we notice too this bit the solemn solemn not meaning we're all grim faced but serious church gathering that's like in Matthew 18 isn't it tell it to the church if they will not listen to the church let him be as a pagan and a tax collector so we have the same thing here of the ultimate end of the line and this end of the line is reached almost immediately of the church meeting in this sense in the name and power of the

[25:51] Lord Jesus and then I put a comment about handing commented on and the aim to win this person over in the long term which I've already commented on so let's just follow through the rest of the chapter verse six your boasting is not good don't you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough so he now uses the the model the illustration from the Old Testament of dough with yeast in it and the connection excuse me to the exodus where the lamb was killed and eaten and in conjunction with that unleavened bread was eaten the unleavened bread first instance was bread that you had to make very quickly it didn't have time to rise

I understand that the correct biology chemistry is not quite the same as our yeast but it's a good enough analogy not to be misleading so they say yeast your boasting is not good don't you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough get rid of the old yeast so that you may be a new batch without yeast as you really are 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 bread without yeast the bread of sincerity and truth so he's using that Old Testament diet food thing as an illustration of the Christian life so he links it first it links back to

Christ Christ has been sacrificed like the Passover Christ our Passover has been sacrificed therefore let us keep the feast let us celebrate the feast in the appropriate way and the appropriate way to celebrate the feast was with unleavened bread and he says well unleavened bread for us is where we remove the old yeast of badness malice and wickedness so you get rid of those things so it's not appropriate you can't celebrate the festival with that so get rid of that and we end up with

bread of sincerity meaning I think purity rather than honesty the bread of purity and truth so if I were to move truth to trueness you would see that shade of meaning brings us more into this realm of sexual sin the bread that we're supposed to eat is of moral purity and trueness peace which is why a parallel illustration was that at the beginning of if you're married you're faithful to the marriage partner and Paul would say there are certain ways of behaving which are appropriate to the relationship you're now in and some that are definitely not appropriate here he says it's like food you keep the feast some parts of the diet you don't have and some parts of the diet you definitely do have and he's trying to make the same point and then he says now let's just get this clear because we're talking about the boundaries of the church verse 9

I've written to you in my letter not to associate with well it's a word with a few different components so I've put with each mix which is the components of the word meaning mixed up together to be together with to be in the same bundle of things not to associate not to be say these are my people he says I wrote to you not to associate with sexually immoral people not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral or the greedy or swindlers or idolaters in that case you'd have to leave this world so people like this in the world you can't be surgically or clinically isolated from them you know you're going to have to buy your milk from somebody you're going to have to get your car serviced by somebody you're going to have to go to some bank or another to get your mortgage and it's impossible to totally separate yourself from sin and sinners in this world you can't do it we're not meant to do it but he says verse 11

I'm writing to you that you must not associate you know these are my people you know where these are my people not to associate with anyone who is named as a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy an idolater a slanderer a drunkard or a swindler with such a person do not even eat he says if it's when we talk about within the church that's different and there is an incompatibility of being named as a brother and living as he says sexually immoral covetous idolater drunkard swindler the word swindler as I understand the original there's a bit more violence to it so it's like a grabber so I put mugger perhaps I've overdone that if you have somebody in your church who you know is this you can't do that you can't have somebody in the boundary of the church who is like that you're not even to eat with such a person

[32:35] I think he means to eat in the sense that you're saying we're having fellowship together because I'm reminded that Jesus had with tax collectors and sinners so I think the eating of saying you know we're having a conversation I'm not signing up to anything that you're offering me but we are having a conversation I think that's the sort of meal that Jesus had what business of mine verse 12 is it to judge those outside the church judge is such a word that we have to use carefully so one of the ultimate sins in our current ages to be judgmental how somebody decides if you're judgmental presumably they have to judge that you're judgmental but anyway it's like a friend of mine who said it's absolutely wrong to make moral imperatives Paul says what business is it of mine to judge those outside the church well he's already judged them hasn't he he said they're covetous idolatrous slanderous swindlers

I mean that's what they are so he's not afraid to make a moral analysis what he must mean is it's not my business to act in judgment to sort of unilaterally act towards them it's not my jurisdiction to act I know what sort of people they are I'm not blind I'm not stupid I know that's wrong but I don't have the authority to act against them however in the church he says God will judge those outside are you not to judge those inside and he says that yes we are it's a right thing to be looking out for one another and assessing in that sense one another and saying so and so brand new television last week just like the one that got stolen from a shop down the road in fact it's actually got on the television that's where it came from that's not right is it that is not acceptable to have somebody known as a brother who is any of these things thief expel the wicked man from among you he says you've got to act the expel the wicked man from among you is a quote from several places in Deuteronomy which we looked at some months ago they're on the screen there and in each of those cases no that's not quite true as I recall in many of those cases there was the death penalty purge the wicked one from among you the way they did it was to stone or otherwise execute the guilty person and this they exited the community via a hearse it's interesting that Paul says the imperative of keeping the community pure is still the same but you don't do it by killing them we

don't have a members meeting in which we decide to hang somebody that would be a thought wouldn't it but we can and should if necessary have a members meeting to expel somebody who is living in or has committed gross outward sin and I think that's pretty much it so there's some conclusions there are sins that were outward and grossly so and are incompatible with the Christian faith if persisted in and not repented of I thought about that are there some sins that if you just commit them once think about that one there are degrees of sin the Christian church as a body has a duty to exclude such a person and there is a challenge of a church being willing to act together and perhaps in a moment David might be prevailed on to tell us a reminiscence about this from his experience a church can meet in such a way that the name and the power of the Lord Jesus is present under apostolic authority and there is a spiritual power there to do this work the guilty person is treated as not a Christian the aim is to try and to save them for example by this strong reminder of what they are now letting themselves in for and what they are missing it is the duty of the responsible church to do this being a church member makes this a whole lot clearer so if somebody is signed up as a member of this church we know jolly well it's our job to look out for them if it's somebody that we see from time to time do this disciplining or do they belong to somebody else church membership makes this a lot clearer this power operates within the realm of the local church what we expect of society is a different thing so if you think about Christian Institute Christian concern just have to be careful that Paul quite clearly says it is unrealistic actually not expected of us to try and impose Christian behaviour on the world outside now we do have some input into the world outside and we can say to people if you live that way it will just damage you so as far as you are going to listen to us we really advise you and we use our abilities as citizens in a democracy to try and persuade!

[39:24] influence to say don't legislate that legislation or don't endorse that form of behaviour but he does make a difference doesn't he we're not mandated to impose Christian behaviour on people outside the Christian church!

And I think this is my final point exclusion and expulsion is important for the health of the church when it's the appropriate thing it's an important thing for us to do I've stopped David you shared something with me was that just an entirely private observation yeah no I just it's many many years ago but I have been in a church where the practice of discipline was necessary that there was a young lady in the church who managed to seduce a married man and had done it more than once in fact but when it she was in the church and when it came to light that this had happened it absolutely had to be taken seriously and the elders had worked through that the recommendation to the church was that she had to be put out of membership at least for a period and along the lines of what we had heard the idea was that this would help her to see how grave the thing was and that she would be excluded from communion for a while until there were signs that this is clearly over and not to be repeated but it's quite interesting how in the church perhaps there was just an unusual older couple who were not very strong in

God not very well taught and of course as soon as this first came forward this person has to be dealt with we have to exclude them they made quite a scene and said how can you do this I could so easily sin like this so they were stirring up some division that if this happened among we shouldn't be excluding them so you can see how you have to tread a very even course but when you're seeing the aim is that when challenged the pastor at the church said this woman needs to know that we are taking this seriously and if you glossed over it it was important that she knew the church knew and that it was a public thing no question was the answer was no anybody else like to comment or ask a question

Martin how would you view someone who's been taken in a public sin but is repentant would you still need to exclude them for a period because of the public aspect of it and I suppose one answer to that is that there are some things that scripture gives us as clear framework examples so this is a clear example Matthew 18 is a clear example and I think the way scripture operates is it gives us some clear examples in this territory this territory this territory and then many other things fall in between that and it is a matter of wisdom and judgment for the church and the elders to work out an appropriate path bearing in mind the principles that scripture gives us so

I would say I think I would try not to give you an immediate answer to that I would say it depends on a lot of things so for example we have had in the church people who are convicted criminals and they have been quite clear that they have committed a crime in the past perhaps served a prison

sentence and that is in the past that's not what they're trying to do now and I don't think there'll be any point in any church disciplinary angle to that they're repentant sinners and goodness knows if the Lord were to expose all the things that we've said and done who would stand so if it was something that happened in the ongoing life of the church I think there'll be a possibility of saying we have a members meeting to discuss this and to say to the person this is something we did do in the past you were already repentant but we want to say to everybody what you did was wrong we can't possibly endorse it or approve it and we make that as a solemn statement but we do appreciate that you are already repentant so we take it no further

[45:13] Steve just reminds me of an actual example which we had here which you probably remember if you think back to our youth where there was a couple who were both active prominent members of the church a young couple who were engaged to be married but who in fact the fiancé the woman got pregnant before the marriage and this was discussed I think by the elders and by the church as to what should be done they had already committed to be married and they were repentant as I recall we simply made a statement saying this is not acceptable behaviour but as you repented we will not exclude you from the church I think that's what we did I think so too!

Thank you Jerome? it's probably quite unlikely but what would happen if you had a disciplinary issue where it was both a spiritual church ecclesiastical matter but also a civil matter I'm trying to think of an example say someone was engaging in some kind of criminal activity that was clearly I don't know say I was dealing drugs in church I needed to be disciplined that's both a church issue that requires church discipline but it's also a civil matter how would we address that as a church well that's a good question and it's probably very unlikely but it could happen it's probably very unlikely I be dealing drugs but some things do cross into both spheres they do they do well again

I don't want to sort of back myself into a corner by giving an answer when there are a number of variables that might be in the case there if somebody was dealing drugs in the church so Sunday morning we had a little huddle over in the corner there then that would be totally unacceptable and would be said to be so I mean this I think it is not unlikely that somebody on the path to becoming a Christian or being a very new Christian might find themselves struggling with parting off from a drug habit as they might from an alcohol habit and I think there it would be a question of weighing up all sorts of things so I wouldn't automatically think that let's say a new

Christian comes along and says oh I was smoking funny cigarettes last night whether we would immediately report them to the police or whether we would say there's actually a pastoral aspect to this rather than simply a disciplinary aspect to it anybody else got more wisdom on that I suppose one area where that could be more maybe the drugs wasn't a particularly good example but a sexual misdemeanor in the church that involved children that for example would be that's an extreme one obviously that's when you're in the realm of both the spiritual ecclesiastical and the civil aren't you when it comes to child safeguarding the internal procedures of the church are overtaken and out flanked by the legal requirements which are actually quite stringent and even a whiff or a hint of behaviour that put children at risk would most likely trigger a quasi criminal legal train of events so that would be a special case

I think we have been revising some of the things in the constitution and this is how some of these things actually came up as Phil said the safeguarding policy says that in that case clearly we shouldn't be covering up crimes now there is a caveat as Phil says that if somebody is smoking pot would you normally initially send them to the police you wouldn't no citizen would you would say that you shouldn't be doing this but with that caveat I cannot see that it's ever the correct procedure for the church to cover up a crime and I don't know what we decided on the end but I certainly sort of strengthened the safeguarding statement when I was going through the constitution to make it more general than just safeguarding because that's what

[51:02] Peter says the civil authority there is to judge crime and you should expect to be punished if you're not doing good and the question is obviously then what is a crime it's not as simple as that but my view is the basic principle is that if we are aware that a crime is being committed then we should report it to the civil authority the catholic church has got itself in all sorts of mess by its policy of the

confessional being not privileged and I think it's because they haven't thought the thing through properly that it's not our business to cover up a crime and if it is if we try and do that then it's a whole can of worms it can get us into a tremendous mess and therefore the basic principle except there are cases that are going to be debatable and where there is a pastoral issue that it's not our job to cover up a crime and in fact one of the mind marks books is it gives an example of somebody who was accepted into church membership and the elders realised that he was actually in this!

this is in America he in the country illegally and they did say you really should go and confess this to the authorities they didn't immediately ring the police and say we have an illegal immigrant here they did say to the person you should go and confess this and he refused to do so for a while and I think eventually they did I can't remember exactly what it said they certainly put him out of the church I think they may have reported it to the civil authority as well but the happy ending was that he did get deported and then realised that they had been right and that the Lord had actually was leading him to work back in his native country so there was certainly a restoration there but I cannot see that it's basic well I mean there are dubious cases in grey areas obviously but I cannot see that I think the basic principle is that the church should never attempt to cover up a crime on pastoral grounds that's what

Peter says I think I just wanted to say as I'm listening to everything that there's a couple of things just about Jesus that I just think we you know because I think we've gone a long way over to the left if you like or the right maybe you know and maybe just bring it back that Mary Magdalene committed a crime by committing adultery and everyone wanted to judge her and stone her and Jesus said you without sin throw the first stone and the other thing that when the thief on the cross died next to Jesus he repented and Jesus said today you will be with me in paradise I know he was getting punished for his sin and Nicodemus who ripped everyone off once he repented I don't think pardon just like here sorry I know he repented but Jesus didn't call the police and I'm not saying we shouldn't I think we should you know people should maybe pay for crime I'm not saying that crime should ever pay you know you should always there should always be a punishment but I also think that there should be some measure of pastoral discussion around things like smoking pot or you know I know we put that your church put that lady out of the church and things like that but I think if we get too harsh and too disciplinarian then we lose stuff and also you know when Jesus said I know it was a totally different context but you still said when you take your brother to a magistrate rather than try and sort something out it would be better to sort that out because that's a bit about the plank and the splinter and what have you he's more or less saying if you do that expect some comeback for yourself so

I just wanted to bring it back to the middle I think there's quite a lot of dimensions there are a lot of dimensions but that's I wanted to bring it back because it is now really we're getting a bit legislative legislative okay I think it'd be great if we did actually have 10 minutes to pray together so let's stop just there and I'll put some things on the screen Lord we thank you for being able to open this subject up and we continue to pray that as a church we might be wisely informed and equipped and prepared for something that we hope in a sense will never happen but please help us to take on board all the issues of care for one another of the spirit in our own hearts of the forgiveness of the [56:55] Lord Jesus and of the entirely reasonable concern that the bride of Christ should be pure and true and so we ask you Lord to be our redeemer our helper our deliverer in the name of Jesus Amen I put up on the screen I put up on the screen ending ending