

Accountability

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[0:00] This subject of accountability, responsibility in the community of the Church of Jesus Christ.! Much more than this, I did it my way.

It's almost a definition of sin, isn't it? I lived life my way. I did it my way. I don't think anybody will know where this lyric comes from.

Since I was 17, I've had no one over me. It's actually sung by Joni Mitchell. A wonderful hippie singer-songwriter.

Interesting thoughts. Since I was 17, I've had no one over me. No one tells me what to do since I was 17 when I was a child. So let's just put this into ordinary language.

I do my own thing. I'm free. I'm not tied down. I looked up Western individualism on Wikipedia, which we know is always true.

[1:26] It isn't really. I'm just saying that as a bit of a joke. But Wikipedia defines Western individualism as independence, self-reliance, in which the individual takes precedence over the social group.

And we live in our Western society, we live where Western individualism is just assumed to be normal, right, proper, unquestioned, assumed.

I'm sure other cultures have similar sorts of things, but I'm just thinking of Western individualism.

I did it my way. Since I was 17, I've had no one over me. I do my own thing. I'm free and I'm not tied down.

I stand and fall alone. I think as an individual. I am responsible to no one. I am responsible for no one. Western individualism.

[2:39] I do as I please. It is not the way the Bible thinks of being a Christian. We're going to have a deeper look at what it is to belong to the Church of Jesus Christ.

And my thesis is I'd like to persuade you that as many as possible Christians should belong to a local community of real Christian people. Real as distinct from virtual, not just on Facebook, although Facebook is a very good way of keeping up with people.

You may say for good reasons, such and such a church is not the one for me. Okay. There may be fundamental differences which mean I cannot wholeheartedly join in. But we would like as many as possible people to say, such and such a church, maybe our church here, hopefully our church here. That is the one for me. There may be superficial things that I disagree with. I don't like Philip's choice of shoes or something like that. But important matters.

And they're in matters of freedom and individual conscience. But fundamentally on the important things, we are agreed. And accountability and responsibility is one of those fundamental things.

[3:56] This is my plan. Previously, we looked at... Love and how that is embedded in the community of Jesus Christ.

We looked a little bit at teaching doctrine. We looked at what is reformed. That's a couple of weeks ago. Last week, Chris preached from John's Gospel on service.

And today, we're looking at accountability. And if you... So this is going to be more in the nature of a study of a number of passages rather than a sermon on one passage.

But I do have one theme. This is my plan. To state the target. Say what is accountability. To look at four texts. Two in the Old Testament.

Two in the New Testament. And then to draw out some conclusions. And the thing that I'm concerned about is that I hope I won't be brutal. I think these texts are really quite strong.

[5:01] And I want to say them as they deserve to be said. But I'm not intending to be brutal or personal.

But there are some strong implications to these texts. So those are the three stages. So what is the target? Right. Does that make sense? Yeah.

Good. I just wondered. Target. What is meant by accountability? Well, what I'm meaning by this is that way of living in which I accept that my spiritual life is bound up with the spiritual life of my brothers and sisters in the church.

In which I accept that I, by my sin, can harm myself and them. And they have a right to rebuke me. In other words, to say to me, what you are saying is wrong.

What you are doing is wrong. That they have a right to do that to me. And that I have a duty to seek their best interests by rebuking them, if it's a necessary thing to do, for their good.

[6:17] Put it the other way around. I have no right to live without concern for the effect of me on other people. I have no right to live without concern for that.

And I have no right to live without concern to rebuke other people for their good. In other words, just to say, oh, let them carry on. I have no right to say that or to think that.

In other words, that by the design of the Savior, we live in a community, a body, as the Bible sometimes says, where the connecting sinews and ligaments are filled with the idea of responsibility and accountability.

That's just the way it is. Did that make sense? Okay. Let's look at some texts.

Let's look at the text that Lindsay read to us in Deuteronomy. And I would like to read this and then to say, if you were a Western individualist, what would you make of this text?

[7:34] So the text says, we won't read the little tiny bit in chapter 16, we're going to chapter 17. Do not sacrifice to the Lord your God an ox or a sheep that has any defect or flaw in it, for that would be detestable to him.

If a man or woman living among you or one of the towns the Lord gives you is found doing evil in the eyes of the Lord your God, in violation of his covenant and contrary to my command, has worshipped other gods, bowing down to them or to the sun or the moon or the stars of the sky. And this has been brought to your attention. You must investigate it thoroughly. If it is true and it has been proved that this detestable thing has been done in Israel, take the man or woman who has done this evil deed to your city gate and stone that person to death.

Okay. You're already thinking, gosh, this is really primitive and harsh, stoning people to death. Oh no, what's going on here? Okay. Let's just carry on. Let's read the text.

On the testimony of two or three witnesses, a man shall be put to death, but no one shall be put to death on the testimony of only one witness. Well, that's a relief. The hands of the witnesses must be the first in putting him to death.

[8:53] Oh, it's just as bad as it was before. And then the hands of all the people. You must purge the evil from among you. So what's it saying?

It's set in Israel. So it's not today. It's not our situation today. It's back in the history of how things were with God's people when they had a land and they were a nation.

It's set back in Israel, in the community there, and in the land of gift, verse 2, the towns the Lord gives you.

So God has given them this gift of land. And it particularly refers to the worship of different gods. So worshipping the sun or the moon or the stars of the sky.

And we noted this European culture used to be polytheistic. So the Greeks and the Romans worshipped Mercury, Venus, Jupiter, the stars in the sky.

[10:01] So it's not just a stupid thing. It's things that used to be done and still are done. So the worship of different gods. It says, if this happens, this is in violation of the covenant.

This is evil in the eyes of the Lord. Apparently, that's what it says. And this is to be investigated. If this comes to your attention, verse 4, you investigate it thoroughly.

You check whether it's true. So it's not just rumors and not liking somebody and telling nasty stories about them. But it's investigated. And if it's proven, then there is the death penalty.

Take a hard swallow. It says it's the death penalty. Take the man or woman who has done this evil deed to your city gate and stone that person to death.

Verse 5. On the testimony of two or three witnesses, a man shall be put to death. So two or three witnesses, not just one. And the people who are involved in putting this person to death, well, first of all is the witness.

[11:07] The hands of the witness must be the first. So I suppose that stops people trivially making up a story because they know they're going to end up almost literally with blood on their hands.

But then it says, the hands of all the people. The whole community is involved with this. It says, tagline, you must purge the evil from among you.

That's what it says. You must purge the evil from among you. Purge, the word is often translated burn, actually. So there's a sort of sense of the power of a fire or something like that to purge the evil from among you.

The word for evil is the word evil. And the from among you is a word which means inside you, inside the body of people, actually inside this group, inside this circle, inside this community.

You must purge the evil from among you. And what do Western individualists say? A Western individualist would say, how primitive?

[12:24] Because surely people are allowed to choose exactly who they worship and how they worship. And we wouldn't dream of, you know, I should be allowed to do that.

They should be allowed to do that. And it would be saying, and if that group over there is going to take it into their heads to stone somebody, I'm not going to be involved with that.

I'm just going to sit on the side and perhaps write a letter to the guardian or something about it. And the text says, that is a totally impossible position to take.

That is a totally impossible position to take. Because God does not say it doesn't matter. God says it is evil. Doesn't it?

I think three times it says it's evil. And when the judgment is made, you too are expected to pick up a stone and join in.

[13:32] And if somebody, why aren't you joining in? We all do this together. We've got to purge the evil from amongst us.

And you're part of the us. And the evil's got to be purged out. And this is what God says has got to happen. This is how it is. And how foreign and strange that seems to us.

Text number one. Text number two. No, not text number two. There's several texts like this. This tagline, you must purge the evil from among you.

Text number two. Is repeated something like 15 times. There's little variations on it. Let's just flip through. So we're still in chapter 17, verse 12.

The man who shows contempt for the judge or for the priest who stands ministering there to the Lord your God must be put to death.

[14:30] This is bizarre. To, okay, they're disrespecting one of the leaders in the community of God. Disrespecting, perhaps by implication, the service of God.

And there's the death penalty. Isn't that right? Must be put to death. Tagline. You must purge the evil from Israel.

Notice the assumption there's a group of us. We're in this together. If there's evil in there, it affects everything. And we must purge the evil from the group.

And it goes on to say, verse 13, All the people will hear and be afraid and will not be contemptuous again. So it says there's an effect on everybody else.

Because they see what this enforcement does and they begin to say, we should take this seriously. So more important than we thought. The people will hear and fear.

[15:33] Chapter 19, verse 12 has the case, I think I'm correct in saying, of, now which one is this? Yeah, this is an escaped murderer.

Chapter 19, verse 11. The man hates his neighbor, lies in wait for him, assaults and kills him, and then flees to one of these cities. The elders of his town shall send for him, bring him back from the city, hand him over to the avenger of blood to die.

Show him no pity. Here's somebody who's committed a murder. Run away. You go back and get him. And it says, show him no pity. You must purge from Israel the guilt of shedding innocent blood so that it may go well with you.

That text is slightly different. It's saying there's an unresolved crime, something that's not been paid for. So there's a murder. Well, that doesn't matter. Well, it does matter. Something has been done that's wrong. And it generates a sort of debt that must be paid for. That's just the way it is in God's world. And the way that's said here to pay for it is that the murderer pays himself.

[16:44] And he is killed. And thus, you purge from Israel the guilt of shedding innocent blood. So there's a sort of stain which is purged in that sense.

You must purge from Israel the guilt of innocent blood. 21, 21. This one will make you gasp. 21, 21. This is Deuteronomy 21 from verse 18. If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who does not obey his father and mother and will not listen to him when they discipline him, the father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him to the elders at the gate of his town.

They shall say to the elders, this son of ours is stubborn and rebellious. He will not obey us. He is a profligate and a drunkard. So I think we're not talking about a little boy who knocked over his milk at playgroup.

I think we're talking about somebody who is of age and is just a complete pain. Profligate and drunkard. And what it said, I don't think they have to do this, but here's the provision they can do.

[17:52] Then all the men of his town shall stone him to death. You must purge the evil from among you. All Israel will hear of it and be afraid.

So it has an effect on the other people. Interestingly, Jesus was accused of being a profligate and a drunkard. Have you ever spotted that? They thought he deserved to be stoned like this. Very unfair accusation.

But that tagline again, you must purge the evil from among you. And it has an effect on the rest of the community. They'll go, wow, like we're doing.

And there's a list. I won't go through the whole list. There's a couple who are caught in adultery. You must purge the evil from among you. There's somebody who claims to have been raped but actually agreed to it.

You must purge the evil from among you. Somebody who does kidnapping. You must purge the evil from among you. And if a man finds that his wife, who was said to be a virgin, is not a virgin, you must purge the evil from among you.

[18:58] They're all really... We gasp, don't we? We think, you know, this is just ordinary life. But in Israel, it's considered evil, which shows us how little sense of sin we have these days.

It shows us that, doesn't it? Because we think, oh, well, that's just... Who cares about that? Well, God does. He says it's evil. And the penalty for it, there in front of your very eyes, is the death penalty.

I've forgotten where I was going with this. And it's put in terms of the way it works on the community. Let's put a Western individualist is saying, you know, this is just a different world.

Surely we all do as we please. We have sex with whom we please when we please. We treat our parents the way we please as we please. You know, that's our business. We're just individuals.

We do as we see fit. And this text is saying, in God's community, you don't do as you please. You don't make up the rules as you please.

[20:13] God has rules. There are things that he considers to be evil. And the community is involved in that. And the community is affected by it.

And the community purges it from within itself. I'm just telling you what the texts say. That's set of texts number one.

Hold on to that thought. What do we learn? Well, the assumptions and the basis. There is a true real God. So life matters.

There really is such a thing as community. In the Old Testament community, there really is a group of people who are so bound up together that you can say from within you.

You know, we're not just isolated individuals. There really is community in God's community. And there really is evil. And it affects the community.

[21:11] And it's to be purged out. And sin affects the other people in the community. So for example, if there's blood that has been shed wrongly, that needs to be dealt with because it affects the whole

community in the way that it's put here.

Enforcement keeps the community safe. So they will see and fear. And as far as I can see in the text, in these texts, there is no benefit offered to the person or the thing purged.

There is no remedial aspect to the adulterer or the idolater that you just get the death penalty. It's different in the New Testament. Okay, so stop and take a breath.

There's some Old Testament text. Now, jump in. Other Old Testament text. Let's go to Exodus 12. This is about the Passover.

Exodus 12 is this great act of Old Testament salvation. It's really like the focal point of the Old Testament where the lamb died so that the people could be set free.

[22:33] It's a night of judgment and salvation. God comes to his people. They're slaves in Egypt. So there's Egypt and there's Israel as slaves in Egypt.

And across the whole extent of both of those nations, he demands a death. And he has the death of the firstborn.

Except that in Israel, the lamb dies instead of the firstborn. So Israel is rescued, even as Egypt is judged.

And this is signified, Exodus 12 verse 13, by the blood being painted on the doors of the Israelite houses.

Verse 12, This is a day you are to commemorate verse 14.

[23:43] And they commemorate it. That's the angel of death Passover. They commemorate it with a meal. They eat the flesh of the lamb.

It's roasted. And they eat with it bread, which is made in a hurry, and therefore made without yeast. Yeast takes, yeast, you know about this, don't you?

It's like the great British bake-off. Or something, no. Making bread. You have the dough. You put some special ingredient.

In modern cooking, we have yeast. They had leaven, slightly different, but same idea. You mix it in together. The yeast spreads through the whole dough, and causes, if you leave it, it ferments, and causes the dough to rise.

So it's got bubbles in it. And that is the sort of bread we eat. If you don't let it ferment, if you don't have time to do that, it's a sort of flat bread. Am I right?

[24:41] That's about right, isn't it? That will do. And because they didn't have time to do that whole process, they left Egypt eating flat bread, unleavened bread, without yeast.

And that becomes, that becomes quite an important motif, an important little picture. And they're told in verse 15, that they're to celebrate this year on year, and they're to make a special point of not eating leavened bread, or eating unleavened bread.

And in chapter 12, verse 15, for seven days, you are to eat bread made without yeast. On the first day, remove the yeast from your houses, for whoever eats anything with yeast in it, from the first day until the seventh, must be cut off from Israel.

So they say, this is now going to be important. We all remove the yeast from, we all eat this meal, we all remove the yeast from our houses, we all eat the unleavened bread.

And we either get rid of the yeast, or we're kicked out of the community. Verse 15, remove the yeast. Is that right? And verse 19, for seven days, no yeast is to be found in your houses.

[25:57] Whoever eats anything with yeast in, must be cut off from the community. So you either remove the yeast, or you're removed from the community. It's quite, you're getting this, you're thinking, oh God.

So that's the way. The Israelites are to celebrate, and enjoy this great act of redemption, year on year on year. And a Western individualist would say, this is just bizarre.

Who are they to tell me what sort of cooking I do? Who are they to tell me that I can't eat yeast, bread with yeast?

And the text says, well, chum, you either do the thing that we're all doing, or you don't belong to us anymore.

Quite strong, isn't it? You remove the yeast, or you're removed from the community. Okay.

[27:00] So now we breathe another sigh. We'll take another deep breath. We'll go to 1 Corinthians 5. So we've now left the Old Testament, and

we've come into the New Testament. And you're going to say, well, I'm so glad, because that Old Testament stuff was so oppressive, we don't live like that nowadays.

We live like, we're doing more like Corinth. Okay. Corinth is a Greek city by the sea.

It's one of the places that the Christian message came to within a few years of Jesus dying and rising again.

So we're now talking about 2,000 years ago. And it's a similar period of history to ours. So they are not in the land.

They're not in the land of Israel. They are not forming a nation. They are a little pocket of Greek people in a Greek nation, but they form a church.

[28:01] And we are after the cross of Christ. We are not in the realm of symbolic things looking forward, like lambs that look forward to the lamb.

We are looking backwards on Jesus, the lamb of the world. So we're in a different part of history. So let's now read 1 Corinthians 5.

So this, we might have said with the other text, well, you know, don't try to stick that one on me because, you know, we don't live like that now. Okay. This one we do live like. Please notice what it says.

Chapter 5, verse 1. It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you. Interesting.

Among you. And of a kind that does not even occur amongst the pagans.

Christians. So something is happening that even the pagans would say, oof, oof, really? A man has his father's wife and you, Corinthians, are proud.

[29:01] We think, well, we're so, you know, so free and easy about things like that. We're so progressive. And Paul says, you shouldn't be proud. You should have been filled with grief and you should have put out of your fellowship the man who'd done this.

Do you notice that same idea that there's a group and there's an inside and an outside and you're to put out of the fellowship the person who has done this.

And he explains how the ingredients for doing this, which we'll just look at quickly. So this is the Apostle Paul writing and he says, verse 3, even though I am not physically present, I am with you in spirit.

So he says, he himself is absent, but in some spiritual way is present. I have already passed judgment on the one who did this, just as if I were present.

So we've got the absent Paul's judgment on this particular matter. So we've got the apostolic verdict on this matter. And then he says, 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.

[30:16] So he says this assembly of all you lot. There's a very special significance to this assembly and a very special spiritual aspect to this.

You're assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus. The apostolic verdict is there, I am with you in spirit and the power of the Lord Jesus is present.

And what are they supposed to do? They're supposed to hand over to Satan this person who's done this evil thing.

Meaning, I think it's reasonably clear what it means. It means there's the boundary of people in the church. This is the kingdom of Jesus Christ here. And outside is under the power of the evil one in some relative sense.

And he says, I want you to take the person and say you're no longer under the shelter. and part of this community of the church. You're out there where Satan does, you know, many of the things he just pleases to do.

[31:20] We're going to hand strong language, isn't it? Hand this person over to Satan. Although he does say, and this is important, that his spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord.

That his sinful nature may be destroyed and that his spirit saved on the day of the Lord. I think what he's saying is, I think this is what he's saying, that if people won't learn the easy way, then they're going to learn the hard way.

They're going to be put out of the church and they don't have the comfort of the church and the support of the church and the welcome of the church. They're just out there on their own. And that's a destructive environment.

But the aim of putting them in that destructive environment is so that they'll learn, even if they have to learn the hard way, and that they'll come back and that their spirit will be saved in the end.

I think that's briefly what it's saying. And now he goes on to say, your boasting is not good. Don't you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough?

[32:25] Well, we knew that because we just thought about cookery, didn't we? And 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.

Therefore, let us keep the feast, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but like bread without, the bread of sincerity and truth.

So he says, you're like Old Testament Israel. Do you know, when they had their Passover, they repeated it year by year, and one of the things they had to do was something they had to get rid of. Well, it was yeast. I mean, yeast isn't bad. Most of the year it's useful, but symbolically you got rid of that in order to eat this particular meal.

And Paul takes this over after Jesus Christ and says, well, we're like that. We're a community that, if you like, is always eating this feast.

[33:26] That's what we're doing. We're a feasting community. And we've got something to get rid of, like they did, and you either get rid of it or we get rid of you. And what is got rid of is evil, he says.

Get rid of the yeast. The yeast meaning this time, verse 8, malice. Wickedness. And eat in a way which has got sincerity and truth.

And he goes on to say the sort of thing that the Christian church needs not to have within it. And he gives a list.

And where is the list? It's in verse 11. Those who are sexually immoral. In other words, sexual morality in the Bible is pretty simple.

It is that the place for sexual activity, physical sexual activity, is between one man and one woman within marriage.

[34:28] That's what biblical morality boils down to. So anything that isn't that, he says you need to get rid of that. Or greed. Or idolatry.

Well, we picked that one up before in the Old Testament, didn't we? Or slanderer. Or a drunkard. Or a swindler. That's evil, which should not be within your congregation, within your community.

And that's like the yeast. You get rid of that. And he says you need to judge those inside.

God will judge those outside. And he brings in, do you notice exactly the same tagline that was in Deuteronomy? Slightly different translation, but really the same thing.

Expel the wicked one from among you. Expel the wicked one from among you. It's the same as in Deuteronomy, with the difference that the expulsion is not the death penalty.

[35:37] It's a very significant change. In the Old Testament, the way you got them out of the community was to kill them. In the New Testament, the way that the evil is purged is by disciplining and expelling from the Christian community.

You are no longer within our community. You are outside it. Purge the evil from among you. Expel the wicked man from among you. See, that's why I took time to go through the Deuteronomy, to get the hang of that, because he's got the same tagline here, but it's not the death penalty, but it's just a serious.

So from this text, I deduce, there is a Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. I deduce, there is a community.

We're not just individuals who do whatever we want, because there would be no way of saying, expel from among you, if there was no you from which to be expelled.

There is such a thing as evil. In the New Testament, we haven't lost the thought that some things are evil. They're still evil. And like yeast, over time will influence the whole community.

[37:04] A little yeast, says Paul, works through the whole batch. He has in mind the safety of the community. And he says, in other words, the

idea of people will see and fear.

I don't think he specifically mentions it, but I think that idea is there, that people will go, oh, wow, we do take things seriously, when that church discipline occurs.

And he goes on to say, in verse 11, do not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother, but is sexually immoral or greedy. So he's saying that this community, you have to be really careful how you construct it, because you don't just let anybody, any old person in, because we're, as we're supposed to be these days, inclusive, I put that in inverted commas, we're welcoming to all sinners who repent.

But he says, we don't want a community that's just mixed up, as mixed up as the world outside. Don't get into a church mixture with sexually immoral people, et cetera.

I also deduce that removal can bring salvation to the expelled person. And note that in Christ, in the Christian community, the death penalty is transformed into something equally as serious, but allowing time for repentance, which is removal from the church.

[38:39] We never thought removal from the church was so serious, did we? We never thought it was like the death penalty, only a little bit different, but the same seriousness as that.

We never thought that it would be possible for an apostle to write, purge the evil from among you, and write that over what it is, what church discipline is, but he does.

And we also learn that the church's authority, via the apostolic judgment, the spirit of the Lord Jesus, to move people out of the salvation community into the Satan community.

That the church, the gathered church, us lot, rightly done, seriously undertaken, has the authority to move people from the salvation community to the Satan community.

humanity. You're in, you're out. Let's look at the last text, which is Matthew 18.

[39:47] Matthew 18, verse 15.

Matthew 18, verse 15. It's quite warm in here, so this is important. Don't go to sleep before the end. So, let's stop. Let's all stand up. This is not a liturgical act. This is just to get you wide awake, and then we'll sit down again. That was it.

Yeah, oh, you missed it. It was only just to get you anything else.

There wasn't anything sinister behind that. So, Matthew 18, verse 15. If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault just between the two of you.

[40:57] If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But 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.

We've heard that before, haven't we? If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church, and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. And it goes on to say, tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven, for where two or three come together in my name, there I am with them.

I'm never quite sure whether that two or three refers to the church discipline or whether it's changed, but it's certainly linked. So what does this text say?

If your brother sins against you. So now we're not talking about being an adulterer or a swindler. It might be something quite small, but that's included in this text.

[42:08] And what you do is you go individually individually and privately to the person concerned. That's against human nature because in human nature what we do is go and tell somebody else how badly we've been treated by person X.

But what Jesus is saying here, you go to person X and you take it up with them and nobody else needs to know about it. And if they say, you're right, I was totally out of order.

Or if they say, I didn't realize it had come across like that, I do apologize. Or if they say, I was just having a bad day that day, I'm really sorry. Then it's done.

It's finished. We're to forgive. And it says, you have won your brother over. So there's a therapeutic aspect to win over.

But suppose that doesn't happen. It says, well, you take, what does it say? Take one or two others. Take one or two along so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three

witnesses. So as before, we're now in the realm of investigating, being quite clear what is and isn't said, double checking because it matters.

[43:15] And presumably, if at that point, he says, you know, now we've thought about it, I see your point. Okay, I was out of order. And you would have won him over and you don't have to go any further with that.

But if, there's lots of ifs in this text, if you look at them. But if he refuses to listen, so this is the last stage.

This is appealing to the highest court. Tell it to the church. Tell it to the church. Tell it to the assembled group of people, like in 1 Corinthians 5.

Notice he doesn't say tell it to the elders. This is interesting that he sees the final court of appeal being the whole community. You tell it to the church.

And if he listens, presumably he's won over. But if, notice the wording, if he refuses to listen even to the church, then, that's it.

[44:23] then what you do is you treat them like, well, it says like a pagan or a tax collector, meaning to say you treat them like somebody totally outside the church.

So they were inside the church, inside the community, and if they won't listen to the church, you say, well, I'm sorry, I can no longer call you a brother.

You are now outside the church. It's the last resort. It's the nuclear option, but it's there. And the text tells us, Jesus tells us, that when the church makes such a solemn and careful decision, it carries the authority of heaven, which is very strong.

So I say, be careful which church you submit to. It's a good idea to ask before you put yourself under the discipline of the church, what sort of things do you discipline people for?

So we were discussing this last night. So do you discipline somebody if they drink alcohol? No, that's permitted. Would you discipline somebody if they were drunk? Yes, that's not permitted.

[45:38] And so on. That's a big subject. But be careful which church you place yourself under the discipline of, but you must place yourself under the discipline of some church because that's what Jesus says.

That's the way it all operates. Rightly done, heaven comes down to earth when the church makes such a solemn decision.

What you bind on earth will be bound in heaven. What you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

A very serious, solemn thing when the church gathers together and makes that sort of decision.

I deduce from this. There is a Father in heaven who judges. It's a solemn thing. The Father in heaven doesn't just pat us on the head all the time.

We've got various Christian sayings about how much the Father loves us and sort of gives the impression that that's all the Father ever does. He just loves us and pats us on the head and feels delighted by us and dances and rejoices over us.

[46:55] Sometimes the Father says that is well out of order. There is a Father in heaven who judges. There is sin which needs to be addressed.

There was evil in the Old Testament and evil is still evil in the New Testament. There is community. That's how it works.

In the Old Testament the community was a nation. In the New Testament the communities are scattered as little groups little churches. But there is community.

community. And the community needs to be defended and the community seeks restoration and the community is given heavenly authority to accept or to remove.

and I learned from this particular text that there is a process which it can be gone through with many opportunities to repent and it leads to the ultimate thing of being removed from that community to Satan.

[48:03] And let's be a Western individualist again and say oh this is so bizarre. You can't seriously say that Christianity is like this. And Jesus says well it is.

It is. You say that's like the Old Testament and say it is quite like it. Not quite the same but it is quite like it. Well we make up what's good we please ourselves.

Who we sleep with when we sleep with them. No you don't. Not in the Christian church you don't.

We make all our own decisions. We're independent. I mean some of us have a declaration of

independence.

I mean that's but not in the Christian church you don't. That's not how it works. I'm not going to let anybody tell me what to do on things like that.

Well if you're not going to allow that to happen you can't be in the church of Jesus Christ because that's the way it is in the church of Jesus Christ.

[49:06] Well I don't care. Well you ought to care because God cares and has spoken very clearly about it. oh dear my clicking hasn't worked.

Let's draw some conclusions. All these texts tell us that there is a God and a saviour in heaven who judges. All these texts say there is a community which he forms that has not changed since the Old Testament.

In fact it's even more precious in the New Testament. All these texts tell us there is such a thing as evil sin and it matters. All these texts tell us that the unrepentant sinner must be purged out of the kingdom like that.

Give many opportunities to repent. Please still don't be a Western individualist. Please still don't say oh it's nothing to do with me it's just those Calvinistic churches do all that stuff.

This is Bible. Please don't say well I'm going to do as I please because Jesus says that is not the way the Christian life is. And please don't say well I don't care whether I belong or not.

[50:27] I belong to all the churches in Brighton that is not the way it's meant to operate. You belong you are under you are within the boundaries of and under the care of and caring for and responsible to and accountable to a group who know you you know them that's the way it is.

So when you're doing ministry and service do you do it as if well it doesn't matter to me which church this is with or I just sort of come and go on this please don't do that.

It's not the way it's meant to be. And when you think about coming to be together please don't think well sometimes I come sometimes I don't come sometimes I go to this church sometimes I go to that church sometimes I support them sometimes I support them please don't think like that.

That's not the way it's meant to be. You're thinking like a western individualist. The Bible Christians are not western individualists.

And you think about the seriousness of well you know I don't really care to live like those other people in the church. They're all you know they're all behind the times.

[51:48] Please don't live as if sin didn't matter. Please don't live as if conscience right and wrong don't matter.

The tagline is purge the evil from among you. Church membership as I understand it is turning from western individualism or whatever you want to call it and yielding to God's call for all his people to be part of this accountable responsible community.

Footnote. In those texts the idolater died for his or her own sin and that's the way that evil was purged.

but let's not forget that we have someone who was not an idolater who died to purge sin from the community to purge our sin.

Let's remember that in the Old Testament the lamb died and the lamb was eaten and benefited the community and there was that purged bread and people celebrate that to this day Jewish people but we live in a better feast let us keep the feast he says let us rejoice in looking back on the lamb and the salvation and let's keep it with this new bread purged from sin as a holy community let us keep the feast and walk the walk and live the life and rejoice in the saviour until we get to our final destination where love reigns forever death and sin is no more

[54:04] Christ is all in all let's sing together a ending