

Judgement Inside the Church

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[0:00] Let us pray.

Lord God, we thank you for the privilege of gathering under the teaching and preaching of your word. Thank you that we have the freedom together. We pray now as we are here that you will be present with us.

Give us ears to hear, Lord. Give us hearts that can be molded under your word. Help us to listen to correction. Help us to listen to encouragement in your word.

And help us to leave changed and more like Jesus Christ. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.

One church father said this, and I quote, any church, whatever that church may be, any church where discipline is not followed, according to the example that is given in the Bible, is that church is a dying church.

That is why it is so important that we not ignore this topic as we go through these verses in 1 Corinthians. That is why it's vitally important that we not ignore what God has to say to us through Apostle Paul.

[2:20] Because to ignore it is, according to the quote above, is to ignore it is to contribute to the dissolution of the church. So remember that last week we looked in 1 Corinthians chapter 5.

It's on page 1134 of your pew Bible, actually. So I encourage you to pick up your Bible and follow along. Remember that we looked at the first eight verses there.

And remember that Paul's command for the Corinthians, the Corinthian church that is, is to stop ignoring and to stop accommodating the scandalous sin of the man who was committing sexual immorality.

He had taken up with his stepmother a sin that was not even to be tolerated among the pagans, Paul says. And the church in Corinth was tolerating it.

And so Paul says, stop accommodating and stop ignoring this. Paul commanded them, let him who has done this be removed from among you. Paul told them. And last week we saw, we saw two of the three reasons for doing so that Paul gives.

[3:31] The first reason that Paul says is, it's for the good of this man who has committed this sin. It's so that you should do this so that a spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.

And the second reason why Paul says it's needed to be done is so that such sin does not infect the whole church. Because as Paul said, a little leaven leavens the whole lump.

Remember the analogy we gave there, right? A little yeast going through the whole batch. And sin here is like the leaven, the yeast.

And so if you let it to, if you accommodate it, it will infect the whole body. And before we look at the third reason this morning, in verse 9 to 13, I thought it important for us to mention, at least before we go ahead, some of the differences between the nature of this sin and the more normative instruction that God gives us in Matthew 18.

Remember that we preached to Matthew 18 about a month and a half ago. Counter to what I said last week, I said that Paul might have, they might have approached this man privately.

[4:43] But in fact, there is no need to have approached this man in this condition, in this particular sin privately. And we'll talk about why. Because there is a distinction that the Bible gives between public sins and private sins.

This sin is a public sin. This man, as publicly, as flouting God's law and God's command, and publicly sinning before the whole church.

And so there's a distinction the Bible gives us between public and private sins. Public sins, what are public sins? Public sins essentially are those that are witnessed, not by just one or two persons, but sins that are committed openly to the offense of the entire church.

Public sins do not require, does not require the steps which Christ lists in Matthew 18, 15 to 17. Oftentimes, when such sins occur, rather, when such sins appear in the church, the church ought to, and it's the church's duty to, summon the sinner and correct him or her according to his or her fault as a church to do so.

You might say, what are examples of public sin? We have an example right there in this text of this man, publicly leaving, perhaps he was married before, leaving his wife and shacking up with his stepmother.

[6 : 14] Right? Adultery is a public sin. If you claim to be a part of the body of Christ, a member of Christ's church, this is apathetical. By God's grace and goodness, this is not a reality in our gathering.

But if someone were to say, well, I'm just going to chuck my wife to the side and my kids to the side, and I'm going to bring my new wife to the church and sit in the pew. That is a public sin, brothers and sisters.

We need not to go privately and say, oh, you shouldn't do that. The church should stand up and say, this is not according to God's word and publicly reprimand and correct such sinners. Fighting, stealing in the church, those are public sins.

Things that are publicly known, widely known. Teaching false doctrine. That would be a public sin. So if I were to stand up before you now and start to teach things that are not in accordance to God's word, that would be a public sin and should be publicly corrected.

Denying the Trinity. Such things as, or teaching that God didn't create us male and female. Such things are false doctrines, eretical, and should be publicly corrected.

[7 : 27] Such things demand the church to step in and to correct. And when correction is, and under correction, to exercise appropriate discipline, if necessary.

But in the case of private sins, that's what Matthew 18, 15-17 gives us. Christ has given us the steps there in Matthew 18.

In the case of private sins, such things that are not brought before the church. Private sins are not meant to be brought before the whole church unless the sinner refuses to repent.

Then that's when such things are brought before the whole church. And then, when that happens, the church is required to do its duty, as Christ commanded, and bring the sinner up for correction, and call him or her to repentance.

So those are the distinctions between public and private sins. In this case that we have here, in 1 Corinthians 5, it is a public sin, and it's publicly addressed, as it should be. When there is obstinate unrepentance, both kind of sins end up before the church.

[8 : 35] Note that. But what Paul says here, beginning in verse 9, he wants us, the third reason why we should not take sin lightly, why we should address it, why we should confront it, why we should call each other to repentance, is that we are meant to judge appropriately among one another in the church.

So that the world might know that here is our people, who are gathered, who know, who have been saved, and who operate under the power of God's salvation.

And so in verse 9, we're made to understand that Paul had written a letter to them prior to this one that he's writing now. In that prior letter, Paul had admonished them about living holy and pure lives as the church of Christ.

Because Paul knows, and he wants them to know, that the church is a place where a covenant identity as God's holy people is guarded and maintained.

Because it tells a story to the world of the power of the gospel to take sinners such as we were and make them saints.

[9 : 55] That's the power of the gospel. And that's what the story that the church and the gathering of God's people tells to the world. Our identity as God's chosen people, a holy nation, a royal priesthood, a people of God's own possession, is meant to tell the truth about the God who bestows this great identity on us in His Son, Jesus Christ.

It tells us of His great salvation and of His sanctifying grace that is indeed transforming us into the image of His Son. That's what's going on when we gather as God's people.

That's who we are. That's the story we tell the world. So that's why Paul continues in verse 9. I wrote to you in my letter not to associate, that is, not to mix indiscriminately with sexually immoral people.

But I did not mean, not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world or the greedy and strindlers or idolaters. Since then, you will need to go out of the world.

Nor thieves, he says, right? Nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor reviled. I'm sorry, I'm in chapter 6.

[11:14] We're supposed to be in chapter 5, aren't we? Right, verse 11. But now I am writing to you, rather, so I'm writing to you not to associate with those, I'm not saying don't associate with the sexually immoral.

The sinners are out in the world. But rather, what I'm telling you to do is, I'm writing to you, verse 11, that not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother.

If he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler, not even to eat with such a one. So that's the distinction that Paul is making to the Corinthian church, that they have turned the other side up.

They had misapplied Paul's earlier instruction instruction. They've made the church of Christ a ghetto. They've become insular. They've built walls to keep themselves in, to separate themselves from the unbelieving world.

But Paul caresses them. He says to them, the church is not meant to be a monastery, a convent close to the outside world, not even to the sinners outside, the sexually immoral of the secular world.

[12:33] The church's door is meant to be in fact open to such people. So they may come, so they may come in to repentance and faith in Jesus.

And they may then bear fruit of repentance by living lives of obedience to God's law. That's what the church is. I wonder if we can say, Holy Trinity, that we are such a place where our doors are wide open to all, regardless of their affinity, their political affiliation, their sexual orientation, their belief, where our doors are open for all to come in, to hear the gospel of Jesus unto salvation.

Are we such a place? You know, of course, by associating with the world, you know that Paul isn't saying that we must be, as people foolishly say today, in modern churches.

They say, come as you are and stay as you are. That's not what Paul is saying here. Rather, it is, come as you are, come as you are and receive the life-changing power of God that raises the dead to life so you may be transformed and not remain as you are in your sin.

That is why the doors are open. That is why the doors were open for us when we came in to the assembly of God's people, when we heard the gospel of Jesus Christ and we received it unto salvation.

[14:15] It is so we may not remain as we were. But the Corinthians, on the other hand, they are building a wall in their arrogance.

They've made the church of Christ a silo. And the tragedy is that in their very actions, the sins that are marked by people outside in the world are also marked by them in the church.

They're no different from the world outside. They are committing the same sins even worse than the outside world. You know, that's often the trend when churches build barriers for people to jump over before they can hear the gospel.

That's often the trend. Such churches become legalistic and self-justifying and they start to accommodate sin among themselves. And because they have this self-justifying image of themselves, they start to excuse the sin among themselves.

They start to preach a dead orthodoxy devoid of love for God and for God's people. And then the other side of the same coin is the church I've described just earlier.

[15:36] Other churches will claim to welcome all people without preaching the transforming gospel of Jesus Christ. Such churches then what happens?

They start to reflect the world making themselves obsolete in a generation or two because they are devoid of the gospel that can save.

They have nothing to offer a dying world. Whereas the church of Christ is neither of those two options. the church of Christ is open doors, gospel proclamation, the cruciform, Christ exalting, gospel of Jesus Christ unto salvation.

And that's why verse 11 is so crucial. Paul's correction to the Corinthian church is this in verse 11.

He says to them, I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother.

That's the distinction he's making. I'm not saying do not mix with the world outside because you're in the world. You will have to mix with them. You will have to associate with the world.

[16 : 45] You will have to interact with the world. In fact, you ought to interact with the world. You need to go out into the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ. What I'm telling you is not to associate with those who say they're brothers, who call themselves brother, who bear the name of brother, yet they're guilty of sexual immorality or greed or they're idolater, reviler, drunkard or swindler.

And he says to them, don't even eat with such a one. Now, why will Paul make that distinction? It's okay to associate with sinners outside so that you may bring the gospel to them, but you must not associate with someone who bears the name of brother, right here, he says brother or sister, siblings in Christ, but yet their life is marked by an ongoing sin of this man.

And notice that he's not only talking about sexual sins here now. He lists all sorts of different sins. And I think Paul is actually intentionally naming these sins because these are the kind of sins that as we go on in the rest of these, in chapter 6, we will see in 7.

And 8, these are sins, apart from just the sexual immorality, which is one of them, the other sins are also sins that have marked this Corinthian church. And Paul says to them, don't associate to anyone who calls himself brother and sister, who claims to belong to the family of God, claims to belong to Christ, yet their life is characterized by these ongoing sins.

And ongoing is key here. Please listen, ongoing is key here. Because the truth is that we all sin. we all stumble.

[18 : 34] And when we do, we ought to turn to God for forgiveness. And there is. That's the beauty of the gospel. That is the good news. When we do come to God in forgiveness, He forgives.

We can run to the cross. We can fall at His feet and cry out for mercy. And He gives freely. Paul is not referring to such people who stumble.

Paul is referring to those who momentarily have stumbled into these sins, but to those who persist in their sins. Those whose behaviors are without repentance and they are ongoing in these sins and yet they claim to belong to God.

Paul is saying such people are in fact to be kicked out, to be put outside the family of God. So, those who are habitually in sexual immorality, those who out of greed extort money from others in order to get ahead, excusing such behavior as the way the game is played, for example.

Those who are idolaters, those who give themselves worshiping the gods of this age, those who are revilers, who speak ungraciously to others, who slander others, and this is an ongoing behavior without repentance.

[20 : 14] He says such people, he lists them, he says such people are to be put out if they remain unrepentant. for what reason?

Paul says in verse 12 and 13, for what have I to do with judging outsiders? What have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge?

And he says God judges those outside, but you are to purge the evil person from among you. Purge the evil person from among you.

Because Paul's aim and Paul's attitude and Paul's priority, and it should be ours as well, is to defend and to protect the honor of Christ's name.

If we say we belong to Jesus, if we say we are his, then our proclamation and our actions must be in keeping with the person whose name we bear.

[21 : 18] We are a holy assembly, brothers and sisters in Christ. We are not yet perfected, we know that, we sin, that's why we have a savior, that's why we need a savior, that's why we come every Sunday and we confess our sins, we receive forgiveness, we receive the assurance of God's love for us, and then we partake of his body and blood, and we're given graces to go out into the world, to live for Christ.

None of us are perfect, none of us are without sin, but we are all as people of God striving to bear the image of Jesus Christ more and more, falling under a sanctifying grace, surrendering ourselves, being convicted by the Holy Spirit, confessing our sins to one another.

That's what the church is meant to look like. And when someone comes along and says, well, I am going to be part of the body of Christ, but I will live as if I'm still out in the world, not acknowledging my sin, self-justifying, all of those things, then Paul says, you need to protect the honor of Christ's name.

You need to protect the honor of Christ's church. It is your duty then to exercise discipline in those matters.

What would happen, as one of the church reformers says, and I quote, it says, what will happen if each person, that is, each person in the church, is allowed to do what they please?

[22:55] If preaching of doctrine is not, if we don't add to the preaching of doctrine, the preaching of God's word, if we don't add to it private admonitions, corrections, and other aids of the sort that sustain doctrine, and do not let it remain idle, what would happen to a church where people can just do as they please?

They don't surrender to the lordship and the kingship of Jesus Christ. What would happen in a church where discipline is not used as a bridle to restrain and to tame those who rage against the doctrine of Christ, or like a spur to arouse those of literal inclination, and sometimes like a father's rod to chastise mildly, and with gentleness of Christ's spirit, those who have more seriously lapsed? What would happen to such a church? That such a church will, in a generation or two, depart from the gospel of Jesus Christ, and be like the world.

And this is why Paul admonishes us to judge appropriately, brothers and sisters in Christ. Judge appropriately so that the world might know salvation.

What are we saying? What story are we telling to the world if we allow sin to take root among us, and we proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ?

[24:33] The world sees, the world knows, they will know, well, you know, you can say all you want, but your life is not in keeping with the message you bear. That is why it is important, church of Christ, to judge appropriately, not the world outside, but to judge appropriately, one another, to spur one another to holiness.

And so, in conclusion, I just want to reiterate where we've been in these chapters. There are three primary purposes for discipline in the church. It is to protect Christ's name and Christ's honor.

The church itself is the body of Christ. It cannot be corrupted.