

Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?

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[0:00] May the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our strength and redeemer. Amen.

! We're continuing in our series through 1 Corinthians. We're in chapter 5 this morning. We're finally in chapter 5. I know we read it last week, but here we're going to get into the text this morning. It's on page 1134 of your Pew Bible. You can follow along there, and I encourage you to open your Bible and follow along. It's a stark reading, and our second reading, if you read that, as Pym read that passage for us this morning, it's stark. It's grave.

What Paul seems to be saying there in 1 Corinthians 5. And as we look at this issue, it's helpful for us, I think, to remember Paul's heart in confronting the Corinthians, in confronting the Corinthian church in the first place.

Remember again, Luke chapter 4, verse 20. Just turn quickly to the previous page. Luke 4, 20.

Paul, rather, has said to the Corinthians, The kingdom of God is not a matter of talk, but of power.

[1:24] He says that to them. The Corinthian church is marked by arrogant talk. They were living an over-realized, triumphant life. They were neglecting to participate in the sufferings of Christ, along with the apostles.

Remember what Paul says about them. They think themselves kings already. And yet their lives does not bear out their arrogant talk. Their notion of power in the church is loving the spectacular. Instead of the effective. But Paul will have them know that the Spirit's power is manifested in godly living.

And so Paul comes to them with a father's heart. With pastoral love. And he confronts them in their hypocrisy. And calls them to become a church that actually lives by the Spirit's power.

And note that in chapter 4, verse 21, that Paul says that Christian love and pastoral love must not give in to cowardice.

[2:39] It's not that Paul wants confrontation. He doesn't delight in confrontation. He does not. He would rather come to them, as he says in verse 21, He would rather come to them in love and in the spirit of gentleness.

But if necessary, he tells them, he must come with a rod. Now the rod here is not a literal, it's not literal of course.

He's not coming here to actually beat them with a literal rod. It's a metaphor. It's a metaphor for discipline. He's saying, I will come to discipline. So Paul's pastoral heart wants to build them up. That's what he wants to do. But his love for them will also not allow, on his part, for moral cowardice.

He's ready to call them out and expose the sin among them. Because sin matters. And he asked them.

[3:43] Paul seems to be asking them here as he ends chapter 4. He asked them to have the same pastoral heart. The same loving heart for each other. By not tolerating unrepentant sin in their holy assembly.

So let's look in chapter 5 at the particular issue that's facing the Corinthian church. And the biblical principle that Paul lays out in God's word for not being complacent towards unrepentant sin within the church.

What's the presenting scandal here? It's quite a doozy. It is actually reported, Paul says, that there is sexual immorality among you.

It's bad enough that it's sexual immorality. But it's of a kind that is not even tolerated even among pagans. For a man has his father's wife.

Now, just to point of clarification here. For a man has means that it's an ongoing scandal.

[4:52] It's not a one-time, two-time thing. This man is living with his father's wife. It's an ongoing sin. And coming in, in the church.

And why ongoing living with his father's wife? And then it's also important for us to note here.

Father's wife, the word, it's a stepmother. So that, otherwise, Paul would have used a different word if it was actually a stepmother.

But it's a stepmother. But that, it's pretty bad. Right? Even pagan law, Roman law, states, at the time of Paul, Roman law states that it is illegal to marry a father's, a mother's sister.

And he also says, you cannot marry her who at one time was your mother-in-law or stepmother.

That's the pagan Roman law. So Paul isn't exaggerating when he said it's a scandal that even among the pagans, they wouldn't tolerate.

So it's shocking, then, that such a thing is found in the church that claims Christ as Lord. And what is even more shocking than the actual sin and the scandal of this sin, what is even more shocking to Paul is that it is widely known in the church, and it is widely tolerated.

[6:14] Paul is shocked by their complacency. And in verse 2, he says this, And you are arrogant. Now he's writing not just to the man, he's writing to the Korean thing, church as a whole.

You are arrogant. Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you. Should Paul even have to tell them this?

This seems like a no-brainer, doesn't it? But I think before we look down our noses at this church in Corinth, we might want to examine the sins we tolerate in the church today.

Today, I've heard of men who cheat on their wives, abandon their children, and take another woman in unlawful marriage, and the church turns a blind eye while the man continues to attend church, as if nothing is wrong.

I'm not speaking of our current church. I've not heard that, thanks be to God. But I have heard of churches that claim the name of Christ, where such a thing happens. And it's as if no one turns out, no one, you know, does anything.

[7:31] They tolerate it. They turn a blind eye to it. What's even worse, I've heard of pastors, ministers of the gospel, and elders, who have done such things.

And you know, interestingly, you might wonder, why would a church be silent about such a thing? Why is the Corinthian church silent about this issue?

Interestingly, scholars have written, and they think that this man, this particular man who has done this, with his stepmother, was probably a wealthy patron.

And so, the tension is to accommodate this man's sin, because they were afraid to lose his influence, and his money, in the church.

To them, that is to the Corinthian church, worldly values of status and proximity to power, such as this man confers, is more important.

[8:35] to them, than the integrity of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And that's the tension. Right? It's so easy, to call out sin, when it's somebody that has no power, influence, or cachet, in the world, or in the church.

But when you think about, oh man, there's something to lose there. Oh, if we get that person mad, oh, you know. That's really probably, what's going on here, in the Corinthian church.

This man is influential. And so, they stay silent. He's a wealthy patron. And the first thing, that Paul calls them to though, as he calls them, to address the issue, the first thing he calls them to, is to mourn.

Be sorrowful, for the soul of your brother, who has committed this sin, and who is caught in unrepentance. By the way, this is ongoing, unrepentant sin.

Be sorrowful, also, for your complicity, in allowing such a sin, to fester among you. And for bringing dishonor, on the name of Jesus Christ, and on his church.

[9:53] So, mourn, be sorrowful. And the second thing is that, they should remove him. Paul isn't mincing any words there. Remove him from among you, if he remains unrepentant.

Notice how brave, Paul's words are. Paul calls for a separation. For a separation. He uses five different words, to talk about, to emphasize this.

Being separate from this man. In verse 2, he says, remove him from among you. In verse 5, he says, deliver him, to Satan. In verse 7, he says, clean out the leaven, which is this particular sin. In verse 11, he says, do not associate with him. Not even to eat with him. And in verse 13, he says, purge the evil from among you. So, the question is, why is separation, separation, separating from this man, why is it the right thing to do?

Paul here is describing the process of discipline. This is the last step in the process of discipline, which Jesus gives to the church in Matthew 18.

[11:08] And by the way, you can go to the church's website to listen to that sermon about a month ago. We preached on that, on Matthew 18. You might ask, you might ask at this point, doesn't Paul know that separation is painful for everyone?

why is this the right thing to do? And I do want us to see this morning that while this, Paul isn't unaware of the pain, the pain this will cause.

But I want us to see this morning that while this process of discipline is painful, Paul wants us to see that it is necessary, that it is good, that it is in fact loving.

And this week, we'll see that it is about salvation. And so, from verse 3 to 5, Paul pronounces a judicial verdict and pronounces formal judgment.

He says in verse 3, For though absent in body, I am present in spirit. And as if present, I have already pronounced judgment on the one who did such a thing.

[12:25] When you, yourself, are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present with the power of our Lord Jesus, you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.

So, Paul says these grave words in verse 5, You are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh. So that, the so that that is really important.

So that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord. You know, the judgment for this kind of sin under Mosaic law is death. But that's not what Paul is talking about here.

Right? When he says deliver him for the destruction of flesh. He's no longer living under the Mosaic law. So he's not referring to bodily death here in verse 5.

The so that in verse 5 is crucial. That's how we know he's not referring to death because the reason for delivering him over to Satan is actually so that he might be saved.

[13:40] It's for his salvation, for his good that you must do this. so that he may be saved on the last day, the day of the Lord. And therein lies the goal of church discipline.

Church discipline isn't to beat one another over the head as we do so. It is the point of it, the goal of it, the aim of it is restoration.

Not just punishment. It is restoration. The goal of discipline is restoration to right relationship with God. But that may not be easy to see in Paul's language here.

So let's look closely at what Paul is saying. He says to us, deliver this man to Satan. To deliver him to Satan is to place him outside the fellowship of those who proclaim Jesus as Lord.

Remember that there are only two groups of people in God's economy. those who claim Jesus as Lord and those to whom whether they consciously claim it or not, Satan is their Lord.

[14:53] Those are the only two groups of people in God's economy. Those who have committed and been forgiven of their sins are in Christ. Christ is their Lord.

And they live accordingly. and those who have no acknowledgement of God whatsoever. And so what Paul means to say here is that since this man refuses to repent, since he is refusing to amend his ways, he has in fact rejected the Lordship of Jesus over his life.

Paul then says to the church, pronounce the reality of his status by delivering him to Satan, by delivering him over to the realm of Satan.

And the aim and the hope in doing so is that his flesh may be destroyed. Now Paul isn't speaking of illness or death again, but he's speaking of his sin, that's the flesh.

Flesh here equals persistent sin. So by giving him over to Satan, by yielding him, by giving over to the realm of Satan, that he may then realize that he's no longer under the Lordship of Christ.

[16:12] And that he may then realize the state of his soul, and turn back in repentance, and turn back to God.

Just, and so Paul then continues to say, you must separate from this man. Separate from him so that his spirit might be saved.

The question Paul wants us to answer along with the Corinthian church is this, are we, as the church of Christ, operating under the authority of God's word?

Is God's word the rule of our life of faith together, as we gather? If God's word is authoritative in our life, then we will take such decisions, as Paul points here, we will take such decisions to confront sin, we will take such decisions seriously.

And so Paul pronounces judgment. He claims the authority to do so on three grounds. He says, I'm united with you through the spirit, although I'm not here presently physically.

[17 : 25] He says in verse 4, he is spiritually present with them, with the power of our Lord Jesus. And in his apostolic office, he speaks with Jesus' authority.

And thirdly, he says, when you as a church are gathered, you can invoke the power of Jesus as Lord. He says, you as the church of Christ possess the keys of the kingdom and the power to pronounce judgment in Christ's name and according to his word.

Those two things are important. The judgment they're pronouncing regarding this issue is according to God's word. They're not making it up as they go.

God's word is their guide. So what about us today? You might say, well, we don't have Apostle Paul to, you know, sort of come in and look into our own affairs.

like this Corinthian church has, we don't have any other apostles. Actually, I will say to you that we do have the apostles.

[18 : 36] We have them because we have the deposit of the Holy Scripture that they've left us through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. And God the Holy Spirit who inspires them to write down these words is still active in the church.

To use his word to guide his church and lead us into truth. So the question for us is this. Are we going to live under the authority of God's word?

If so, then we must cast all personal agendas aside and take God's word seriously. We must live under the rule of God's word and submit to God's word.

And we must call each other to conform to God's word. I want you to know that this judgment as Paul calls us to make the judgment in this case, in this first Corinthian case, this Paul is trying to show them that it is actually unloving.

It's unloving to accommodate unrepentant sin. Why is it unloving to accommodate unrepentant sin?

Because what they're doing is they're giving false assurance to this man.

[20 : 02] And they're jeopardizing his eternal soul. And so perhaps the question we need to ask ourselves is this, what does love look like in the church?

Are we willing to love one another enough to do that which is painful? Which is calling each other to conformity to God's word, to holiness, and godly living.

And I also want you to know that this judgment, as Paul describes it, is private. The decision, I'm sorry, rather, I want you to see that the judgment here is not a private judgment, rather, right?

It isn't just two groups of people in the church saying, well, you know, we don't like that person, and we've read God's word, and we're going to pronounce judgment on him. No, it's the whole church that's doing this, pronouncing this judgment.

It's a corporate pronouncement of judgment over this issue of sin. And that's what Jesus gives us, that's the process Jesus gives us in Matthew 18.

[21 : 14] Jesus says there that when sin persists, and there is a refusal to repent, Jesus instructs us to bring the case before the church.

Now, how this looks in the church varies depending on the church's organization. salvation. In our Anglican context, the case is brought before the rector and the vestry, under the oversight of the bishop.

And the matter is weighed. And so, Paul says, separate from this man, for the sake of his own soul, for his own salvation.

then he goes on in verse 6-8, and he says, separate for the sake of the church itself, because the church is being saved. Now, perhaps the Corinthian church is wondering, and perhaps you're wondering as well, how can one man's sin affect the whole church?

Or maybe they say these words that we say, that I've heard people say in our day, well, that's a sin, I'm going to just mind my own business. Well, it's not my business to judge.

[22 : 36] Or this. I'm sure if the pastor thinks it's important, he'll say something. Whereas the pastor doesn't know about it. But you are the brother nearest, or the sister nearest, and you know of it.

So, the responsibility, according to Paul, does not lie with the pastor. It does not lie with just the elders in the church. The responsibility lies with every single one of us.

We are our brothers and sisters keeper. So, Paul lays the burden on all of us as a church, collectively. Paul calls us to separate from such a person, not only for the sake of his soul, but for the sake of the church itself.

Because the church is God's holy temple. The church is Christ's body, which is being saved. And for this reason, you must separate from this man who is causing scandal to Christ's church and to Christ's honor.

Your boasting is not good, Paul tells them. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Leaven is yeast.

[23 : 50] If you bake, or if you know anything about bread, you eat bread, you know enough to know that yeast, our yeast works. And I know that in our modern world, you can easily get dry yeast, right?

You get those little packets of dry yeast from the grocery store. But you know that it's only as recently as in the 1940s when you could actually do that. Before the 1940s, all the way back to the time of Paul, all the way even back to the time of the Passover, yeast was not something you can get in a dry form like that.

Yeast is something that you cultivate. My wife does sourdough baking. If anyone does that, you might know what I mean. Because the yeast there, I don't know if it's yeast or sourdough starter, I'm not sure what she calls it, but it's kept in a compartment.

And you have to feed it periodically. It's actually a living organism. It's fungi. And so you have to feed it. And then you take a little bit of that yeast or starter when you're baking and you knead it into a dough to make the bread rise.

So that's the imagery that Paul is giving us here. Sin is like a little leaven. Sin is like a little yeast.

[25 : 18] And if we allow it to persist in the dough, which is the church, it affects the whole batch. That's the point that Paul is making in this imagery.

And it's actually a Passover imagery. Remember, at the time of the Passover, the Jews, the day before the Passover, this is what they're meant to do, to commemorate what God commanded them while they were being delivered from Egypt.

They are to sweep all the leaven, that is, all the yeast, from their house the day before the Passover. Why do they do that? It's to underline, to illustrate the radical nature of the new beginning that began at their redemption from Egypt.

And then they go on to celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which is also known as Passover. Because, what are they saying by doing that?

They're illustrating that they are a people consecrated to God. They're holy people, a holy nation, a nation of priests.

[26 : 36] And Paul seems to be saying here, using that imagery, he's saying, that's who you are, Corinthian church, the church of Christ. That's who we are here at Holy Trinity.

We are our only nation, a people consecrated to God. So, he says to them, as he says to us, cleanse out the leavened that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened.

For Christ, our Passover, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Essentially, Paul is saying to them, and saying to us, be what you've been made to be, through Jesus' atoning death, as a Passover lamb.

Paul seems to be saying, remember who you are. Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Jesus' substitutionary death for you, has delivered you from darkness into God's marvelous light. You've been washed, you've been sanctified, you've been justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. And that's why Paul then can say in verse 8, let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, which is sin, the leaven of sin, the leaven of malice and evil, but let us celebrate the festival, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

[28 : 12] In other words, be who you've been made into through the redeeming sacrifice of Jesus. And note that word that Paul says at the end of verse 8, sincerity and truth.

Sin matters. That's the point that Paul is trying to show here. Sin matters individually, sin matters corporately. And so, as the people of God, we must live lives of sincerity and truth that confirms and illustrates the reality of our gospel message.

Sincerity and truth goes end in end together in illustrating and confirming that we are indeed people of the gospel. And so, in conclusion, we might want to ask ourselves some questions here today, this morning at Holy Trinity.

What does living in sincerity and truth under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, what does it look like?

How can we take this warning that Paul gives in these verses seriously?

wrongly? What does it What does it What does it What does it We might ask ourselves, what have we wrongly tolerated that has shaped our culture here at Holy Trinity that is not the gospel?

[29:44] And what particular pitfalls do we need to watch out for among ourselves? I just want to offer some caution as we think about these things.

First, we must know that this process is done in conjunction with Matthew 18. So, that means that the process is slow and cannot be rushed.

Remember Matthew 18. When you see sin, the first sin is not to say, oh well, let's get a church court together and cast this person out. No. The first step in Matthew 18 is go to that brother in love and confront him and call him to repentance.

And then if he doesn't listen, call two or three witnesses. And if he still remains unrepentant, then this process that Paul gives is undertaken.

The church is called to administer judgment. And so the process has to be slow. And the goal and aim of it is not to punish, but to restore. Second, we must see that this process, as highlighted in 1 Corinthians 5, is a last resort.

[31:04] And the matter has to be publicly known as far as the sin is, as far as the sin affects. So for example, it is a sin that is, for example, if I am the one that is offending the name of Christ, bringing shame to the name of Christ, and the church rightly judges that sin and pronounces judgment, because of my role as the pastor in this church, you will all have to know about that.

It will have to be publicly made known. But it's not always in regards to if it's just a particular sin between a group of people. And the matter is, the church can still adjudicate and pronounce judgment, but again, remember in our polity, the church, the people who represent the church is the elders of the church, right?

The pastor and the vestry. But that doesn't mean that in every situation it has to be publicly known. Because the point is not to shame and to punish, the point, the aim, the goal, again, is to restore. It's restoration. But, while we aim for restoration, we must make sure to be on guard to protect the honor of Christ's church.

That's also part of our goal and our aim. And so, as Paul gives us this sort of process, the warning also is that we need to be able to apply it carefully.

[32:46] We must apply it carefully. And as we do so, we must examine our own arts. Don't think that you are without sin yourself.

Don't become Pharisaic. You know, what the Pharisees, the Pharisee was doing. Remember that parable of Jesus in the temple. He's standing there and said, thank God, I'm not like this other man. I'm not like this publican, a sinner. Don't become Pharisaic. Don't become full of yourself. I tell you, that's part of what is the problem in the Corinthian church. They were puffed up.

They were arrogant. We must guard ourselves against arrogance, even as we rightly are on guard against sin infestation among us.

Don't think you're without sin. But remember that even though we are all, all of us, sinners, saved by grace, we have a mighty Savior.

[33:54] Savior. And because it's important actually to make sure that we guard against Phariseeism here. Because when we give ourselves into Phariseeism, we make ourselves open pray for Satan.

He loves people who think of themselves as more righteous than others. He loves people who are hypocritical of other people's sin. He loves people who go around pointing out other people's faults and sins without any sort of inward perspective to look and examine their own hearts, to confess their sins before God, to recognize that they themselves are sinners under God's mercy that needs God's mercy and needs God's grace.

Satan prays on such people. And so we must guard ourselves from bringing like that. Amen. Amen. Amen. Next week we'll continue in these verses as we think about in verse 9 to 13 why we must persist in judging appropriately so that the world may know that we are serious about the gospel and salvation in Christ.

So we'll continue in chapter 5 next week but let us pray. Lord we thank you for this word. It is grave. It is sobering. And we confess that left to ourselves we are prone to be like the Corinthians to just accommodate sin because we don't want to ruffle any feathers but we recognize that we need your Holy Spirit to help us.

[35 : 41] To give us boldness to give us clarity to give us a heart that seeks to defend the gospel of Jesus Christ above all else. And so we ask that you will give us that spirit Lord and efforts Lord in doing so to be mindful that the aim of all of it is love and restoration.

So we ask for your help and we pray all this in Jesus name. Amen.