

# Immorality in the Church

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- [ 0 : 0 0 ]     Good morning, everyone. I wasn't sure I looked a little like Pastor Wayne.! It is well with my soul. Can we say that this morning?
- ! I trust we can. I was singing the song and I could just hear the voices around me. You know, people singing the top of their lungs. We are able to say it is well with my soul.
- Thank you for leading us in those songs this morning. And thank you as well for reading the text for us this morning, Igor. This morning we will only look at verses 1 to 8. Earlier in the week I wasn't sure if I would be covering the whole chapter, but doing some digging and so on, I realized 1 to 8 is enough of a mouthful for one Sunday.
- And so we will look at that portion this morning. Before we do that, let's turn to Psalm 145. I'd just like to open up with that, with a couple of verses.
- Psalm 145, verses 8 and 9. Are we not blessed to serve a God like this?
- [ 1 : 5 0 ]     You know, when He is described by words like gracious, compassionate, slow to anger, merciful, good.
- You know, on our Christian walk, the path isn't always smooth and straight. There's twists, there's turns, hills and valleys.
- And all along the way, we're faced with obstacles. And some of these obstacles will cause us to fall.
- And in these times, it is good, it is even reassuring to know that we are treated as sons. Our Father will not be harsh with us, but will be gracious to us.
- For we truly are His children. We have been bought at a high price. All because our Heavenly Father loves us so.
- [ 3 : 0 2 ]     And so it is good to be encouraged in the Scriptures. The Bible was given to encourage us, but not only that, but to teach us as well.
- It is our road map in life, we could say. And it teaches us how to handle any circumstances in life. How to live the Christian life.
- And so, this morning as we turn to 1 Corinthians 5, we are being taught here as well.
- Taught about immorality in the church. Taught about how immorality defiles the church.
- How the church is to deal with it. And how the effect of immorality, or how it can affect the church.
- [ 4 : 1 2 ]     So the three things to look at this morning. Before we continue, let's just again bow in a word of prayer. Heavenly Father, we come before you again this morning.
- Lord, it is good to know you. To know that you are a gracious, merciful God. That you love us. That you are good. And that we are your sons and daughters.
- This morning, Lord, we just want to open our hearts and our minds to your word. That it may teach us. So, Lord, just pray for wisdom and strength to proclaim your word.
- To speak it in truth. And, Lord, just help my voice to hold out. To bring forth the message this morning. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Amen. Been dealing with a cold for a few weeks already. And it's still hanging on. And so, the title I have for the message this morning is simply, Immorality in the Church.

[ 5 : 19 ] And so, how does immorality defile the church? Paul here is dealing with a second major issue in the church at Corinth.

The first issue that we have been looking at to this point is that of sectarianism. The congregation was divided.

There were small groups aligning themselves under different leaders within the church. And they were elevating these leaders. Putting them on pedestals. And, in essence, then be worshiping them.

And so, this issue, it could very well have played a part in this second issue in the church.

And we'll talk about that in a moment. But, you know, what is the second issue? We find the issue in verses 1 and 2 of chapter 5.

[ 6 : 27 ] It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles, that a man has his father's wife.

And you are puffed up and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you. So, the second issue, sexual immorality.

And, specifically speaking, they were dealing with incest. So, the last part of verse 1, it reveals that a man has married his stepmother.

And so, we have the wording that a man has his father's wife. And so, in Scripture, the wording, to have a woman, refers to being married to her.

And, you know, there's some different examples in Scripture that bring this out. I've just chosen two. The first one is in Matthew chapter 14, verse 4.

[ 7 : 45 ] And, regarding Herod, John the Baptist is telling Herod that it isn't lawful for him to have his brother's wife.

And so, even Herod, he had married his brother's wife. And John is saying that this too. It wasn't lawful for him to have his brother's wife. And, ultimately, this comment, or this, what Paul, or not Paul, what John the Baptist tells Herod, it ends up being what costs him his life.

This angered Herod's wife. And she was looking for a way to get rid of him. And the way it comes by her daughter.

How she pleases Herod and his friends. And Herod tells her that she can have whatever she wants up to half the kingdom. And she goes to her mother.

And, what should I ask for? And her mother's response. John's head. And so, you know, Herod having his brother's wife, being married to her.

[ 8 : 59 ] Also in Matthew, in chapter 22, verse 28, the Sadducees are questioning Jesus about the resurrection. See, the Sadducees didn't believe in the resurrection.

And so, they create a scenario for Jesus. And so, they come up with a scenario where seven brothers had the same wife.

And this could have been fictional. It may have happened. But we don't know that. But it is a scenario that they bring before Christ. And so, there's these brothers.

One marries this woman. He dies. The next brother comes along, marries his brother's wife. And the same thing continues on until seven brothers have all had the same wife.

And lastly, the last brother dies. And so, they ask, in the resurrection, whose wife will she be? For they all had her.

[ 10 : 02 ] So, they all had her. They were all married to her. So, just a couple of examples in Scripture how this wording tells us that they were together in marriage.

And so, here in our text, a man has his father's wife. It doesn't say he has his mother. It says his father's wife. And so, therefore, we make the conclusion that it was his stepmother.

It doesn't tell us if this young man or this man, if his father has passed away.

Regardless of the scenario, this situation just sounds wrong. And Paul even goes so far as to say that something like this isn't even named, meaning practiced, among the Gentiles.

The Gentiles wouldn't even do this. Not that it didn't happen among non-believers. It has.

[ 11 : 14 ] But even in ungodly circles, the general population, something like this would be frowned upon.

It is just not something one would do. It's just wrong. It's sick. And yet, here is an instance of it happening in the church, among believers.

Relationships like this are forbidden.

And if we, for a moment, turn to Deuteronomy, chapter 22, we can read there how it is forbidden.

So, in Deuteronomy, chapter 22, verse 30, the last chapter of that, or the last verse of that chapter. A man shall not take his father's wife, nor uncover his father's bed.

[ 12 : 21 ] So, here we read the law. A man shall not take his father's wife. A man is not to have his father's wife. And here, in Corinth, it is happening in the church.

If we turn a few chapters to Deuteronomy 27 and verse 20, we read that it also comes with a curse.

Cursed is the one who lies with his father's wife because he has uncovered his father's bed. So, there's a curse attached to it as well.

And so, serious consequences for the individual. We have the word immorality in our text.

Immorality is described as knowing something is morally wrong or sinful and doing it anyway.

[ 13 : 24 ] And so, it would be tied with willfully sinning. And so, we have the case of sexual immorality here in Corinth, but it can be connected to other immorality as well.

It can be applied to other sins. And so, as we read in Deuteronomy, we know that this defiles the individual, but how does it defile the church?

And Paul brings that out here as well. One area of defilement, we read in the first line of verse 1 in our text, it is actually reported.

It was being talked about by others, by people outside of the church. It was being, you know, there was gossip going around, right?

It was being told around the community, and I'm sure it spread beyond Corinth, but, you know, something like this happening, it was being talked about by others. What does that do?

[ 14 : 46 ] It tarnishes the reputation of the church. Who are we as the church? We are Christ's ambassadors, His representatives.

The church is a beacon on a hill, a light in a world of darkness. The world is watching us, seeing if we will make mistakes.

And they will see us make mistakes. We're human as well. But the world doesn't understand Christianity.

Their idea is that we think that because we're Christians, we're better than them. It's a false idea, but that is the idea that they hold to.

And one mistake gives them a reason to mock us and the church that we are connected to. And so Christianity in the world is painted in a bad light.

[ 16 : 04 ] And so a situation like the one in Corinth wasn't a single unintentional sin, though.

It wasn't a one-time thing. This guy married his stepmom. Living together, coming together in marriage with a relative, even if it is a stepmom.

Imagine what the outside world would think of the church that allowed such a thing. What did the community of Corinth think of that church?

And so that brings us to the added defilement of the church in Corinth.

It was getting a bad reputation in the community, but the added defilement was the church wasn't doing anything about it.

[ 17 : 20 ] They were allowing this to continue on. Not only that, verse 2 tells us that they were puffed up. They were puffed up about it.

They boasted about it. They should have been grieving about the fact that one of their own was living in sin.

They would even consider such a thing. And yet, they boasted. And so, this is where their sectarianism might well have played a part.

Maybe their boasting was because this man might have been part of one of the, there's many small groups in the church going after, together with different leaders.

maybe this man was a part of one of the different groups and the rest of the church in different groups. You know, they were, they had their boast, you know, that I am better than this person.

[ 18 : 26 ] This is a wrong attitude to have. Never are we to rejoice when another one, another person falls into sin or hurt.

And we can turn to Proverbs chapter 24 on that. The wisdom of Solomon. Proverbs chapter 24 verses 17 and 18.

And here it relates to our enemy. And so, if we're doing this about a brother or sister in the Lord, I would imagine this would be even worse.

But it says, Do not rejoice when your enemy falls and do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles, lest the Lord see it and it displease him and he turned away his wrath from him.

So, a warning in that. And if we back up in Proverbs to chapter 17, verse 5, there's further warning.

[ 19 : 45 ] He who mocks the poor reproaches his maker. He who is glad at calamity will not go unpunished. So, a warning, a warning there of making a boast or rejoicing that, you know, what is happening to another person.

Excuse me. On the other hand, it may have been that this man was very well regarded in the church. He may have been a popular figure in the church.

Maybe a good speaker. Maybe he was well-spoken and people were drawn to him. There's some out there that think this possibly, possibly this was one of the leaders in the church.

And because of his popularity, others in the church, you know, because they liked him so much, maybe they were willing to turn a blind eye to his sin or to cover for him and to sweep the sin under the rug to look the other way.

Whichever scenario it might have been, it is dangerous ground for the church to be walking on. Never are we to condone sin, to tolerate it.

[ 21 : 33 ] Always we are to call it out for what it is. God hates sin and he won't stand for it and neither should we.

So that brings us to the next question. How is the church to deal with immorality? How do we deal with it?

Continuing on in our text in verse 3 through 5, For I indeed as absent in body but present in spirit have already judged as though I were present him who has so done this deed.

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ when you are gathered together along with my spirit with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

We read here that Paul had it settled in his mind already what he would do. He wasn't there.

[ 22 : 42 ] He was writing this letter to them but he hears about this and he had enough facts to pass judgment and Paul was a former Pharisee.

He knew the law. He knew what needed to be done. And so in verses 4 and 5 he gives the church instruction.

And take note here in these instructions who is to deal with the sinning individual. When you are gathered together along with my spirit.

When you are gathered together. The congregation the whole church was to come together and deal with the sinner.

This was not for leadership to exercise authority that you will do as we say. This was an issue for the congregation to deal with.

[ 24 : 08 ] Now ideally church leaders would have been there as well. The whole church coming together leadership included. Leaders to help give spiritual guidance.

But we know the situation in Corinth. The local leaders their lack of dealing with the sectarianism issue.

Were they really fit to deal with this issue? They hadn't done anything about this relationship to this point.

So essentially were they not condoning this as well? Again Paul wasn't there and yet he had been hearing these reports from within but I imagine he had heard enough from outside as well that he knew the facts.

He had enough evidence to judge the matter and so he writes to them saying I'm with you in spirit and that they needed to go ahead and to deal with this.

[ 25 : 29 ] It needed to be dealt with now. And so the whole assembly is to come together and in the name and power of our Lord Jesus Christ they are to deliver this immoral person to Satan.

They were to excommunicate this man. Now when a man is found in sin scripture tells us to confront him personally about his fault.

If he doesn't listen the first time we are to return with one or two more witnesses to this man's sin. Maybe then he'll repent of his sin knowing there's multiple people that have seen his fault and witnessed it and give him the realization that what he did was wrong.

And if the second attempt fails then they are to bring it before the church to tell the church about it.

And if he won't listen to the church to the assembly of the congregation then they are to excommunicate him. These instructions come out of Matthew chapter 18.

[ 27 : 00 ] And so another reason to believe that this man in Corinth was possibly a church leader is that Paul jumps right to the third step involving the whole church.

If we turn to 1 Timothy where Paul is giving instruction to Timothy regarding church leaders 1 Timothy chapter 5 and verse 20 regarding elders if we back up to verse 19 do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses!

Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all that the rest also may fear! And so in our text maybe there have been individuals that have gone to this man who doesn't tell us that he is a church leader but there's hints to it but you know maybe he was just a brother in the congregation and living in sin and maybe there had been individuals that had already gone to him and rebuked him and he was refusing to listen we aren't told whatever the scenario whatever the case is this man wasn't listening he was continuing on in this relationship he had gone ahead with it and so therefore the church is to come together and to deal with it the whole congregation coming together and opposing this man's immorality would show they were serious about maintaining the church's purity and it would send a strong message to the sinning party we read that the sinner is to be delivered to

Satan not to be completely destroyed only that his flesh his old nature might be brought down that in the end his spirit might be saved Paul has dealt with a scenario like this if we turn again to 1 Timothy chapter 1 1 Timothy 1 verse 20 he is sharing we look at verse 19 having faith and a good conscience which some having rejected concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck of whom are

Hymenius and Alexander whom I delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme so Hymenius and Alexander two individuals that were delivered to Satan that they might learn not to blaspheme not to destroy them but that it would teach them a lesson they would learn not to blaspheme it is evident when a believer is caught up in sin that his old sinful nature is standing up it is at work as believers in Christ we are called to put off the old man to do away with our old ways our old habits and yet if we continue in sin and we're willfully sinning refusing to turn away from sin there needs to be drastic measures taken to get our attention we cannot we must not continue in sin we must repent and make things right well if we are part of the congregation dealing in such a way with a sinner what is to be our attitude let's turn to

[ 32 : 19 ] Galatians chapter 6 Galatians 6 verse 1 and 2 brethren if a man is overtaken in any trespass you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness considering yourself lest you also be tempted bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ we are dealing with a situation like this or in any situation where we're dealing with a brother in sin we are to do it in a spirit of gentleness we are to bear one another's burdens the end game is always to restore the sinner to welcome him back into the church into the fellowship to welcome him back into the fold as we talked about this morning in

Sunday school the parable of the lost sheep and so we need to have the mindset the desire to restore the sinner to welcome him back not to drive him away forever to this point the Corinthian church was sitting by not dealing with the sin in their midst and in that lays danger for the church you already saw some of it in the first two verses Paul brings out more in the last portion of our text this morning verses six to eight your glorying is not good do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump therefore purge out the old leaven that you may be a new lump since you truly are unleavened for indeed

Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us therefore let us keep the feast not with old leaven nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth Paul likens sin to leaven or yeast as we call it today more commonly the church glorying in another man's sin is not good this one individual sin could and given time would affect the whole church the example of leaven or yeast we put a little yeast into a batch of dough and it spreads through all of the dough and causes it to rise or to grow if you will this bit of yeast affects all of the dough sin has that same effect and

I'm sure all of us could share an experience where we saw the effect of sin where sin was tolerated instead of being dealt with and we witnessed the spread of sin to others sin doesn't stay in one place if it is tolerated for only a little while there is great danger of it spreading to others we can say it is contagious people see someone living in sin seemingly getting away with it and if there is any opportunity the devil will cast a seed of doubt if this person can get away with it why can

I not enjoy some of that pleasure as well I don't see him getting punished is it really sinful imagine what could take place in the church we have this example in Corinth and it could relate to any church Corinth was a city known for loose living there were temples where they would worship sexual immorality and yet even something like was happening in the church was not something that would have been normal in Corinth in the city that that worshipped immorality and here is this church in this city getting the same reputation a reputation for loose living for tolerating sin

[ 38 : 22 ] Paul urges us to purge out to clean out the old leaven do away with sin with that old sinful nature let's read a verse in Hebrews chapter 12 Hebrews 12 verse 1 therefore we also since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses let us lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily ensnares us and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us people are watching us the world around us is watching us let us lay aside remove the sin which so easily ensnares us sin is a trap we can't take a quick sample of sin and no one the wiser it ensnares us it entangles us we get one taste and we'll keep coming back for more and so we are called to purge out the old leaven that you may be a new lump of dough meaning a new a pure lump of dough without any leaven without the sin spreading around and as

Christians we are truly unleavened we are a new creation in Christ pure and holy before our God in the final bit of our passage this morning Christian holiness and discipline is illustrated by the Old Testament teaching of not allowing yeast in the bread eaten at the Passover feast in Exodus chapter 12 the Passover is instituted the Israelites are in Egypt preparing for the exodus out of the land and they are given instructions to prepare the Passover lamb and to remove all leaven from their house for seven days during the Passover feast that they are to keep from that point forward

Christ came and took the place of that Passover lamb John the Baptist saw this connection between Christ and the Passover lamb and he tells us so in John chapter 1 verse 29 John 1 verse 29 the next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said behold the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world Christ came and was crucified once for all fulfilling God's plan of salvation and so for the believer Christ is our Passover he sacrificed himself for us the debt for our penalty of sin was paid in full by his shed blood and so therefore we are or we should symbolically keep the

Passover feast not for a week but rather through our whole life here on this earth free from the old unleavened bread full of sin and be as the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth a couple of scriptures that direct us how to live the Christian life can be found in Romans chapter 12 turn there Romans 12 verses 1 and 2 I beseech you therefore brethren by the mercies of God that you present your bodies a living sacrifice holy acceptable to God which is your reasonable service and do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of

God from there let's turn to 1 Peter 1 Peter chapter 2 verse 5 you also as living stones are being built up a spiritual house a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ in conclusion we have in our text this morning we have a reminder from scripture on the danger of playing with sin of turning a blind eye to sin or else boasting in it that we are better than that sinful person sin is never to be taken lightly the moment we consider a sin to be harmless that we don't need to deal with it it bites us we must continually guard against it where and when it is found it needs to be dealt with swiftly for the source of it comes from our enemy the devil he's out there seeking whom he may devour may he find no opportunity amongst us though correction of sin is serious and it can be severe we ought to thank our

[ 45 : 55 ] God that he is so gracious so compassionate and merciful towards us as we read in Psalm 145 in the opening always he waits with open arms to welcome a wayward child home he is out there seeking the lost seeking those who have gone astray and when he finds them he will pick them up on his shoulders and he will rejoice and carry them home!

God is so good let us faithfully serve him today and forever more let's bow heavenly father we thank you for your grace for your mercy your goodness your patience with us Lord Lord we thank you that you do not give up on us but you seek after us firstly when we were in a lost condition you sought us out you came after us you called out to us and you brought us into the fold and if by chance while in the fold we go astray you don't give up on us you come after us again and again and again continually you seek us out calling us back home and always you welcome us back with open arms when we realize our sin and we repent and Lord we thank you for that for your goodness to us

Lord thank you for each one here this morning may you go with us as we go about the rest of our day in Jesus name we pray amen