

Blood Bought Holiness

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[0:00] This may be dismissed. Good morning, church. The sermon text today, as Jordan said, is 1 Corinthians 5. At the conclusion of the reading, I will declare this is the word of the Lord, and the church, in joyful response to his revelation given to us, will together say, thanks be to God.

1 Corinthians 5. It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among the pagans, for a man has his father's wife. And you are arrogant. Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you. 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.

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

Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you are really unleavened.

[1:08] For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people, not at all meaning the sexually immoral of the world, or the greedy, or swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world.

But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother, if he is guilty of sexual immorality, or greed, or is an idolater, reveler, drunkard, or swindler, not even to eat with such a one.

For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? God judges those outside. Purge the evil person from among you.

This is the word of the Lord. We keep praying is because we are so needy and desperate for you.

[2:13] And because we depend on you, we rely on you for all things, for physical and spiritual life, for physical and spiritual health. Lord, we need you. So Spirit, would you speak to us through this difficult text that you decided belongs in the word of God.

You decided that these instructions are needed for the church of Christ to be the church. And so would you work in us this morning for your glory and the advancement of the gospel, we pray in Christ's name.

Amen. Well, good morning, church. For those that have not had the pleasure of meeting, I'm Mike, one of the pastors here at Shoreline. And as Jordan already welcomed you all, we're just so glad that you're here this morning.

And I just want to say, Frank, we are so thrilled to finally have you baptized and join us in membership for the church. And I want to thank the church for praying for me and for my family this past week as we were mourning the loss of my grandfather.

But my grandfather was a believer in Christ and he is right now rejoicing in the very presence of Christ. And so I'm excited, Frank, for you to get to meet him.

[3:17] He's a really cool dude. And so are you. And I think you guys are going to be great friends someday. Well, perhaps you've heard somebody use this line on you before.

Don't judge me. Jesus says you can't judge me. Right? Don't judge me. Or maybe you've used that line on somebody before. But I just want to ask, is it even biblical?

Is it biblical? I think you'll see as we walk through today's text that it depends. It depends on how that line was actually used. But I would say probably not, just guessing on how we normally use that line.

Now, if you haven't already done so, please turn to 1 Corinthians 5, our passage for today. If you don't have a Bible, there are a few Bibles on the back table. I need to order some more. People have been taking them, which is awesome.

They're bookmarked to today's text for you. So feel free to grab one and keep it as a gift to you. 1 Corinthians 5 is one of two key texts in the New Testament, the other being Matthew 18, that address the process that we refer to as church discipline, how to handle sin within the church.

[4:30] And you say, seriously, Mike, we're talking about church discipline after a baptism? Yes, in fact, we are. Now, it might help for us really quickly to look at the sentence that forms the very heart of this text.

So look in your Bibles at the second half of verse 7. For Christ, our Passover lamb has been sacrificed. For Christ, our Passover lamb has been sacrificed.

Central to this passage, central to the process of church discipline even, is the gospel of Jesus Christ. The spiritual realities that were just represented in baptism is central to this thing that we call church discipline.

So we're actually not veering too far by spending time today in 1 Corinthians 5. Now, for those that are new, we've been walking through the letter of 1 Corinthians together, seeing what makes for a healthy church.

Now, it's a bit ironic because the Corinthian church, as you might know, was pretty unhealthy. But into the midst of that, the Apostle Paul calls them to gospel consistency, to displaying Christ in all of life.

[5:44] And this is really the theme, the driving theme of this whole book. And the title that we're giving to our sermon series, finally, we're given a title, is this, The Church's Call, if you go back one, Caleb, The Church's Call, Displaying Christ in All Things.

That's what this letter is about. Now, the focus of chapters 1 through 4, that was really one block in this letter. It was displaying the unity of Christ in the church. We've come through that now.

The focus of this chapter and the next chapter is displaying the holiness of Christ in the church. And the title of today's sermon is Blood-Bought Holiness.

Blood-Bought Holiness. And here is the main point that I think Paul is getting at in this text. The church is called to pursue and preserve the holiness that Christ died to create.

The church is called to pursue and to preserve the holiness that Christ died to create. Now, here's the first thing that we see in verses 1 and 2. It's the church's call to grieve, not tolerate sin.

[6:48] And Paul writes, It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans.

For a man has his father's wife. Now, if you recall, Paul concluded chapter 4 by asking the Corinthians regarding their divisive, faction-creating boasting.

He says, What do you wish? Shall I come to you with a rod or with love and a spirit of gentleness? Now, in that matter, the jury was still out. Like, they had choices to make.

But in this new matter, it's already been decided. What's needed, Paul is saying, is the rod. That's what's needed. Now, what is this new matter? It's a case of sexual immorality in the church.

As reported to him by Chloe's household, as we saw, they brought this report to Paul. Now, the Greek word translated in most Bibles as sexual immorality is the Greek word porneia, which is a general word for all kinds of sexual sins.

[7:51] But Paul narrows it down here to the exact sin. It's incest. He says, For a man has his father's wife. Now, this is not likely the man's own mother, or else Paul would have probably said so, but his stepmom.

Now, not only did the Mosaic Law and the early church condemn this behavior, but Paul says, It is of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, right?

Even among the unbelieving Roman culture, this was not tolerated. This was condemned. And yet, it was going on in the very church of Christ. So Paul's outrage here, which is very clear from the way he's writing, his outrage is apparent, and it is deserved.

And what's more, Paul says, And you are arrogant. Verse 2. You're arrogant. Now, it's possible that what this means is that the Corinthian church was boasting about the sin itself as a sort of token of their supposed freedom in Christ.

Without going into detail, I'm just going to say, and you can talk to me later if you want to ask questions, I don't think this is the nature of their arrogance. I think the sense here is more like, you Corinthians are arrogant, boasting about how wise and how spiritual you are, how mature you are in Christ.

[9:10] We've seen this in the last few chapters. Yet, all the while, you're tolerating this vile sin of incest in your very midst. Right? This arrogance is absurd. This arrogance is grossly hypocritical.

He's saying, no, no, no, you shouldn't be arrogant at all. Ought you not rather to mourn? Paul says, the knowledge of such an egregious sin occurring in the church, it should have been like an axe to the base of their arrogance.

Like, it should have brought them to their knees in godly sorrow and in grief over this sin leading to repentance. Right? This is how the church should have responded, not turning this blind eye and then continuing to boast in their supposed spiritual prowess.

The church is called to grieve, not tolerate, sin. Now, by way of application, it first needs to be said, and this has become, you know, quite controversial in our culture, but so abundantly clear from Scripture that God's design for sex is for it to be enjoyed in the context of a biblical marriage between a husband and a wife who have covenanted together for life.

any other use, any other use of sex is sexual immorality. Okay? God, and we see this in Genesis 1. God is the engineer, he's the designer, he's the architect of the human body, and he's given us operating instructions, right, for how the body ought to be used.

[10:51] And contrary to popular opinion, to operate according to the owner's manual, listen to this, it's actually true freedom, right? If you take your car and like try driving it through the woods, that's not very free unless you have a car designed for that, like a Jeep, right?

But if you don't, you've got to stick to the road, and if you stick to the road, there's freedom there, right? That's where it's meant to be used. It's the same thing. Human joy, human flourishing, it's found by living according to God's design because he made the human body and the human soul. And you know, there are many churches out there today who boast of their commitment to Christ all the while adopting our secular culture's very confused ideologies about gender identity.

But listen, Christ-like love, Christ-like love, it calls sinners to repentance and to a life of true joy, true freedom found in submission to God and his word.

Now with that said, Shoreline, we have our own problems with pride while at the same time nursing secret sins. So I'm not calling us to cast any stones, okay?

[12:02] We are called to look ourselves in the, James talks about this, to look ourselves in the mirror, right? And to see, consider, where is there inconsistency in me with the gospel that I profess?

And then to grieve over that sin and then run to Christ for forgiveness and repent and turn. That's what we're called to, to grieve, not tolerate sin.

Now Paul then moves to declare what ought to be done with this sinning brother. Point number two here, the church's call to judge for the sake of salvation.

Judge for the sake of salvation. Look at verse, the second half of verse two. Paul says, let him who has done this be removed from among you.

Now this sounds awfully harsh, right? Paul's going too far. Well, he keeps going. Verse three, for though absent in body, I am present in spirit and as of present, I have already pronounced judgment on the one who did such a thing.

[13:08] Okay, now hold on, Paul, because you literally just said a chapter earlier, do not pronounce judgment before the time because it's only the Lord who judges. So like, how are you getting off now judging other people?

That's a good question, right? It's really important for us to understand that there are different kinds of judgment, right? There is a kind of prideful, condemning, self, self, self, self, for the sake of salvation.

And so we see this principle that church discipline ought always to be restorative, not punitive. It's restorative. It's motivated by love.

And that is, that's one of the driving themes of Corinthians as well, 1 Corinthians, that everything ought to be done in love for the upbuilding of the body. Church discipline ought to be done out of a heart of love.

And this is, again, this is just like our discipline as parents ought to be. Restorative from a heart of love. Now we're terrible at that. I'm terrible at that.

[14:18] But our Father is not. Our Heavenly Father is not. He disciplines us for our good that we may share in His holiness. This is from Hebrews 12.

For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. You know, our culture today for a long time now has been preaching tolerance, right?

Preaches non-judgment. Our culture says accept me as I am. Our culture requires that you love me in a way that I perceive is loving. I'm the one that determines whether it's loving action or not.

But church, listen to this. True, biblical, Christ-like love does not always feel loving. It does not always feel loving. It is actually sometimes painful.

In this area of correction and discipline, again, just like in parenting, it's painful for the one receiving the correction. It's also painful for the one giving the correction. Like, it's not an easy process to walk down, but Christ calls us to walk down this hard path because of the spiritual and eternal fruit that results.

[15:33] Now, perhaps there's a word of correction that you've been needing to speak into a brother's life, but you haven't because it's going to feel awkward. Maybe God's calling you to push past the awkwardness for the sake of love.

Again, the sake of love. Perhaps there's a word of correction that you were given by a sister in the church and you responded in pride and in anger. Perhaps God is calling you to receive that word in humility and to ask that sister for forgiveness and to thank them for being willing to push past the awkward and to speak the truth in love, even at cost.

And you know, this text, it hits close to home for Shoreline because we went through this whole process as a church just last year. And all I want to do now in mentioning that is to urge all of us, especially those of us who walked through that process, to continue to pray for the salvation, for the repentance of that former member.

Like, that is something that can only come about by the sovereign power and the grace of God. So let's fervently pray for that member. And you know, I also want to press this text into the area of accountability.

But before we do that, I want us to consider the next three verses which form the heart of this chapter. The church's call to judge for the sake of blood-bought holiness.

[17:04] Now look at verse 6. Paul says, your boasting is not good. So he's reminding the church that their boasting actually looks ridiculous in light of the flagrant sin that's being tolerated in their midst.

And then he says, do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Sin is like yeast, he's saying, working its way through the entire lump of dough.

Sin is cancer, gradually over time infecting and destroying the body. For you Lord of the Rings nerds, it's like Sauron with his insatiable desire for the one ring, right?

He will stop at nothing to get it. And we see this principle from the very beginning when after the fall sin spreads like gangrene among mankind to the point that after only a few generations, Genesis 6-5, the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

John Owen writes in his book *The Mortification of Sin*, sin aims always at the utmost. So in light of that principle, Paul urges the church in verse 7, Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump as you really are unleavened for Christ, our Passover lamb has been sacrificed.

[18:34] So you see, Paul is grounding this command in the whole text in the gospel of Jesus Christ. He's saying, remove the unrepentant sinner from your midst because you're not like that anymore.

Like, you are now a batch without leaven. You are now holy because Christ sacrificed himself as the spotless lamb of God. And when he did that and you believed in him, he forever removed your sin from you as far as the east is from the west and he made you holy like him.

And what Paul is doing here, he is pulling us into the grand narrative of all of human history. And we talked about this in the first sermon of the year.

We were created as image bearers of God, right? In his likeness to reflect his holy character to the world. But we sinned, right? And we were kicked out of the garden.

What did God do? He formed then a people for himself, the nation of Israel, to be his possession and for his glory. He enabled them by sanctifying them to actually live out that creation purpose, to bear his image, to reflect his holy character in the world.

[19:45] And you know, every year the Israelites, they would celebrate the Passover. They still do. To remember the original Passover in Egypt when God passed over the houses of the Israelites.

And what had they done in order for that to happen? They had sacrificed an unblemished lamb and they had taken the blood of that lamb and they had spread it across their doorposts. So all the houses who had the blood applied, the angel of death passed over.

God brought salvation. The firstborn sons of the Egyptians, though, those who did not have the blood applied, they were killed. It was all about the blood.

It was all about the blood, making holy a people for God's own possession and glory. But church, we know the animal sacrifices, they were only a shadow.

They were a copy. They were not the substance to come. The substance is Christ. For it is impossible, this is Hebrews 10, it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

[20:50] But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God for by a single offering, he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

Amen? By a single sacrifice, he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.

Church, we are forever made holy by his blood. And therefore, Paul is saying, be the holy ones that you already are through the gospel.

Like, we're going to keep coming back to this theme throughout 1 Corinthians. Be who you already are in Christ. Christ. And that's what he's basically saying in the next verse. Verse 8. Let us therefore celebrate the festival not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

Now, he's not telling them to literally celebrate the Jewish festival of Passover, but to do so symbolically, right? In light of the cross of Christ, by living holy lives, by rejecting the sins that once defined them, and living in sincerity, purity, meaning not boasting on the one hand and then nursing secret sin on the other, but living pure and holy lives consistent with our profession of faith.

[22:13] And he says, living in truth, meaning according to Christ who is the truth, according to the gospel and the word of God. Church, let's see how this is not first a word of demand.

Okay, listen to this. This is not first a word of demand placed upon the saints. This is a word first of freedom in Christ. Because if you are in Christ, then your sin has been atoned for.

You have been forever made holy in him. You are holy. But not only that, you have been given a new and holy nature in Christ.

You have been filled with the Holy Spirit to live according to that new nature. this means that you can live a holy life. Like, you no longer have to be a slave to sin.

Right? You no longer have to be a slave to the addictive power of alcohol or of drugs. You don't have to. You don't have to succumb to the poison of sexual lust anymore. You don't have to.

[23:16] You don't have to give in to prideful urges to defend your own honor or to spin or manipulate. You don't have to do those things anymore. You can be holy in Christ.

And therefore, church, let us pursue holiness. We've been reborn to be a holy people, to know God and to make him known, to bear his image in the world.

So let's pursue that high and holy calling. This doesn't mean, you know, rolling up our sleeves and working really, really hard to become more holy. Like, Frank's testimony attested to that.

It means pursuing Christ. And as we do that, as we pursue Christ, focused on him alone, we're transformed into his image and likeness, his holy image.

And church, you know, we do this individually. We do this as families. And we also do this as a church family, which leads me to one more point of application, and that is accountability.

[24:16] See, we need to recognize that our holiness is a community matter. Our holiness is a community matter.

See, Paul's speaking to the church in Corinth, right? The holiness of the entire body is his concern here. And you know, my individual holiness, it affects that of the entire body.

My individual holiness is a community project. Even me, right? the lead pastor of this church. My holiness is our project. When I entered into membership in this body, I chose to submit myself to the accountability of this church.

I chose to submit myself to your disciplining of me. Because listen, even though I am holy in Christ, even though I can live holiness, a holy life in Christ, I'm still dragging around that old man, the flesh. I'm still giving in to temptation. And I need you all to confront me in love. Please do it in love. I need you to confront me when you see me speaking and acting in a way that's inconsistent with the gospel.

[25:26] Like, I need that. So we need to be doing this for one another, cultivating a culture of accountability. accountability. Now this requires that we're actually in relationship with one another, right?

And I just want to say the relational work of the members of this church, the relational work, that is the most important work that goes on here. Like, I am so thankful for our greeters.

I'm so thankful for the strolling kids workers and for the music team and for any of the formal ministries. We need those as well. But I want to say the relational work, that's the most important work that goes on in the church.

We've got to be in relationship with one another, holding one another accountable, helping each other to follow Jesus. And we do that best in deep relationships. And as I mentioned earlier, the first step in the church discipline process is simply one believer confronting another believer in love for their good.

Right? And in that way, if we're doing that all the time, then that means that we're continually cleansing out the old leaven. Right? We're continually pursuing and preserving the holiness that Jesus died to create without having to go down those other more severe steps of the church discipline process.

[26:47] That's the goal. Okay, so where are we? The church is called to grieve, not tolerate sin. The church is called to judge for the sake of salvation.

the church is called to judge for the sake of blood-bought holiness. And finally, there's this, the church is called to be in the world but not of the world.

Verse 9, Paul says, I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people. Stop right there. So here we learn of a prior letter that Paul had written to the church.

And apparently, so we don't have that letter today, we don't know what he said, but apparently, he had exhorted the church not to associate with sexually immoral people but his words were misunderstood by the Corinthians.

And so he's seeking to bring clarity. He says, not to associate with sexually immoral people. Verse 10, not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world or the greedy and swindlers or idolaters since then you would need to go out of the world.

[27:48] The Corinthians thought, Paul was telling them to disassociate with unbelievers who indulge in these kinds of sins. And Paul's correcting their misunderstanding here and he does it by bringing in the language of Jesus in his high priestly prayer in John 17.

You see, Jesus taught in that prayer that we are to be in the world but not of the world. Right? In the world but not of the world. See, the saints have been saved out of the world.

Right? Made holy, set apart, but then sent into the world. And why have we been sent back into the world? For the sake of mission, right? So that the ministry and the mission of Jesus could be continued through his body, the church.

So how can we carry out his mission if we remove ourselves from the world? No, Paul is saying continue to engage with the unbelieving world. And here's what he actually meant in his former letter.

Verse 11, but now I am writing to you 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.

[29:03] For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? God judges those outside. Purge the evil person from among you.

Paul is grabbing on to language from the Mosaic law in which over and over again God commanded Israel to purge the evil from your midst.

So he's saying, no, no, no. It's not unbelievers that are characterized by those sins that you're to separate from, but believers. And why is that?

Well, we've already talked through this, so I'm not going to dwell on it, but it's because somebody who professes faith in Jesus Christ and therefore bears his name but is living in unrepentant sin is a walking contradiction.

Right? They're bringing disrepute to the name of Christ. And Paul's saying this cannot be. He says, not even to eat with such a one. In other words, the church cannot go on treating such an unrepentant sinner as if they belong to the covenant community of faith.

[30:12] Like the church cannot, by their fellowship with this person, continue to affirm that they have a credible profession of faith. And that's what we're doing. When we baptize somebody, when we receive somebody into membership, when we partake of the Lord's Supper on a weekly basis, we're actually affirming one another's faith in Christ.

That we all belong to the body. And Paul's saying this unrepentant sin, this outward, serious sin, it's not consistent with the gospel. So the church can't continue to affirm that person's faith.

Now I just want to draw one application point before we close. And it's this. That we, the church, need to maintain our holiness for the sake of mission.

For the sake of mission. So, we don't judge unbelievers. Right? They're unbelievers. They are dominated by a sin nature.

They need Jesus. Right? So we don't judge them. We love them. And you know, God has ordained, as Jesus prays in John 17, that the primary way that the unbelieving world is drawn to saving faith in Christ is by witnessing, them witnessing, the holiness and the unity and the love of the body of Christ.

[31:30] Christ. So they witness, among us, a redeemed gospel culture. And that is strikingly different from what they see in the secular world. And they know, therefore, that Jesus is alive.

They see the culture in the church, the love, the unity, the holiness in the church, and they think, Jesus must be alive and reigning because that's different. And I want that. And they come to faith in Christ and we've seen that play out.

We've seen that play out. So church, our holiness is a matter of eternal salvation of the lost because they need to see it.

And listen, not only the salvation of the lost but the glory of God. We began, you know, this year by asserting from Ephesians 3 and 1 Peter 2 that the church is the focal point for the display of God's glory to the universe.

And for the church to be made that, it costs the life of the Son of God. And now we see from 1 Corinthians 5 that if that's the case, if we are to display God's glory, then we must live lives of holiness as He is holy.

[32:43] We're called to pursue, to preserve the holiness that Christ died to create. So that's for the sake of professing believers living in unrepentant sin.

That's for the sake of the health of this body. That's for the sake of the lost. And that's also for the sake of the glory of Christ. Please pray with me.
Heavenly Father, Thank you.