

# The Grace of Discipline // 1 Corinthians 4:18-5:13

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[0:00] The following message is given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee. For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at [TrinityGraceAthens.com](http://TrinityGraceAthens.com).

1 Corinthians 4, verse 18. Some are arrogant as though I were not coming to you. But I will come to you soon if the Lord wills. And I will find out, not the talk of these arrogant people, but their power. For the kingdom of God does not consist in talk, but in power. What do you wish? Shall I come to you with a rod? Or with love, in a spirit of gentleness. It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you. And of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans. For man has his father's wife. And you are arrogant? Ought you not rather to mourn?

[1:03] Let him who has done this thing be removed from you. For though absent in body, I am present in spirit. And as if present, I have already pronounced judgment on the one who has done such a thing.

When you 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 over to Satan for the destruction of the 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 really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.

Let us therefore celebrate the festival not with old leaven, the leaven of malice and envy, evil. But with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people.

[2:09] 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. But now I'm writing you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother.

If he's guilty of sexual immorality or greed or idolatry. Reviler, drunkard or swindler. Not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging others?

Is it not those in the church whom you are to judge? God judges the outside. Purge the evil person from among you.

This is the word of the Lord. Hallelujah. Please be seated. In the spring of 1994, the nation was outraged when American teenager Michael Fay was sentenced to be caned in Singapore.

Various acts of vandalism occurred in that spring in Singapore. An 18-year-old Michael Fay, American citizen, was arrested and charged for taking part.

[3:22] For spray painting cars, egging cars, and so on. He was sentenced to four months in prison. \$3,500 in fine. And six strikes with a cane.

Some of you probably remember this hitting the news. Caning is a form of corporal punishment. Still used in Singapore to this day. An offender is stripped of their clothing, tied down to this apparatus, and struck with a four-foot wooden cane.

Now, it's well and good for Michael Fay to be punished for vandalism. But did he really need to be whacked with a cane? President Clinton called the sentence excessive and extreme.

Nearly half the Senate appealed for leniency. The media was more to the point. They called caning archaic, bizarre, unnecessarily cruel.

I mean, after all, it was almost the year 2000. Isn't it about time to put away the spanking battle?

Imagine if the gentle parenting folks had been around then. They wouldn't have been able to sleep.

[4:35] Fay's sentence was reduced. But he was still caned on May 5, 1994. I was in the eighth grade. This archaic, bizarre, unnecessarily cruel act.

Well, this morning we come to a biblical practice of the local church that may seem archaic, bizarre, unnecessarily cruel.

Church discipline involves the practices of church discipline. Church discipline involves pursuing a brother with love, a brother or sister with love and gentleness, appealing for them to turn back to the Lord Jesus Christ and walk in obedience to him.

But if it doesn't lead to repentance, church discipline encourages us biblically to withhold fellowship or what some have called excommunication.

Now, it seems archaic. It seems like a page from the Scarlet Letter, right? We are 21st century folks. Can't we agree to disagree?

[5:47] It seems bizarre. Isn't this the behavior that led to witch hunts and all sorts of crazy things? Shouldn't we be more loving, more tolerant? It seems unnecessarily cruel.

What happens when church discipline is exercised? Is this person rejected, shamed, shunned? Are they supposed to feel that way?

Is it worth the risk if they do? Well, 1 Corinthians 5 is the longest chapter on church discipline in the entire Bible. These verses carefully explain the divine purpose and biblical practice of church discipline.

But in and through these verses, perhaps more than anything else, God means for us to see that we have a moral responsibility for one another. In a day of pervasive, unquestioned individuality, we must not settle in the church for everyone doing what is right in his or her own eyes.

We must not reduce following Christ to just me and Jesus, a privatized religion. We must not be indifferent or even neutral to our brothers and sisters who stray.

[7:00] Rather, we're called to be a holy people. That's what anchors this text. Salt and light, called to shine like stars in the midst of a crooked generation. So even when the risk is high and the payoff does not seem to be great, these verses call us to church discipline.

They call us to think about these things. You know where we're going? All the church must take responsibility for the whole church to be a holy people for the Lord Jesus. All the church must take responsibility for the whole church to be a holy people for the Lord Jesus Christ.

We're going to break this out. Four points today. I took the headings from my friend Jeff Perswell, and I trust he doesn't mind. The first one is the good of the sinner. Why do we practice church discipline?

The first purpose is for the good of the sinner. The good of the sinner. I included the end of chapter 4, verses 18 through 20, because those verses form a transition to the next section in this book. If you remember, we've been talking, Paul's been talking, about division in the church. Addressing division, calling them to walk in the way of the cross. Well, now this transitions to attention to sexual immorality.

[8:16] To addressing how to rightly handle your body. Glorify God with your body. In marriage or in singleness and in sexuality.

But first, he says, you must take action because of some sexual immorality in your midst. The sexually immoral person, you see, immediately is someone involved with his dad's wife.

Now, that's not his mother. They would have been two different words there. His dad's wife. It's a subsequent wife of his father. Now, this relationship is explicitly forbidden in Leviticus and Deuteronomy.

It's also forbidden under Roman law. So, look down there with me. He says, verse 1, it's not even tolerated among pagans. I mean, that's like the ultimate no-no.

Not even tolerated among the Romans. And what isn't tolerated among them, it seems like he's saying. How can this be taking place in the church of God?

[9:22] The church is to be a holy people, a light to the nations. Yet, it appears the pagans are shedding light on the church. Like they're walking in greater moral faithfulness than the church.

It's alarming. It's disturbing. Yet, what's most alarming here is that it doesn't alarm the Corinthians. Look down there, verse 2.

And you are arrogant? Even though this immoral relationship is taking place, they're not faced. They're not humbled.

They're not grieved. Paul continues and said, ought you not rather to mourn? Notice he doesn't say, ought you rather to be upset?

He doesn't rage bait him in any way. Ought you ready to be outraged? He says, ought you ready to be to mourn? It's so important.

[10:30] Our response to the remaining sin in our hearts and among those of the church, even scandalous sin, is not indifference or outrage, but mourning.

Jesus said, blessed are those who mourn. Sometimes we outrage, but more often, we're indifferent. Now, I'm old enough to know what it's like to drive on the highway when there's not rumble strips on the side of the highway.

I guess, presumably, they added those because one too many people, or it's always too many if it's this, people drifted off to sleep and went off the road and crashed.

My mom did that when we were young kids, you know, and had a wreck, you know. And so they added these rumble strips. And so the rumble strips, there's meant to be a response, a right response to the rumble strips.

You know, you hit those rumble strips, you're supposed to be jolted back. Oh, my goodness, what's going on? Is the car blown up? You know, the first time you hit them, they're so loud. But over time, you hit those rumble strips.

[11:37] I was just looking at my phone for a second, you know, just switching the radio. You know, that response isn't what it was supposed to. I remember riding with a friend one time, and he was driving, and we hit the rumble strips a few times.

Hey, man, you hit the rumble strips. And we're riding along a little bit. He goes, I said, are you all right? He goes, I'm fine, I'm fine. We're going along. He hits the rumble strips again. Hey, hey, man, you keep hitting the rumble strips. Are you all right?

You need to fallow? You need to sleep? You know why? Because the rumble strips are supposed to do something. Well, the same thing is supposed to happen when we're aware of sin in our own lives and in the life of the body.

It's meant to be like hitting the rumble strips. Oh, my gosh. It's meant to elicit not outrage, not indifference, but mourning.

Why? Because it's evidence of continued rebellion against God. That's why we did that prayer this morning. I mean, we didn't plan it that way. But God means for us to be continually bringing our hearts before him.

[12:40] But in this text, he doesn't merely say mourn. He says you must take action. Look down there. He says let the one who has done this thing be removed, verse 2. Let him who has done this thing be removed from among you.

Repeatedly, the whole verse is urged to take action. It's not enough to be empathetic. Not enough to be sympathetic. Not enough to be sad. Not enough to mourn. You must take action, he says. And we're going to understand why as we keep moving. But he says what is the action they are going to take? Look down at verse 4. He says when you're assembled, that's what churches do. They assemble. Literally, that's what the word church means. They gather.

So when you're assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus. Sorry, I lost my place. You assemble in the name of the Lord Jesus. My spirit is present with the power of the Lord Jesus.

You're to deliver this man over. While other verses talk about church discipline from a top to bottom standpoint. All the parts of it. Matthew 18.

[13:37] Talk about pursuing a brother. Trying to appeal to a brother. Praying for a brother. Trying to win a brother back. This text is referring to the end of church discipline. That of an individual being removed from the church.

So the result of this action, he says. Look at verse 5. You're to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh. The scriptures call Satan the God of this world.

The ruler of this world. The prince of the power of the air. The scriptures call the church the called out of the world. The ones who are under the rule of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Walking in obedience to him. And so in this action, the individual is put back into Satan's world. For the destruction, not of his body.

Not that he would lose his life. But to awaken him to the sinfulness of his sin. And his need for a savior to turn in repentance. So I think it's so helpful.

[14:45] This image right here. This biblical principle right here. Because the church, whether we realize it or not. The church offers massive protection to those inside it.

Gathering. Showing up. Loving. Serving. Sacrifice. Offers massive protection. Again and again. I've seen it so many times. When people stray away from the church. They don't usually just fall away from Christ.

They stray away from the church. And then they stray away from Jesus Christ. That protection is here. So it's devastating what's going on here. He's saying. Cast them outside of that protection. You want to say. Paul, what are you talking about? What are you talking about? Outside. Not to put a scarlet letter on them. Or something dumb like that. So they'd be awakened. Look down. He said.

[15:49] So the result of the action that are outside. Well the purpose of the action is there. So that his spirit might be saved. In the day of the Lord. The reality is. This sinner like all of us.

Has the desires of the flesh. Waging war within them. And so you're praying for the destruction of the flesh. So that the soul might be saved. It's amazing. That's why it's good for the sinner. That's what's going on here. And so the whole process is geared towards the ultimate good of the sinner. When someone strays. We should pursue them. Don't look for somebody else. When someone sins.

We come alongside them. When someone repents. We bring them back. But when someone refuses to repent. It doesn't serve us. It doesn't serve them for us to act like nothing happened. It doesn't.

It doesn't. It doesn't. It doesn't. It doesn't. It doesn't ultimately serve them. To merely be. Empathetic. No. We're supposed to take action. Not to embarrass or humiliate.

[16:46] But in hopes that they will feel ashamed. There are things to be ashamed about. And turn. To Jesus Christ. I'll never forget. When I was.

Pastor. Previous church I served in Knoxville. We disciplined a young man. Younger man. Mid-20s man. That I had disciplined.

On campus. That gobs of hours with him. As I was writing this sermon. I just was praying for him. Thinking about him. And Kim and I were getting married. And during that time.

Spent so much time with him. And he got in a sexually immoral relationship. And we appealed to him. I remember driving over. To his apartment repeatedly.

Man. You have to turn from this. Once it came to the light. And. He refused. And so. We as a church. Had no. Choice. But to remove him from the fellowship.

[17:43] Just to. You know. Not a. To shame him. But to communicate. What was going on. And to ask the church to pray. And to reach out to him. And to love him. Years later.

I was performing this wedding. It was kind of somebody. I barely knew. I mean. I knew him enough to marry him. I guess. But. Didn't know him super well. Up on the lake.

And. I remember. Standing up. With the groom. And. Stood up. Looked out in the. Audience. You know. Like I do. And. I saw that guy. I hadn't seen him in years.

And he just had. Massive grin on his face. Because he hadn't seen me in years. And we spent a lot of time together. And he came up to me. And said. Man. I've repented. And trusted Christ. I just remember bending over.

I mean. My wife was right next to me. Weeping. Because. Like it. It had. It's intended a fact. And.

[18:44] This brother. Repented. Repented. That's what Paul's. Alerting us to. This reality. That we take responsibility.

Second point. The health of the church. Secondly. Paul says. The purpose of church discipline. Not merely for the ultimate good of the individual. But for the health of the church. The ultimate health of the church. Paul continues with analogy about leaven.

Look down there. This is one of those questions he asked. You remember. We talked about it. Do you not know that you're the temple of God? He says. Do you not know. That a little leaven leavens the whole lump. Don't you remember that?

That's in Jesus' teaching. Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees. So we've seen that before. But do you not know that. A little leaven leavens the whole lump. And now this is an analogy. I think built for this church. I was at community group this week.

And. One of our members said to me. This church. Is the sour dough church. I was like. Well. I'm proud of that.

[19:44] You know. Fruit of the gospel. Praise the Lord. You know. But I'm all in for that. But the analogy makes sense. If you do sour dough. Actually I've never done it. So I can't speak with any authority.

But I have read a little bit about leaven. Leaven is a bread rising agent. So the idea is. You take a little bit of fermented dough. From a fermented dough. And you would add it.

To a lump of dough. To make the dough rise. So if you're making bread every week. You would take some of the fermented dough. From last week's bread. To add it to this week's bread.

So that this week's bread rises. Is that right ladies? You know. Just give me a nod. Don't call me out. You know. But. So the idea makes sense. Right. A little bit of leaven. Leavens the whole lump. If the leaven. If the little bit of fermented piece. From last week's bread. Is good. Then the leaven spreads throughout the lump. And makes it rise. The problem is.

[20:38] If the leaven has an infection. It goes into the new lump. It infects the whole lump. So if it's a good leaven. If it's a good fermented lump.

Or piece. Good leaven. The bread's good. If it's bad leaven. The bread is bad. And so what he's saying is. Sin is like leaven in the congregation.

A little bit spreads throughout. It grows. Increases. Sin is like cancer in the body of Christ. It never stays in one place.

It metastasizes. And grows. It mutates. You know. Sin is like one of those obstacles. In a playground. A kid's playground. You've probably all been on it.

One of those horizontal ladder type structures. And so each of the planks is held together by rope. So that it swings a little bit. You know. And so you can step out on this thing.

[21:33] There's some give in the different planks. And so it feels a little weird to walk across. Not like a normal bridge. Or definitely not climbing up a normal ladder. And it's easy enough to do.

You know. Reasonably. Easily enough to do on your own. But because it's suspended by ropes. If other people hop on. The whole. The whole thing shakes.

You know. You're swinging back and forth. You can barely make a step. Which stepping is the easiest. Thing to do. If you're not wheelchair bound. And so he's. You're trying to make this step. You can't make this step. Well the analogy is the same.

In the church. The church is like this ladder. When you sin. The whole church shakes. Like you think your sin is privatized.

It's high. It's hidden. It's inside your house. But that's not the way it is. Biblically. When we isolate ourselves. The whole church suffers. When we fail to serve others. The whole church is weakened.

[22:30] When we indulge in worldliness. The whole church is compromised. When we sow to jealousy. And envy. And gossip. And slander. The whole. The whole church shakes. And it's not just a New Testament idea.

This is an idea all throughout the Bible. That's the story of Achan. Right? God said go. And devoted to destruction. He goes and takes some of the treasure. Hides it.

And what happens next? They go to try to take the next city. And they're too weak. And Josh is like. What? What's going on? The Lord literally says. Get up.

You know? That's a great verse. Okay? Sometimes the Lord does grab you by your. Front of your shirt. Get up. You've tolerated.

Achan. The valley of Achor. Where he was stoned. Why?

[23:24] So God means for us to see. That tolerating sin. In our. In this body. Can rob us. Of the blessing of God. Right?

A little leaven. Tolerated. Leavens it all. The infection spreads throughout. So what do we do?

He continues. With his analogy. Cleanse out the old leaven. That you may be a new lump. Now this would have been vivid to the. The Israelites. Not as vivid to us.

But in the Passover. When they celebrated the Passover. You remember they had to run out. And they didn't have time for their bread to rise. So they ate unleavened bread. Right? Remember that? And so. So after the Passover. Again and again.

When they would celebrate. They would celebrate the Passover. Then they would celebrate the feast of unleavened bread. What would happen is. They would clear out all the unleavened bread. So anything that might be. Infection.

[24:20] We're going to clear it all out. We're going to start over. So every Jew in that audience. Would have immediately remembered. This is what we're called to do. Cleansing.

The old leaven. Taking it out. Of the lump. Taking it out. Put the man outside the body. Who is sin. So it's for the health of the church. It's about preserving. The purity of the church. He continues. Church discipline. Thirdly.

Is about the honor of the Savior. The honor of the Savior. The purpose of church discipline. Is not merely for the ultimate good of the sinner. Or the overall health of the church. It's for the honor of the Savior. The analogy of leaven continues.

Cleanse out the old leaven. But look down there with me. He says. That you may be a new lump. As you are. You really are unleavened.

[25 : 22] Cleanse out the old leaven. Because you really are unleavened. I'm like. What? That doesn't make no sense. You know. Like you don't unleaven until you cleanse out the leaven.

But he's saying. You're already unleavened. Even though you haven't cleaned it out. It's so critical. This is where the analogy with the leaven falls apart. With bread. You have to get rid of the leaven to be unleavened.

But with the gospel. You don't have to clean up to be clean. That's what he's saying. Anchoring its point. He continues. For Christ. The past. Our Passover lamb.

Has been sacrificed. Now to understand the point. That was already there in the Old Testament.

They. They celebrate the Passover. They remembered that night. When they slaughtered the lamb. They put it.

The door. The blood on the doorpost. And the angel of death. Passed over the house. And did not kill the firstborn in that house. But on the houses of Egypt. Where it was not. The blood was not there.

[26 : 18] It did. It came. The angel of death. Struck down the firstborn son. And then after that. They celebrated this feast of unleavened bread. They ran out. They celebrated the deliverance of God.

He's saying the same thing here in the gospel. Christ. The Passover lamb. Has been sacrificed. Now you must celebrate. By walking forward with him. In sincerity.

And truth. So the idea is. The gospel is not. Clean yourself up. Read your Bible. Pray every day. Don't smoke. Don't cuss. That you may be clean. The gospel is. You have already been made clean.

Now get out of the dirt. It's so critical. Staggering.

Staggering. The way he says it. It's not clean yourself up. So that you might be my people. But don't you realize you're my people.

[27 : 14] So clean yourself up. Put it away. Just as.

Isaiah. One says. Come now. Let us reason together. Though your sins are like scarlet. They shall be white. As snow. It's the gospel.

That makes us clean. Makes us acceptable to God. And for the honor of the Savior. Everything's turned over to him.

Right? All of our lives. Lord. Get the dirt out. Change me. I don't want to be indifferent.

I don't want to be calloused. And if you need to be clean. I offer you the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. No amount of Bible reading will get you to Christ.

[28 : 15] No amount of Sunday morning attendance will get you to Christ. No amount of scripture memory. No amount of look who's in my family tree will get you to Christ. You need the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. You need to know that the gospel is that God sent the righteous one to stand in the place of the unrighteous one.

So that the unrighteous one might come to God freely. And that's what I invite you to do. Today. Right now. This is the day of salvation. If you'll turn to him and believe.

And then he's saying what he's saying with his honoring with the feast. Cleansing out the unleavened for the honor. You want to walk together. You want to honor him in sincerity and truth. You want to give him your life. Now humanly speaking.

There's one person I want to honor more than any other in this life. And it's my wife. Many days are not good.

Stank. Sorry honey. She's not here. But she listened. But I want to honor her. Now we purpose to never get a divorce. At least.

[29 : 19] As far as you can depend on us. But it would not honor my wife. If I was more generous with other people than I am to her. It would not honor my wife.

If I was more selfless with my co-workers than I am with her. It would not honor my wife. If I valued my work over I value her. It would not honor my wife.

I flirted with other women. Instead of flirting with her. And the same truth is what Paul's trying to drive in here. Yeah we don't clean ourselves up in order to come to God.

But we clean ourselves up to honor him. Let the words of my mouth. Meditation of my heart. Always be acceptable in your sight. I want to honor you.

You know whatever I do in the body. I want to please the Lord. And that's the motivation. That's what he's going at. That's why he immediately goes in. Look at verse 8. Let us therefore celebrate the festival.

[30 : 15] Right? No sacrifice. The festival is an announcement that the sacrifices happen. Let us celebrate it with sincerity. With the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

And the same thing is true with the Lord. We honor him. Turning from indifference and callousness. Taking responsibility for the whole church to be a holy people in the Lord.

Finally church discipline is also for the integrity of the church's witness. The ultimate good of the sinner, the health of the church, the honor of the Savior, and the integrity of the church's witness. You'll notice in verse 9 Paul references I wrote to you in my letter. Now this is a letter and he's talking about writing another letter. And that helps us remember the context. Paul had already written them a letter and they had written him back.

We don't have that letter. It's lost to history. So technically we're reading 2 Corinthians right here. Even though there's another 2 Corinthians which is actually 4 Corinthians. But it's this dynamic relationship.

[31 : 14] He wrote to them already. He wrote to them already about some of this stuff. Like we don't know completely what it was. But he was addressing some immorality in their midst.

He said he wrote to them not to associate with anyone as sexual and moral. But now he writes to them more specifically. Now he didn't mean the immoral of the world.

I love the way he says this. If he told them to not interact with anyone who is sexually immoral they'd have to leave the world. Right? Because the world is filled with immorality.

And look at verse 12. And not only would they have to leave the world for him to address them and give them that command in a reasonable way. Also he doesn't judge the world. Look at verse 12.

For what do I have to do with judging outsiders? Verse 13. God judges those outside. We know all people give an account to the Lord Jesus Christ. But verse 11.

[32 : 15] He says. Look there. He says. I'm writing you now. Not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother or sister. If he's guilty of sexual immorality or greed.

Or is not idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler. Not even to eat with such a one. As we've mentioned before. Other verses talk about the pursuit of an individual who's straying.

Again, this verse talks about the final step. A change in relationship. A disfellowshipping of this individual with the church.

Now who are we not to associate with? That is the \$64,000 question. What is Paul talking about? That's quite a list down there.

You know. Don't associate with anyone guilty of sexual immorality, greed, idolatry, reviler, drunkard, or swindler. Swindler. Now, incorporating all that scripture says on this subject.

[33 : 15] I think. Generally. We're only supposed to practice church discipline in certain situations. You know. Like. Man. If you have a brother that appears to have made food an idol.

And keeps pounding the buffets. Or something like that. Can't stay on a diet. Does he need to be purged? No. What about a sister who starts a Bible reading plan every year and makes it a February?

And not past that. You know. Does she need to be purged? No. That's not what the scripture says. It's very narrow in certain cases. Informed by other scriptures. It's focused on ongoing unrepentant sin that brings particular shame upon the church.

So it could be sinful words. Words of divisiveness. According to Titus 3.10. Could be sinful actions. Unrepentant sexual immorality. Which it is here. Could be refusing to turn from heretical teaching. Actively propagating heresy.

[34 : 14] Like Paul says. Alexander. No relation to coppersmith. And 2nd Timothy. And says. Had nothing to do with him. So it's very narrow.

At least this final step is. So that's who we're not to associate. What does it mean to not associate with them? He says. Not even to eat with one of them.

What does that mean? Well the final step of church discipline is a breaking of fellowship. We're not to treat the person like an enemy. Because there's no bitterness, division.

Vindictiveness. But we're also not to treat the person like a brother. Or a sister. We're supposed to treat them like someone who needs to turn in repentance.

To the Lord Jesus Christ. They're not to eat the Lord's Supper. That's implied in verse 8. When it says. Let us celebrate the festival. Not with these people. But they're also not to eat with them.

[35:16] In a culture. The idea is behind that. The culture of table fellowship. This idea that eating with someone. It was not the same like us grabbing a meal at Pepo's. Or something like that. That eating communicated acceptance.

Approval. Welcome. In a way. That would be wrong. To communicate to an individual in this scenario.

But it does mean. So I don't think it means we don't ever eat around somebody.

In this situation. But it does mean we don't live like everything's normal. There's a change in relationship. Now it's important to realize.

The whole church is in view throughout here. The second person plural occurs again and again and again. You all. You all. You all. Why? Sometimes people think. And they think this in a number of things.

[36:14] They kind of think that. You know. As long as the pastor's a Christian. Then I'm all right.

You know. As long as the pastor's obeying the scriptures. I'm all right. Well in church this one.

That's not permitted. You know. This is not something that I can do.

Or the elders can do. This is something. This is a change in relationship. That all of us must deserve. It is a command for all of us. To take moral responsibility. For the good of the sinner. So if some of us just kind of turn a blind eye.

It doesn't serve the person's soul. Nor does it obey scripture. So how does it work? Well if someone's removed from the church. And we're inviting some folks over for a game.

Or to a dove hunt. Or something like that. We shouldn't invite them. Now you're saying. That sounds so cruel. The problem is. If all of the brothers are coming over.

And you invite them. You're communicating the wrong thing to them. You're communicating that they're still a part of something. They're not a part of. That things are okay. You may invite an unbeliever into that context.

[37:10] Someone you're reaching out to. You may invite them into that context. Because it doesn't communicate the same thing to them. But to that person. It does communicate. Everything's hunky-dory.

And yet scripture. Behooves us not to do that. It's critical we get this right. You know. If we relate to someone. An ongoing unrepentant sin. Like everything is okay.

We fail to serve them. And prepare them for the judgment of God. And if we do so as a church. If we just kind of like. You know.

Eleven's going to heaven. Slowly. A church. It's going to change slowly. If we just. Gradually let. Things like this come.

And turn a blind eye. Ultimately we'll damage. Our witness. You know. We're a light to the nation. We're the salt of the earth. Meant to be stars. That shine in the midst of a crooked. And twisted generation.

[38:08] The church. Is supposed to be. The church. The called out people. So if we're people. Fill with compromise. And unbiblical toleration. We're not the called out people anymore.

The church is supposed to be. The church. Now several weeks ago. The pastors and I went to see Bob Dylan. In concert. I'm told he's older than Ron Kaiser.

So he is out there. Doing his thing. Playing music. Ron can hang with him. There's no doubt. I say we went and saw him. But I really actually don't know if we did see him.

Because he stood up there in a hoodie the whole time. And we could barely see his face. But that's Bob Dylan. Bob Dylan has been doing Bob Dylan.

Since Newport 65. And years ago. I read this article. When Obama was in office. Dylan came to the White House. I mean that's a punch list. You know. Bucket list.

[39:02] A dream come true. So he came to perform. Celebrating the music of the Civil Rights Festival. Joan Baez was there. Natalie Cole. Smokey Robinson.

One of my friend's favorites. Was there. All the other artists did the usual. They came in. You know. They rehearsed. Maybe got some of the sweet tea.

In the White House. Something like that. They practiced. They took pictures. With Barack and Michelle. But not Dylan. Dylan didn't want anything to do with all those shenanigans.

Just like the other night. He didn't want anything to do with an encore. Even though that's standard fare. Obama commented later. He wouldn't come to the rehearsal.

I quote. Usually all these guys are practicing before the set in the evening. He didn't want to take a picture with me either. Usually all the talent is dying to take a picture with me and Michelle before the show.

[40:02] But he didn't show up for that. He came in. Played the times they are changing. He finished the song. This is Obama.

Steps off the stage. I'm sitting in the front row. Comes up. Shakes my hand. Sort of tips his hat. Gives me a little grin. And leaves. And he's gone.

He's left the building. The rest of the festivities are over. Obama says. That was my only interaction with him. He continues.

And that's how you want Bob Dylan. Right? You don't want him cheesing and grinning with you. You want him a little skeptical of the whole enterprise.

The whole enterprise of the government. And President Obama. And all that. That's the way we want. We want Bob Dylan to be Bob Dylan. And this text is saying. We want the church to be the church.

[41:00] Country clubs can welcome everybody. But the church has a moral responsibility to walk together in the light. You are the light of the world. Now no one takes the light and puts it under a basket.

No. They put it on a stand. So that all in the house. The world might see the light of God. You're the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its saltiness. How shall its saltiness be restored?

It's no longer good for anything. Except to be trampled under people's feet. And so you're called to shine like stars. In the midst of a crooked and twisted generation.

Take up responsibility for the whole church. To be a holy people. How do we respond? Now this text. Doesn't always directly apply.

Right? Not every day a church is disciplined. A member. Doesn't directly apply to this moment right now. But one application I want you to consider.

[41:58] Is someone in your life or in the church. Straying from Christ. Do they appear to be straying from the fellowship of the church. Straying from obedience to God's word.

Refusing the direction. Turn from the direction they're pursuing. If so I would encourage you to mourn. I would urge you to not be indifferent.

Or to exchange it for a false view of tolerance. A blind eye. The proverbial sweep under the rug. I would encourage you to help. Hebrews 3 says.

Exhort one another daily as long as it is today. So that none of us may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. Part of the keeping of us. In the way of holiness.

This is the exhortation of other people. And I would urge you to pray. Pray for them. Pray for us. Pray for this church to be.

[43:04] Holy. Devoted to the Lord. Serving him with sincerity and truth. May God help us. Father in heaven. We humble ourselves before you.

We praise you and worship you. We pray that you would keep us in the love of God. Protect us. But I pray that you would preserve us. I pray for no one to stray. And if anyone does stray.

That we would have the mind of Christ. And the heart of Christ. To go after them. To be like the good shepherd. Who takes the sheep up on his back.

And carries the lost sheep home. Lord. Blessed is anyone who. Finds a straying sheep. And brings them home. Lord help us. I pray.

[44:05] I pray that you would help us. Do this with all gentleness. And wisdom. Love and care. But also faithfulness. And appropriate boldness.

We pray. Lord we commit this church. It's your church to you. In Christ's name. Amen. You've been listening to a message.

Given by Walt Alexander. Lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church. In Athens, Tennessee. For more information about Trinity Grace. Please visit us at [TrinityGraceAthens.com](http://TrinityGraceAthens.com) Thank you.