

Jeff Corinthians 10

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 25 November 2025

Preacher: Jeff Purswell

[0:00] After the first section, lengthy section, we come now to 1 Corinthians chapter 5. The designation of, the delegation of Stephanus Fortunatus and Achaicus.

He doesn't give the source. But let me, before we hop into this, I want to point out to you that in chapters 5 and 6, we have two main topics, sexual immorality and lawsuits.

In fact, he first deals with sexual immorality in chapter 5, and then lawsuits in chapter 6, 1 to 11. And then sexual immorality, again, chapter 6, verses 20, or 12 to 20. Okay, but you see what I'm saying? So, we've got sexual immorality, chapter 5, lawsuits, chapter 6, 1 to 11, sexual immorality, chapter 6, 12 to 20.

And why the going back and forth? And is there anything holding these chapters together?

Immorality. Okay, good.

[1:31] Immorality holds the beginning of, or chapter 5 and the end of chapter 6 together. But why would he stop and do lawsuits in between? Some people see this as evidence that this is, the letter doesn't have integrity, and someone cut and pasted something in the middle of, cut and pasted chapter 6, 1 to 11, and between chapter 5 and chapter 6, 12 to 20.

Yeah. Well, I, yeah, I think what I'm trying to get at is, and we'll look at some of the details of these, but at the core of these chapters, what ties them together is Paul's call.

In other words, why would he interrupt immorality with lawsuits? I think it's Paul's call for the community to act decisively to preserve its unity and identity as the sanctified people of God.

Remember how we addressed them at the beginning of the letter. Chapter 1, verse 2. To the church of God at Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints.

So he began there to shape their identity as those set apart for God's own possession, those who are to reflect the one who called them. He is holy.

[2:47] They are to be holy. But clearly they're not acting like it, right? And so he corrects them, and he calls them to live up to who they are, to live up to who their true identity, what their true identity is.

And so the thrust here, and what ties lawsuits to immorality, is community identity. The church has a moral responsibility for the conduct of its members, and the conduct of its members affect the whole community.

The conduct of any one member affects the whole church. Okay? So that's what ties lawsuits and immorality together. It's this community responsibility.

And the way in which one person's actions affects everyone. Okay? Now, that's especially clear in chapter 5. If we had to sum up chapter 5 in a brief sentence, it could be this.

I just jotted it down this way. The pursuit of purity is the church's sacred responsibility. The pursuit of purity is the church's sacred responsibility. And the issue of chapter 5 is not simply that of an individual.

[3:55] There are two serious sins involved in chapter 5. One, we see it in verse 1, is the personal sin of the individual. 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, that's obvious. But then verse 2 shows us the other sin. And you are arrogant. There's puffed up again.

Fuseo. Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you.

And so, chapter 1 addresses the personal sin of an individual. Chapter 2 addresses, or verse 2,

addresses the corporate sin of the church.

Do you see? So, not only is there this degrading sin by a member of the church, a man is having a sexual relationship with his father's wife.

Now, that is not his mother, not his own mother, but a subsequent wife of his father. And that, indeed, is addressed in Deuteronomy.

[5:06] Deuteronomy 27, Deuteronomy 23, Leviticus 18, Leviticus 20. So, it's a stepmom. And this was viewed as wrong and illegal under Roman law.

Did you know that? So, that's why Paul says even the pagans didn't tolerate this. So, there's that, and that's bad enough. But there's also the fact that the church didn't do anything about it.

And what's, I think we don't want to miss this. It's striking. It's striking. It's that the corporate sin of the church seems to be as serious, if not more serious, than the sin of the man.

Now, let's be clear. This personal sin is appalling. Paul is disgusted. Paul is indignant. And this man's soul is in danger.

But we should also be clear. Paul's reaction to their tolerance exceeds his indignation over the man's immorality.

[6:24] And, again, not only did the church not do anything about it, they're proud. This guy's doing this, and you, you're arrogant.

Again, we've seen that word before. They're puffed up. They're inflated with pride. They think they're spiritual. They think they're mature. They think they're advanced. Oh, so sophisticated. Culturally with it. But they can't even deal with basic issues of discipline in the church. The reaction was pride when it should have been grief.

Ought you not rather to mourn, Paul says? And not only grief. You see the two things he calls for. Ought you not rather to mourn, so there should be grief.

And then, secondly, let him who has done this be removed. So, they not only should they grieve, they should take action. And the action they should have taken is to remove this man from the fellowship of the church.

[7:26] In other words, they should have exercised church discipline. They should have confronted this man. They should have corrected this man. They should have taken steps to address the sin in his life.

And note the balance. The two-sided impulse of church discipline.

We see it in verse 2. They are to mourn. So, this is the two-sided impulse of church discipline. Church discipline is not harsh. And it's not self-righteous.

He doesn't say they're to be outraged. What is he? They're to mourn. So, church discipline is not harsh. It's not self-righteous.

That's the first impulse. But the second impulse, they're also to act. So, if church discipline is not self-righteous, it's not harsh. But neither is it sentimental or compromising.

[8:26] I don't know what it's like here, but I can tell you where I come from.

Few things are more foreign to the mindset of our culture than the idea of church discipline. Than the idea that you would remove someone from your church.

One of my former professors said many years ago, for years in America, the most well-known verse in the Bible by everyone, not just Christians, would be John 3.16.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son. Now, the most well-known verse is Matthew 7.1. Judge not. Who are you to judge?

And even more tragically, church discipline is all too often foreign to the mindset of evangelical Christians.

[9:21] In other words, Christians who believe in Christ and the Bible and go to church. And I would admit, as a pastor, there's few things I'd rather not do than church discipline.

Church discipline is difficult. It's grieving. It's disruptive. It takes... It consumes your time.

You invest so much effort in it. But, at times, it is necessary. And so we pursue it, not because it's enjoyable, but because the pursuit of purity is the church's sacred responsibility.

Now, the rest of this chapter is going to illustrate this scriptural mandate. And it shows us just what is involved in the process of church discipline, in the church's pursuit of purity.

And I've just approached it by putting four reasons on your outline, taken from Paul's words. Four reasons why we practice church discipline.

[10:34] We practice it first for the good of the sinner. For the good of the sinner. Look with me at 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. When you are... Now, 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 to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.

Now, these are some challenging verses, aren't they? And on first reading, you may think, what in the world is he talking about?

But I think we can get at their meaning by considering a few key ideas. First of all, the action. They are to deliver this man to Satan.

So what's the action? What's he talking about? Paul refers to this one other time. 1 Timothy 1.20, where he says, He handed over Hymenaeus and Alexander to Satan.

[12:03] So both cases are referring to church discipline. And the idea is this.

The idea behind this language is this. When a person undergoes church discipline, and when they are removed from the fellowship of the church, that person is, in a very real way, turned back out into Satan's sphere.

Paul, in 2 Corinthians 4, calls Satan the God of this world, the God who blinds the eyes of nonbelievers and wreaks spiritual destruction in their lives.

So in the world of, outside the church, in the world of unbelievers, principalities and powers, Ephesians chapter 6, still holds sway over people's lives.

In the church, the church is different. In the church, believers are in, they're held in Christ's hand. The experience of the renewing work of the Spirit, the grace and blessings of the gospel.

[13:24] So when a person is outside the church, outside the fellowship of the church, that person is outside the sphere of God's redemptive protection.

You understand? You understand? So this only reinforces what I know we believe. There is great blessing in grace in the church of Jesus Christ.

What did Paul say in chapter 3, verse 16? We are God's temple. Thank you so much. We are God's temple.

What a privilege. We are in the house. What a privilege to be in the house. It's terrifying. A Christian should be terrified to think of being cast outside the house, turned over into Satan's sphere.

So this really, it's sort of, it's part of ecclesiology, but it's sort of a very indirect way to increase our ecclesiology.

[14:44] In, brothers, in our church, in your church, there is protection. There is blessing. It's a very high view of the church, isn't it?

So that's the action. That's the action. The next thing to consider is the result. What's the result? Verse 5, deliver this man over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh.

Now, some people think this means physical death, or, I'm sorry, physical suffering, or even death. But Paul never speaks of death this way, the destruction of the flesh.

And it goes against the redemptive purpose of this action. The key to understanding this is the word flesh.

We talked about *sarx* earlier, the word flesh in Paul's writing. What does that mean, that Pauline sense of flesh? Do you remember that?

[15:48] Yeah, their character. It's basically a person's sinful orientation. In Galatians chapter 5, Paul speaks of the works of the flesh warring against the spirit.

So those aren't, don't think of the flesh as compartments in us. There's a spirit in here, and there's flesh in here, one good, one bad, and they're fighting for each other.

Now, they're not compartments, but they're tendencies, they're inclinations. So when we're living by the flesh, is it possible for a Christian to live according to the flesh?

Right? Yeah, it is. So when a Christian is living by the flesh, that means they're oriented to themselves. They're living for themselves. They're pursuing their own passions. They're pursuing their own desires. When we're living by the spirit, what are we doing? Well, we're oriented to God. We're under his influence. We're sensitive to his desires and to his purposes. [16:56] So what is Paul expecting here? I think what he's expecting is the destruction of this man's flesh, the destruction of this man's bent towards sin.

The destruction of his fleshly desires and passions. The destruction of his love affair with sin and the world. That's the result, the intended result.

Now, what's the purpose? End of verse 5. 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.

That's the goal of church discipline. Repentance and restoration. Forgiveness and ultimate salvation.

Paul has hopes for this man. That his spirit may be saved. That he may repent. That he may repent. That he may be back on track, living the Christian life, and persevere so that he will find ultimate salvation in the day of Christ.

[18:13] So why do church discipline? We don't do it to punish people. We don't do it to exercise our authority over people.

This is not a way for pastors to keep people in line. We do it because God loves sinners. And God goes after straying sheep.

And God cares more about their soul than he does their comfort. In fact, if you look at Matthew 18, it's called the community discourse, one of Matthew's five discourses.

That's where you have the teaching on church discipline there. Jesus saying if someone sins against you, go to them. And if they don't respond, then take another person.

Right? That's the church discipline passage. You know what comes right before that church discipline passage? Yeah, exactly. The story of the lost sheep. The man who leaves the 99 and goes after the one.

[19:24] And when he finds the one, he rejoices and brings it back. And then Jesus immediately says, So, someone sins against you, you go after them. You confront them.

Not in anger. Not in anger. Because you are being like the shepherd who leaves the 99 and goes after the one. You're going after them. You want to reclaim them.

You want to bring them back. That's the impulse of church discipline. It's for the good of the sinner. It's for the good of the sinner.

Michael. What do you think is really done? Yes. That's a great question. Typically, when we talk about church discipline, what we're meaning is the final step of church discipline.

Excommunication. That's what Paul's talking about here. And that's what I'm referring to. But there's a broader sense in which church discipline is part of our daily lives.

[20:21] It's part of the way we serve each other and protect each other. And so, if I say to a friend, you know, bro, it seems that you're watching you with your wife.

You just seem harsh with her. You just seem abrupt with her. You didn't used to be that way. And you do it in front of us. Like you're unaware of what's going on there.

We talk about it. And he may go, you know, you're right. And you talk about what's underneath it in his heart. And then you, he just says, thanks.

Thanks for bringing that to me. Man, I want to change that. In fact, I'm going to go into my wife tonight. And he goes home and confesses his sin. That's just church discipline. We're just helping each other, right?

Going to our brother. How can we help each other? So, that level of, that general church discipline, it's just fellowship. It's just godly fellowship. Helping, linking arms with each other so that we can grow together in godliness and please the Lord and glorify the Lord together.

[21:37] But if, but if that doesn't work, then, oh, what's going on there? And it might, it could ultimately escalate and so forth.

So, Paul here is obviously speaking of that final, that this, this man is entrenched in this public sin. And they must take action.

And I think his, his assumption should have been, they should have tended to this long before this. Long before it got to this point. Who knows what this guy was doing six months earlier?

Brian. Yeah. Yeah. No, that's a good question. I think because he uses that word again, arrogant, fusiato, which he uses strategically in this letter and a number of times in this letter.

And especially you are, the first time he uses it in chapter four, verse six, you have been puffed up in favor one against another. So, in other words, that puffed up is this, this sense of superiority, of arrogance, of, you know, embracing all those values that, that we said, just embodying this sense that we are, we're above stuff.

[22:48] So I think they see them. I think it's a proud toleration. I think they're, they're, they're commending themselves for how tolerant they are. That's, that seems to be what's in view.

Not a, not a sense of, oh, what do we do? We've tried and nothing's happened. I don't, I don't see that. He, the, the, the language Paul uses, the way he addresses them, the, the strength with which he addresses them.

They are, it appears that they are allowing this and tolerating this. And, and, and, and, and maybe even assuming that it's a mark of superiority that, that they can tolerate this.

It's hard to know. But what, what, what is clear is, one, this is public sin that people know about. It's continuing. It's blatant.

The church seems to be tolerating it in a proud way. This is fine. And so Paul sees in this situation something that is, I think, so entrenched that we're, we're past Matthew 18.

[23:59] We're past Matthew 18. And some situations are like that. Jesus is not giving a mechanical, you know, it's got to look this way.

You know, you got to go once and then take another person and then you go to the church. Now it's, he's, he's, he's illustrating a process of appeal, humble, patient appeal.

So in one situation, you might go to a person once. And if he just says, get out of my face. Who do you think you are?

You know, it's just like, whoa. And then, you know, that, some, a guy in that kind of situation, things could accelerate real quickly. Or it could be the guy says, I know, you're right.

Yeah, I'm sorry. And then it just keeps happening. You go again. It keeps happening. And pretty soon it's like, bro, you're not, you're taking no action. I'm not sure you're really feeling conviction about this. You, you sort of admit you're wrong, but you just continue on.

[25:06] What, what's going on there? And, you know, you might go to the guy 10 times, 15 times. I mean, because there's, if there's wrestling and struggle and you perceive not only, not only sin, but weakness and extenuating circumstances.

So again, Jesus is not laying out this. It's got to look exactly like this. He's laying out principles. And I think sometimes, I think sometimes it can, yeah, like I mentioned, I think we can be sometimes a bit idealistic.

Paul perceives here that it's, we're way past Matthew 18. It's, it's time to take action. So, yeah, I think it's, I think it would be over reading this to say Paul does not envision him returning to the church.

I think that's exactly what Paul would want. He would want there, he would want there to be restoration to the local church. Think about what he said about the local church. This is, this is God's temple. So I, I think he would, he would assume that.

I think what, by that statement, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord. I think he's just saying, you know, our, our goal here is this guy's salvation ultimately. We, we, we want, we want him saved.

[26:23] He's, he's acting like a non-believer, but we, we want him saved. I think, so, I think Paul is just, by that phrase is just saying big things are at stake here. We're not just like getting people back into line because that's what we do in Trinity Fellowship.

No, we're about his soul. We're about his relationship with God. That's what's, that's what's important here. Does that make sense? So I, I think Paul would certainly envision the guy being restored.

There's actually a case in, in 2 Corinthians where, and some people think that who Paul is talking about is this guy.

I don't think Paul's talking about that guy. I think Paul is talking about a person who opposed Paul, tried to rally others to oppose Paul.

Because there's, we learn, this is on your, that Corinthian chronology. But what happens after this letter is, so this letter, which we call 1 Corinthians, really 2 Corinthians, because there was a previous letter.

[27:31] Well, then, Paul writes another letter to them, makes an emergency trip to them. He makes an emergency trip. He gets kicked out, basically.

He gets rejected. Then he writes what we call the painful letter. And they repent. They respond to that painful letter. And then Paul writes 2 Corinthians. So, 1 Corinthians is really 2 Corinthians, and 2 Corinthians is really 4 Corinthians.

So, I think he's talking about the person who led the opposition. But, look at what he says here. This is in 2 Corinthians 7. He's saying to them, you know, I caused you grief by my letter.

I didn't want to do it. But I did regret it for a while. But now the letter, because it grieved you. But now I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting.

This is chapter 7, verse 9. You felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us. For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.

[28:33] For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you. What eagerness to clear yourselves. What indignation. What fear. What longing. What zeal. What punishment. At every point you proved yourselves innocent in this manner.

So, although I wrote to you, it was not for the sake of this one who did the wrong, nor for the sake of the one who suffered the wrong, but in order that your earnestness for us might be revealed to you in the sight of God.

So, he's talking about their repentance. And, you know, I'm drawing a blank here about where, at some point, pardon me, for, is it 2-6?

There you go. Yes. Now, if anyone has caused pain, he has caused it not to me, but in some measure, not to put it too severely, to all of you.

For such a one, this punishment by the majority is enough. So, rather, you should turn to forgive and comfort him, or he may be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. So, I beg you, reaffirm your love for him.

[29:45] This is why I wrote, that I might test you and know whether you're obedient and everything. And then, chapter 7, he goes back and talks about why he wrote. And he didn't want to write.

You know, was I too strong? I hate that I grieve you, but I needed to, and so forth. So, here is a guy who was dealt with by the church, but now he's said, no, receive and return.

I don't think it's the guy in chapter 5. Some people think that. I don't. Nonetheless, you see that process of, okay, good. He's responded.

He's been grieved. Godly sorrow leads to a repentance without regret. So, there you see, I think, an instance of a guy being restored, which I think is the goal.

Does that make sense? Well, that's the first reason, then. We do church discipline for the good, the ultimate good of the sinner.

[30:45] We also do it, though, for the health of the church. So, look with me at verse 6. 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.

So, church discipline is not only redemptive for the person, it's purifying for the church. And Paul uses here the image of leaven.

In ancient times, instead of yeast, you put yeast now into grain and it's a rising agent.

Instead of yeast, what they did was they would take a piece of the dough and hold it over from one week's baking to the next. And by the next week, when they're ready to bake again, that yeast that

they took out would be fermenting.

[31:48] And then they would add it to the new dough to cause the new dough to ferment and to rise. So, it became this rising agent. That's the way sin is in the church, Paul says.

It's the nature of evil. It's like leaven. It's the nature of evil to spread. It's the nature of sin to proliferate.

Sin is like cancer in the body of Christ. Sin is like cancer in the body of Christ. So, you sin, you persist in sin. That affects me.

I sin, I persist in sin. That affects you. So, often we fail to recognize this. I remember taking my sons when they were young to area parks.

And there was one in particular part that we used to go to a lot and it had a lot of structures to play on. And one of the structures that we saw a lot was, it had like a horizontal ladder.

[32:56] So, pieces of wood with, on ropes, or ropes that were between pieces of wood and then wooden planks in which you'd hold on to these things and then you'd walk on those planks.

But they're all tied together by ropes and so it's very shaky, right? And I used to love to, one of my sons, he'd start to get his balance and I'd just love to kind of take the thing and just like shake it. And he just, he just goes, you know, loses balance and everything. I was developing their balance. See, I was helping their athletic ability. But, but, but that's, that, or you're walking and someone else gets on it and all of a sudden the thing shakes.

That's how sin is, is, you're never on that ladder alone. You shake, you shake it, the whole church feels it. You compromise, the whole church is affected.

You pursue sin, the entire body is weakened. You see this vividly in the Old Testament, don't you? When, you remember when Israel began its campaign into the promised land? Achan, remember what Achan did?

[34:03] He took some of the plunder, put it in his tent, and what happened? The whole nation suffered a defeat. And the great prayers of confession in the Old Testament have Ezra, Nehemiah, and Daniel mourning the sins of the nation.

What do they say? We have sinned, acknowledging the reality of, of corporate guilt. In the, in the, in the holiness code, in, in the book of Leviticus, violators of certain sins are to be, the phrase that you see is cut off from their people.

And if not, if you don't do this, the land is going to, vivid language, vomit you out. Leviticus 18, Leviticus 20.

So, so as a church, we have a moral responsibility for each member and the actions of each member affect the whole. That's one reason we, to, to, to Michael's question earlier, that's one reason, reason we seek to do life together in the church, to cultivate fellowship in our churches. It's why we want an atmosphere of grace, where we share our struggles and we ask for input and we confess our sins one to another. We need each other.

[35:27] We're looking out for each other. We're protecting each other. And when church discipline becomes necessary, we, we pursue it. We pursue it humbly and patiently and lovingly, but we pursue it because the health of the church is at stake.

Thirdly, we exercise church discipline for the honor of the Savior. We do, yes, pursue purity as individuals and as a church, but the source of any godliness in our church or, or virtue that we attain derives not from our efforts, but from Christ purifying work.

Paul does something fascinating here. We saw it in verse seven. Look at what he says, cleanse, cleanse, 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. So he told him to get rid of the leaven, meaning the sin. But now he says, you really are unleavened.

In other words, purify yourself, not to make yourself pure, purify yourself because you really are pure. Do you see that identity idea again?

[36:45] And, and what made them pure? Seven B. For Christ, our Passover lamb has been sacrificed. It's fascinating that Paul continues to speak

this way to these former pagan Gentiles.

Again, he's putting them in Israel's story. He's putting us into Israel's story. The blood of those lambs was spread on the doorpost of Israel to deliver them from the destroyer.

That blood pointed to the blood of the ultimate lamb, the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. So do you see Paul's logic? It's brilliant biblical theological logic.

Just as God delivered Israel through the sacrifice of those lambs, so we are now delivered through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Through, through his death, we have received forgiveness.

We've been spared his wrath. We have received new life. So, just as Israel celebrated their deliverance, how? By annually cleaning out the leaven from their house, celebrating the feast of Passover.

[37:57] Well, so now does the church celebrate our deliverance by cleaning out the leaven of sin from our lives and our church?

The Christian life is meant to be one long feast, one long celebration of the gospel, one long celebration of our redemption.

You see his logic? So as we celebrate and as we rejoice in our forgiveness and deliverance, we joyfully turn from sin and live lives of grateful godliness.

So that's the connection he's making with Israel. Israel were delivered by the blood of lambs and they celebrated that by cleaning out the leaven and feasting.

So we do too. We celebrate our deliverance by rejoicing in Christ and turning from sin and living in the good of the gospel.

[39:07] So, again, as we practice church discipline for this purpose, to honor the Savior, we want our lives individually and as a church to bear eloquent testimony to the great deliverance we have received through the gospel.

So, to Michael's point, believers have died and risen with Christ. Our lives should reflect those massive realities. Finally, number four, we practice church discipline for the integrity of our witness. In verse 9, Paul writes to clear up some confusion on their part about the previous letter that he wrote to them. Look at verse 9. I wrote to you in my letter, that's the previous letter, not to associate with sexually immoral people.

Not at all meaning the sexually immoral of the world or the greedy or enswinders or idolaters. Idolaters, since then you'd have to go out of the world, but now I'm 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.

So, Paul makes a critical distinction here between how we relate to people inside the church and how we relate to people outside the church.

[40:28] He doesn't want them to avoid non-believers, which would be impossible anyway. Paul is not a spiritual isolationist. Far from it.

Paul goes after these people and he becomes all things to all men that he may by all means save some. So, Paul is not, let's avoid, let's be a holy huddle and just keep to ourselves and not get tainted by the world.

No, that's not what he wants. The church is to be a counterculture in the midst of a fallen and broken world. An alternative society is who he calls us to be, bearing witness to the gospel, living out lives that display the gospel, loving non-believers, reaching out to non-believers.

As Paul put it in Philippians 2, shining like lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. Yes, that's who we're to be. But to do so, the church must be distinct.

We will not shine like lights if we're not different. Which is why worldliness in the church is so tragic. If we are indistinguishable from the world, we will not bear witness to Christ in the world.

[41:39] And so, Paul instructs them, verse 11, not to associate with anyone who bears the name brother. If he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard or swindler, don't even eat with such one.

So, again, the lines marking out the people of God are not to be blurred. And he mentions eating here, not even to eat with such a one.

He mentions eating because in ancient culture, eating together, what we refer to as table fellowship, eating together wasn't just sharing a meal.

It communicated something. I think you guys probably understand this better than I do. The other night when people are feeding each other, that was beautiful.

Caught me off guard the first time, but it was beautiful. So, you're not just like having a meal together. Yeah, we're eating together. No, it communicates. It signals acceptance and solidarity and unity and equality and affection.

[43:00] And so, in the ancient world, it mattered who you eat with. It mattered where you sit, when you eat. It mattered who you invited to a meal. You see all of these things in Jesus' parables.

Right? Don't take the seat at the head of the table. Why? Because someone of higher status may come in and you go to the end.

And in that shame culture, that would be just horrifying, mortifying. When Jesus says, don't invite the rich to your banquet and go and invite the poor and the lame.

That's just a parable of the boundaries of the kingdom expanding to embrace those who would be outcasts. So, eating together.

Here, he's not saying just be sure you don't sit at the same table when you eat. It's not that superficial. It's, he's speaking about, don't engage in activities with such a one that signal, we're good.

[44:07] Your actions are fine. There's no difference between you and me. You see? That's, that's what's behind, that's what's behind that.

So, in this context then, it wasn't appropriate to eat, for a believer to eat with a so-called brother whose life is denying the transforming power of the gospel.

It didn't serve that brother whose life brought into question his profession. And it hindered the church's weakness, their witness.

Seems foreign to us. It, it can be applied, no doubt, wrongly. It can be pursued self-righteously. But just because it can be abused doesn't mean that it's harsh or judgmental. And it shouldn't be self-righteous.

[45:07] It's about the integrity of the gospel. Just mention one other thing. It's not, not in this text.

It's not in your outline. But there's, there's actually one more purpose for church discipline that we see outside this text. And it comes in 1 Timothy chapter 5 verse 20. Where he says this, As for those who persist in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear.

That's another purpose for church discipline, isn't it? In other words, church discipline also acts as a deterrent. It warns.

It produces the fear of God. You see someone reap the consequences of their sin. You see someone removed from the church. You even see someone called to account for their sin.

It, it produces the fear of God in people. It prompts a self-examination. So that's yet a fifth purpose of church discipline.

[46:29] I think what it primarily looks like, Brian, is that your relationship with that person changes. And now it involves not living life the same old way.

Not living life as if all is well. No, it now involves my seeking his repentance. I'm not like, this isn't shunning.

Do you know that word? It's not shunning. It's like, I don't pay attention to you. No, it's, it's when I interact with that person now, I am appealing to him.

You know, brother, I, I, I wouldn't call him brother, so-and-so, I, I just, I want you to know, I'm praying for you.

And I, I, I, I just plead with you to turn from your sin. This is, this is not going to, this is, you, you, you know deep down what the truth, I think you know.

[47:47] And what you're doing is dangerous. It's dangerous to you. It's destructive to you. And it dishonors Christ. You don't want to do that. So please, please turn. So I'm not shunning him like I'm too good for him.

No, I, it just means the nature of my interactions change and they now involve pleading with him. They now involve witness to him because he's acting like a non-believer.

So I, I treat him like a non-believer in a sense. In other words, I'm a, I'm, I'm wanting their salvation. Right? So I'm not going to interact with them.

And that's the way I would put it. I'm not going to interact with them in such a way to communicate to them. There's no problem here. We're good. No, I can't, I can't relate to him that way anymore. So if my small group, let's say our small group gets together every Sunday and watches, I don't know, a football game together, soccer game together.

[48:48] And we're just there. And it's, it's pretty low key. We're just laughing and eating and having fun. Some fellowship is, you know, well, talking about the sermon on Sunday as well.

Yeah. I'm just, I'm just not going to invite the person to that because it would, it would make it feel like we're just, no, there's nothing's wrong. Nothing's different. No, I don't want to do that. That doesn't serve him.

Very, very, yeah, very good point. Yeah, that, that's the difference. Yeah. So yes, I would invite a nonbeliever to that, to that gathering, but it's not communicating that to them.

It's communicating to them. Wow. I can't believe they invited me. These, these are nice people. I want to learn more about that. It would have the complete opposite effect. So no, very rightly put. So again, we, I want to, I want to do, I've got a bullet here just in my notes that it is what Michael said.

[49:52] Again, important point pastorally, this text is addressing excommunication. And sadly that becomes necessary. But again, have in your mind the category that church discipline is in a very real way, just an aspect of discipleship.

We all sin, right? We all wrestle with the reality of indwelling sin. Day by day, we're, we're all fighting the, fighting the fight, the fight of faith.

And what a privilege to do it together in the local church. And so we encourage each other. We pray for each other. We help each other put away sin, cultivate godliness. Confess our sins to one another.

At times correct each other. All, all for the goal of protecting ourselves from undergoing more, more serious, but no less loving correction like church discipline.

Now, before, before we move on, I want us to think about, because this, this often, I think we can be confused. I want to think about what kinds of sins warrant excommunication, the final act of church discipline.

[51:12] What, does scripture give us any guidance here? And what kind of guidance might it give us?

Mikey. Well, let's start with, okay, the examples of church discipline that we see in scripture. This is one. And what was the sin? It was definitely public.

It was unrepentant, gross immorality. Right? I think we could all say that. And it's a public sin.

It's exactly right. So that warrants church discipline. What about, what else? Any other examples? First. First.

First Timothy one. Yes. And what were they doing? Yes.

[52:11] Good. Now, remember that, and look at the earlier context in verse three. He's talking about false teachers, right? Then he returns back to Timothy by rejecting the, so, you know, they're, they're devoting themselves to myths and in this genealogies.

Certain persons swerving from these, wandered into vain discussion, desiring to be teachers, verse seven, without understanding either what they're saying or the things of which they make confident assertions.

Then he comes back to this. Timothy, I want you, verse 18, to hold fast. Wage the good warfare, verse 19. Holding faith in a good conscience.

By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith, among whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme. So, and look in that same category.

Look at Romans 16. Romans 16, verse 17.

[53:22] I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have

been taught. Avoid them. So, very good.

Perhaps we could put this, how might we, let's put it this way. Heresy actively propagated.

Heresy actively propagated. In other words, public. So, again, he's referring in Romans 16, 17 to people who spread ideas and teaching contrary to the doctrine you have been taught.

In the context of 1 Timothy 1, as Samuel was saying, he's talking about false teachers, and then he says, like these guys, whom I turned over to Satan. So, I think here we could also include 2 Timothy 2.

Verses, let's see, 17. Verse 14, remind them of these things. Charge them not to quarrel about words, which does no good, only ruins the hearers. In verse 16, avoid irreverent babble.

[54:39] It would lead people into more and more ungodliness, and their talk will spread like gangrene, among whom are Hymenaeus and Philetus, who have swerved from the truth. Saying that the resurrection has already happened. They are upsetting the faith of some.

There you go. They have swerved from the truth. They're upsetting other people's faith. So, yes, heresy actively propagated.

That warrants just discipline. That's different from heresy privately held. So, just because you know someone in your church, they've got a squirrely idea about something.

Well, we don't discipline them. Have you changed your mind yet? You're out of here. No. There's a big difference between people who have genuine doubts and those who preach error and seek to draw people to themselves.

So, what have we seen? Three, unrepentant gross immorality in a public, especially public, heresy actively propagated, false teachers.

[55:45] And then three, I think, let's go to that, Titus, what Brian just mentioned, Titus 3, verses 10 and 11. As for a person who stirs up division after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him.

Knowing that such a person is warped and sinful, he is self-condemned. So, that's a third category, divisiveness. Divisiveness is peculiarly deadly for a church.

It is destructive to unity. It must be addressed. Yeah, that's certainly a key church discipline.

Matthew 18? It's certainly a key church discipline text. But Jesus is speaking more generally there. It's hard to know exactly what sin is there.

A person sins against you, go to him. I would surmise from that and from all these other texts, because you have to put all these other texts together.

[57:05] Jesus is not, Jesus doesn't go, okay, let's do a church discipline seminar. Right? He's talking about how believers, how brothers and sisters in Christ relate to each other.

And so he says, there's going to be sin against, you're going to sin against each other. And if there is, go to him. If he turns, you've won your brother. And if not, well, then go. And if this thing turns out to be far more serious, you might have to tell it to the church.

So, the question then becomes, all right, what is so serious that it warrants that?

And what I think we see in the New Testament, in 1 Corinthians 5, in Romans 16, and 1 Timothy 1, and 2 Timothy 1, and Titus are, I think those are the key categories.

I tell this story, I remember in a church I was in a number of years ago, there was a pastor in the church, a very zealous guy. And he had been disciplining a guy, and this guy just had a really hard time with his weight.

[58:13] And this guy was like a real disciplined type, disciplined with his exercise. And he just would, come on, and he was always going. And I remember he asked me one time, this guy is not changing.

He's just eating, overeating. He's a glutton. Should we church discipline him? This was serious. And I was like, no, we don't church.

We bear with him. We try to help him. He's not, this doesn't warrant treating him like a nonbeliever.

This is a guy, this is a guy really wrestling. And so, so I do think these are the three main categories we see in the New Testament.

You can see each are, so some, what do we see that characterize those? Well, each are unrepentant, right?

Each are unrepentant. Each are, have a public quality, as Mikey was mentioning. So they not, meaning they not only harm the person, they endanger the church.

[59:22] In other words, not personal struggles with sin. Not private grievances between two people. Unless it becomes so serious that it's threatening to spread to other people.

You got to deal with that. Paul does in Philippians chapter 4. And he calls them out in the letter. I urge you that Eutica and Syntyche, let them agree.

It's like, oh wow, they got their names in the Bible for being at odds with each other. You don't want to be in the Bible for that, but they are. So, so that's, that's the kind of thing that we're talking about. Does that make sense? Michael? Michael? Yes. Well, it would depend, I think, on a number of factors. But given that nine marks kind of context, there's a, there's a fairly rigorous, and I think we should be, I'm not criticizing that.

There's a fairly rigorous and sometimes mechanical addressing of church membership and so forth. And so, almost as if, if, if someone leaves your church and they don't have a real good reason, I'm not, I'm not putting these words in anyone's mouth.

[60:46] But it almost comes across, if someone leaves our church and they don't have a good reason, then we just, we just have to discipline them. We can't just remove them from, from our roles. I wouldn't agree with that.

We've had folks leave us that weren't in the best place and we pursued them and we've spent a lot of time with them. But, and then we communicated with the pastor of the church that they went to. And we appealed to them, don't, don't let this lie. Tell your new pastor. So, we didn't discipline them. So, if it's, if it's, now, but they're going and they, they become Roman Catholic. I think we, we would have a responsibility to pursue that, pursue them and find out what's going on.

Ask questions. And so, and then if, if they're willing to, they may not be willing to. And then try to walk with them through the implications of this decision.

[61:53] First of all, want to know why were they offended? And maybe they're just clueless. Don't they know what this church teaches? Or maybe their, their, their beliefs have changed. If I felt like they were, now I'm just thinking out loud.

But if, if I felt like these people truly love Jesus and were trusting in him for their salvation, even though they were going to a Catholic church whose official doctrine is a completely different kind of justification, then I might be very concerned for them.

I might be sad. I would be sad. But I might not necessarily discipline them, treat them like a non-believer.

If I felt like they really are following Christ and in this context, for whatever reason, it's close to their house and there's, they know a guy who's there and it's a great thing for their kids.

I mean, I wouldn't say those are good reasons, but I'm not going to discipline someone for leaving my church for something I don't think is a good reason necessarily. The issue is, are they, is their lifestyle denying their profession?

[63:10] I think that's what you have to land on. And so just the fact that they did that. Now, I might get there and I, it's hard to kind of imagine the, the scenario I just painted.

They really do love Jesus. And so why are they going to be comfortable in this setting? Why are they there? And so not necessarily, but it depends on the situation.

As for the pornography one. It, boy, it would depend.

Again, I was saying, we don't discipline people for personal struggles with sin. So the sincere believers who are weak, who are struggling, who are ensnared.

We won't explore this, but it sort of depends. I mean, what, what kind of involvement does this entail? Is it, what is their attitude toward it?

[64:19] Are they still, are they, are they sorrowful? And are they, are they, are they cutting themselves off from the church?

Or are they, no, I'm here, help me. I know we went through this book together, but could you, I just, I feel so enslaved. And I know that's not so, you know, I think that's discipleship time, not church discipline time.

But could it get to a point where a guy's like, eh, don't talk to me about this again. And, and perhaps the nature of it is, is particularly, particularly, you know, more, more, grossly immoral.

So I, it depends on the situation. But just because a guy's involved in pornography, would I discipline him? Not necessarily, no. I think you're endangering your people.

I think you're sending signals. And what this guy, this false teacher, it's not that false. Maybe he's okay. Maybe some of what he says is true. I think you can't, I think you have nothing to do with such a person.

[65:33] I don't mean proud, harsh, self-righteous. But I mean, no, you pay attention to that and say, no, I'm not going to participate in that. I'm not going to send any, I'm not going to do anything that would make other people watching me say, huh, that's odd.

He seems to be friends with this guy. Maybe that guy's not so bad after all. You can't, you can't do that. So that, that's, I don't know, I'm sure there are other details that, obviously, that I'm not aware of.

But it sounds bizarre to me. And I think it's very, that's very unwise. At best, unwise. Does that answer your question, Imani?

Yeah. Because you have to let your people know. You know, that idea, I am not by any stretch a congregationalist.

Let that be clear. There's not a single verse in the Bible that supports that. And every other verse that speaks about pastors and their relationship with those under their charge.

[66:43] There's, the authority, the responsibility goes one way every single time and never the other way. Nonetheless, there are the two texts that, that congregationalists use.

And I think they, I think they extrapolate from them in very irresponsible ways. Nonetheless, Matthew 18, it says, tell it to the church. Jesus is assuming a synagogue context there that would have had elders.

Synagogues weren't congregational. And later, there's going to be elders in the church. But that doesn't mean that the church isn't a part of it. Right?

In other words, yes, of course you tell it to the church. You involve the church. And on other things, you, you want to benefit from the church.

I mean, you know, it's not like pastors are ruling the people. But we're, we're, we're shepherding them. We're called to do that. We want to, we want to benefit though from the wisdom of our congregation. When we have an elder, someone we're going to appoint as an elder, we give that name to our church.

[67:49] And give, and if anyone comes to us and say, is there anything, any, would you have any reason why you would not affirm this person? And if someone came to us and says, well, you know, I've had this interaction or I know this about him, or two or three came to us, we wouldn't make that guy an elder until we got to the bottom of that.

But we don't turn the decision over to the congregation. I just don't think the Bible lets us do that, even though we involve them. So with, with church discipline, you, you tell it to the church. In other words, your church needs to know how we are viewing people's spiritual state.

And if, and if that person just leaves and they, they reject the faith, then we would, we would let people know, yeah, we, we are, this person has left the church, you know, in whatever context, maybe a members meeting.

But, you know, this person has, is no longer part of our church. They, they have left the faith. And so it's, it's, do we excommunicate them?

I'm not sure it's quite excommunication as it is just letting people know, this person says they're a non-believer and we, and so they're, they're not part of this church anymore.

[69:02] Let's pray for them. And let's appeal to, if you know, if you have a relationship with them, use that relationship to, to care, to, to, to, to appeal to them.

It's not, it's not so much cat removing them from the fellowship because they remove themselves. You see what I'm saying? So is it excommunication? Kind of.

We remove them from the church roles. We remove them from membership. We let people know what state they're in that they have left the church. But the dynamic is a little, or at least the mechanics of it are a little, a little different than many other church discipline situations.

Let me try this. So if a person just leaves the faith, we do discipline them, meaning we communicate that we no longer consider them a believer.

We no longer consider them as part of our church. Now they may be down the road and go, I don't care what you say, forget you, whatever. You know, so it's not like they're not open to our appeals.

[70:08] You know, they're, they're just like, I'm done with all this God stuff, guys. Leave me alone. You want to discipline me? Do whatever you want to do and I'm gone. But yeah, so we were, we are disciplining them.

We're excommunicating them. We're saying they're a non-believer. They're not part of this, this church anymore. But the dynamic in terms of our communication with them might be a little different than a guy that we're appealing to and appealing to and saying, sorry, bro.

You know, we're, we're going to excommunicate you. So that, if you've got just a professing, a person who's, who's a believer and seems to love the Lord, but leaves our church for, to go to another church.

We're not necessarily going to discipline that, that person. But what we, we, what we will do is communicate to the, what we might do depends on the situation.

But let's say that they're leaving with an unresolved offense or something like that. I'm probably going to have a conversation with that pastor that they're going.

[71:12] Just want you to know. They're not leaving on a good terms. But that didn't mean I excommunicate them because I consider them a non-believer.

I don't think it fits into those, those categories we were teasing out of unrepentant gross immorality, especially that's public, propagating heresy, divisiveness.

Well, I mean, I think what you said ideally is exactly what I would, I would agree with that. You know, ideally, you know, this, someone's in your church and they're going to stay in your church and thrive as a Christian.

Or if they relocate somewhere else, then you send them with your blessing and you know they have a value of the local church and you're encouraging. Have you looked at churches yet? Yeah, I've got, you know, I've got a church in mind where I'm checking out a future.

Okay, good. Be sure, you know, be sure you get that church, be sure you get into a church quickly. You don't want to drift, et cetera. And they're like, yeah, yeah, yeah. Okay, that's great. You can bless that person. Or they leave in sin and they're unrepentant and you church discipline them.

[72:29] Those are the, I think those are the two main options. But I do think there's, life is messy. And what if that person leaves but you believe they're a Christian and they didn't leave on the best terms and they didn't, maybe they've got an offense with someone in your church and they didn't really sort that out like they should have.

And they just, well, I'm going to this other church now. You know, you might appeal to them, but am I going to discipline them because it wasn't perfect?

I don't think I'm going to discipline them. I've got a category for someone changing churches and not doing it perfectly. I think you've got to be careful wielding church discipline because what you're saying about that person is we believe they're a non-believer.

Their life is a, their lifestyle is not consistent with their profession. So I think the kinds of sins, let me show you one other place that is suggestive for sins and it's going to be in the next chapter of 1 Corinthians.

Now Paul doesn't relate this to, to church discipline, but I think it, I think it's a pretty good guide that fits with what we just teased out.

[73:51] Look at 1 Corinthians 6. Do you not know that the unrighteous, verse 9, do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived, neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkers, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

Those are, that's a pretty good list of, would you discipline for those kinds of things? I think so. I think for all of those. And we're going to mention this in a few minutes, but it's interesting, Paul, he uses nouns there. He doesn't say neither, you know, do not be deceived, neither those who commit an immoral act will inherit the kingdom of God.

No, he uses nouns. The sexually immoral, idolaters, adulterers. In other words, he uses nouns to indicate that these are people who are, this characterizes their life.

This is what they do. They are sexually immoral. This is how they live. He's not talking about someone who falls into a sin and repents. These are people who, this characterizes their lifestyle.

[75:12] Okay? They will not inherit the kingdom of God if they do these things. Now, if someone leaves my church under less than perfect circumstances, but I believe they love the Lord, they're going to go to another church, I'm not saying you're not going to inherit the kingdom of God.

And so we discipline you. So I do think there's a third category, and I've been a pastor long enough to know. It just happens. And I've had interactions with people who did that, and they left, not in the greatest thing, but they found another church, and they ended up thriving, and they come back later and go, you know, I didn't handle it that good.

Will you forgive me? Sure. So, that's kind of a third category that just, you just are faced with sometimes.

Yeah, I just don't, again, I think an over-rigorous application, or a mechanical, so I get a little, and I'm not criticizing the church or the pastors.

I don't know the church. I might actually know the church, but I'm just saying, if a pastoral team said, okay, there's only two ways people leave. They either leave with our full blessing and go to another church, or because they're relocating, or we're disciplining them.

[76:31] I just think that's unwise. I've been a pastor too long. There's a lot of, there's stuff in between. And a wife has a conflict with someone in the church, and she's struggling, and they can't work it out, and the husband is like, you know what, I just, this is not serving her, and we're going to go to this other church, and we're going to get help there, and it's like, you know, you might reach after, okay.

Yeah, well, a couple of things. One, this is very common in the States, in our culture, where, because the church, the evangelical church is so weak, and there's such a weak ecclesiology, that it is not unusual for someone who undergoes church discipline to be able to go to another church.

And what we would do in that situation is we would contact that pastor and let him know. But I've seen situations where it didn't matter, and they took them in. We disciplined them.

There's nothing else you can do. You see what I'm saying? You have been faithful. This is a fallen, broken world. And Jesus never promises us that if you do church discipline faithfully, it's all going to be perfect.

You know, it's not. And so we've disciplined people. It sounds like we've done it a lot. We have it. But when we have disciplined people, I've seen people go, fine, whatever.

[78:07] I don't care. I don't care. And then end up in another church somewhere. And it's like, you can only do so much. Your responsibility is for your church.

And your responsibility is for that person to treat them as faithfully as you can. But if they leave you and turn from you and go elsewhere and remove themselves fully from your influence, you're not responsible for them after that.

I mean, there's nothing you can do. You can't make someone repent. You can't make another church. Pastors might think, well, yeah, this church, they're kind of harsh.

They're kind of rigorous on this. We'll take them in and love them. That happens. And so there's only so much you can do.

You have to be faithful, though, and know that God will. You will never obey the Lord without there being blessing. And you will never disobey the Lord without there being some consequence.

[79:17] God's merciful, but God is not mocked, right? We reap what we sow. So you have to be faithful. Yeah, you do.

You do. I mean, you do not. You do not discipline repentant people. They're not on probation with the Lord. I mean, they're sincere. They've repented.

You don't. Okay. Well, we'll see. You don't put them on probation. You welcome them back joyfully. Yeah, it would be, I think, a misuse of church discipline to use it as a way to manipulate someone or hold their sin over them in a way that the Lord doesn't.

Yeah. It could be, you know, if you have someone who does that and then they fall again, they fall. And pretty soon, once you see an entrenched pattern in someone's life that you start thinking, now, wait a minute.

Their repentance is not repentance. Then maybe you discipline someone after a period of time where it just becomes clear they're playing games with you. You know what I mean?

[80:42] So I could imagine that, disciplining someone like that, perhaps. But it would take some time, I think, to get there. You'd have to be clear on that. Again, remember Paul's language in 1 Corinthians 5 and how serious it is turning someone over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh.

Church discipline is serious business. And so we approach it soberly and in the fear of the Lord and humbly and patiently, but biblically.

We don't want to be cowards about it either. We can't be.