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1 Corinthians 5 Taking Sin Seriously

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July 10, 2024

All right. Let's open our Bibles tonight, 1 Corinthians 5, as we continue our study through this letter.

Paul wrote this letter from Ephesus several years after, really, the church had been planted. It was occasioned by a couple of visits from a home church leader as well as three gentlemen who had come to Paul in Ephesus and had begun to share the difficulties that they had been facing in the body. There were divisions and lawsuits before the world, divorce, the pride, and gifts, the favoritism in picking teachers who had come and gone, questions about the resurrection, immoral lifestyles being allowed (as we'll look at tonight). It was a pretty sad state of affairs for a church that really wasn't that old yet, but somehow being planted in a very worldly city, the attitudes and the practices of the city had really found their way amongst the saints.

Paul wrote them at least three letters. Two of them we have; one of them is referenced in verse 9 of this chapter (that Paul wrote). All of them are very corrective because they had a lot of problems. It was a young church. He had been there planting this church for eighteen months. I think when we started the series on 1 Corinthians we talked to you about how Paul got here. But you know his ministry in Europe had not been without great suffering, and nearly every place that he went, he didn't last very long before he was chased out of Dodge or people were out to hurt him, and finally he was, for his own safety, sent ahead, and he spent what was probably months here by himself. And you get the impression, as you read through, that Paul was very discouraged (if you read the book of Acts). He was very, I won't say noncommittal because that isn't Paul, but he was very hesitant to be too loud about his faith and his sharing because it had resulted in such difficulty. And so it wasn't really until his team showed up that he was bold and began to speak. But he was still very worried about every town had gone so poorly. It was at one of those awesome times when Jesus came to Paul and said, "Look, I've got a lot of souls in the city. No one's going to hurt you. Preach, man." I don't know if he said "man," but that's the way I read it. And Paul did. And for a year and a half he ministered, God protected him without fear, and a lot of folks were reached.

So by the time he writes this letter, which is at least the second letter that he wrote (we don't have the first one), Paul began in the first nine verses or so very optimistic. He had great confidence in what the Lord had done. He knew that even though the reports were disappointing that the Lord had done a work there. He had seen – and he mentions it – the evidence of God's Spirit in the lives of the saints there. He trusted that the Lord would finish what He began. But then, in verse 10, he goes after the first of many topics. In fact, for the next seven or eight chapters from where we're at, he almost picks one subject a chapter to deal with.

But beginning in verse 10 of chapter 1, Paul begins to talk about division, and he really did that through the end of chapter 4. The division for the most part was taking sides. Paul was a pretty simple man. He had determined, whether he had learned it or not early on, he wasn't just going to come and preach with great words; he was just going to share the gospel in simple terms and trust the Lord was going to work. At Mars Hill he had tried to kind of meet people where they were at, use some of their own gods and poets, and the results were fairly disappointing. I think he showed up here kind of just, "Lord, You gotta work!" And so Paul began to share, and he wasn't that eloquent though he could have been. When Apollos came to take his place, he was a very good preacher. He seemed to have a real knack for sharing; people were drawn to him. Cephas also taught in the body there. So people started to talk about who they aligned with, who they liked better. They began to boast in one another, and Paul (in chapter 2) said, "Look, let me use me as an example. I don't come with highbrow words of worldly wisdom or oration and all. But I just want to preach the simple word of God and rely on the Holy Spirit," and that's how this church – this Corinthian fellowship – got started. And so Paul was determined, like I said, to stick with God's Word and to trust in the Lord's Spirit. Paul eventually said (in chapter 3) to them, "You're carnal Christians." Kind of came up with a new term. "You're saved, but you're not growing. You should have been old enough to teach others, but you're like little babies. You can just have milk, and that's about it." And he began to talk to them about how God would one day come and judge the hearts and the intents of His people and that there would be rewards waiting for those who, by His verdict, had served Him with pure hearts and all. But Paul was very disappointed and yet very kind in the way that he shared. He gave them counsel how they might be delivered from this fleshly dividing thing. He talked to them in chapter 3 about having a right view of yourself and a right view of others and then ultimately a right view of the Lord. And then in chapter 4 he said, "God will judge one day. I don't judge myself because even my own judgments are probably going to be poor and flawed. But one day the Lord is going to come, and He's going to show who we are, and His judgment will be clear." So he ended last week in chapter 4, beginning in about verse 6 or so, and he spoke to them very sternly. He compared the worldly ambitions and hopes with the reality of life that he was experiencing as an apostle. While they were vying for, "I like Paul," and, "I like Cephas," and, "We're over here with Apollos, and we're the smarter of the three," and there was a great bunch of consternation, he said, "Why don't you consider us, me and the other apostles who have suffered so much for serving Jesus? You want to live this kind of life? You have ten thousand instructors that'll teach you, but there are very few fathers," and he loved them as a father did. And so he sent Timothy to remind them again of this life in the Spirit.

And so beginning in chapter 5 – and I hope we'll finish the chapter today because it's kind of one subject – Paul turns from division in the church to discipline in the church. From division to discipline. Now, though we are not allowed biblically to judge a man's motive or his intent – because both of those are really in God's purview, He knows the heart, we do not – we are called to judge outward behavior. We are certainly able to see what is going on and make a proper judgment. And certainly one of the problems in

this church – and it’s mentioned in both letters – was this flagrant kind of immoral situation that everyone knew about (it was common knowledge), but nothing had been done, and so the church found itself kind of harboring sin. And you could almost name this chapter “Taking Sin Seriously” because the church there was not.

So chapter 5 focuses our attention on the need for the church to set up, to stand with godly standards, to pursue them, to not really allow sin to get a foothold in the body as a whole, that we have to take sin seriously. And what was being tolerated in this body of believers.....and if it’s left unchecked, it’s just going to destroy rather than strengthen. But this church was very proud of their liberal views of life; they were very proud of their open policies about the way things were going. And fitting it into that culture of Corinth, you can understand how that might have been a temptation. But, look, we live in Corinth today, don’t we? I mean, if it’s not worse, it has to be as bad I would think. So what do we do? What must we do? What can we do?

Verse 1 – you never thought we’d get there, but, look, here we are already, Paul said, “It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you; and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles – that a man has his father’s wife! And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you.” Two culprits here. Number one – the fellow there in the fellowship; number two – the church itself, the Corinthians. The sin was fleshly, it was flagrant, and it was apparently known by all. Paul, in almost shocking words, uses (in Greek), “It is actually reported about you that you know about this. This wasn’t, to you, horrific; it was common knowledge.” And the worst part was that no one had stepped in, in the church, God’s place of worship, the gathering of His people, to address it, to deal with it, to confront it, if you will. Sexual immorality. The word “porneia,” in Greek, is really a word that is used of any kind of illicit sexual behavior. It’s a very broad word. In this case, that is defined as a man who has his father’s wife or, if you will, a man who is having an illicit sexual affair with his father’s wife or his step-mother. In the Old Testament, Leviticus in particular – chapter 18, that came with a death penalty. That was obviously something that God wanted to deal with. We assume, from the text itself, that the woman was probably an unbeliever, and we assume that because she is not addressed here. But his relationship was current, and everyone knew about it, and the lesson here, really, in the chapter is what does the church do as a response? It really...the focus is on the church itself.

Paul defines this horrible sin as a sin that was not ever even named among the Gentiles. Look, the Romans and the Greeks, culturally, were unscrupulously immoral. I mean, you could probably define that culture by just making a list of everything that you see as a vice. Except this one. This was, even in Greek writings, non-biblical writings, there was a deplorable issue when it came to his kind of relationship. And this was an ongoing sin in the church who was aware of it, and from Paul’s standpoint, this was a sin that even the world around them was appalled by. It’s kind of like the world went, “Uggghhh,” the church went, “Well, we’re open to everything. We want to love everyone.” And they kind of had let it go. No wonder a watching world turns away when this is the kind of witness that they saw. And notice that the word “has” in verse 1,

is present tense, which means that this was an ongoing relationship that was persistent. This was no one-night stand. This was no error in judgment. This was a daily, decisive, repeated lifestyle choice. This is a way of life that was chosen by this gentleman in the church and his father's wife. Maybe they were sitting together at church, sitting in the pews, everyone smiled; maybe they had communion together; they showed up at the potlucks, he and his step-mother. "All is well, let's go to dinner." And Paul said, "I can't believe that this is actually being allowed by you all." And the church saw nothing wrong in it, I suspect chalking it up as tolerant, "We love everyone." And notice Paul writes here, "You're puffed up rather than mourning. You're proud of yourself rather than broken-hearted about this thing. And this sinful behavior in your church should be breaking your heart." The word "mourn" here – there's four distinct words for "mourn" in Greek, well, there's more, but those are the four that are most often used – this is a very strong word. It literally means the kind of pain that you experience when someone that you love dies. Instead of being that kind of broken-hearted, "You're puffed up." The word "puffed up" usually means exalted in your own eyes. "You're proud of yourself. You're proud of your tolerant, liberal, broad view." A church has developed a worldly view, and there's none worse than this. In this therapeutic age in which we live, oftentimes, unfortunately, the church is looked at as a support group rather than a holy gathering of saints. Right? Rather than the body of Christ. Confronting sin is very rare, even if it's public, even if it's ongoing, even if it's offensive. And we want to be known for our love, and no one really wants to get involved. And yet, part of the protection that we have from the world and the enemy is to be in fellowship – where our brothers and sisters can say, "Hey, dude, seriously. What're you doin'?" And confront us and help us and keep us in line.

But if the church doesn't mourn sin – now again, this is not just tripping and falling, this is a lifestyle choice that is continually a part of this gentleman's life and the life of the church – but if the church doesn't mourn, then the church will soon be shipwrecked. When Jesus wrote that letter to the Thyatira church, He started off in verses 18 and 19 of chapter 2 of Revelation talking about how promising and how it sounded so good when you start to read and how faithful they'd been and how they'd been diligent in their relationship with the Lord, and then you get to verse 20, and the Lord said, "But someone in your church claiming to speak for the Lord has caused you to accept these kinds of sexual immorality and idolatry without restraint," and that's what is the downfall of this fellowship. And it became a place that was being consumed by sin.

So here's the church in Corinth. They're having a hard time. Paul is in Ephesus planting a church, hearing from several folks from this church, has a heart for them, loves them, but it's a hard place to have a church, and it is even a harder place to stay close to the Lord, it seems.

So they were tolerating immorality, and instead of purging themselves from it, they were embracing it.

Paul, in Ephesus, would later write to the Ephesian church and say that they should (Ephesians 5:2-5), "Walk in love, as Christ loved them and gave Himself for them, as a sweet-smelling sacrifice and an aroma." But then he said, "Make sure that fornication

and uncleanness and covetousness are not named among you, for no fornicator is going to inherit the kingdom of Christ.” He was warning them, and I suspect, having had to deal with this from Corinth, it might very well still have been in his heart. But, needless to say, we’re not allowed by the Lord, as God’s people, to just tolerate habitual sin in the lives of others.

By the time that Paul finishes this second letter to them, there were still folks in the church that were living with very open hearts about it. In fact, you can read ahead in chapter 12:20 of 2 Corinthians where Paul said, “I’m afraid that if I come to you, I’m going to find there’s still going to be these contentions and fornication and lewdness that you’ve been practicing. I’m afraid that I’ll still find it there.” It didn’t just change because they got a couple of letters. This was an ongoing issue, and it certainly seems to be one that we’re always going to be up against.

His suggestion, here in verse 2, is “that he who has done this thing might be put away from or taken away from among you.” In other words, there’s really no room in the church body for living in this kind of sin. It’s one thing to struggle. It’s one thing to be weak. It’s another thing to openly and flagrantly defend your position when you know that it’s sinful and have no one say to you, “Boy, you’re goin’ down the wrong road here,” and demand that no one judge..... “Don’t you judge me for this!” Well, I’m not, but here’s what the Bible has to say. Paul was indignant.

He said, in verse 3, “For I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged (as though I were present) him who has so done this deed. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.” “I’ve already made up my mind about him, and I’m not there physically, but I’ll stand with you in spirit. You’ve got to do something about this. You guys gotta act. This is not healthy for you, and he’s gotta go.” In fact notice, in verses 4 and 5, this serious offense that should not be tolerated. Paul said, “deliver him to such a one as Satan” so he could have his flesh destroyed and so he could be saved in that day of judgment. Or, if you will, put him back out in the world. Get him out from the midst of the saints. He’s not walking with God’s people. He doesn’t care what God thinks. The only hope that we have is he’ll get out in the world and taste what life in the world is like, and he’ll want to get away from the kind of lifestyle that he’s chosen. But now he’ll have it without the support and love of the people of God. Their love will now be translated into action.

That’s love in a nutshell, you know? When Paul wrote to the Hebrews in chapter 12:5-6, he said, “Look, don’t despise the chastening of the LORD, for if the LORD loves you, He chastens you.” This is true love. If you see someone down this road, and you warn them, that’s really loving them. Now they might not love you back. It’s a hard ministry. And nobody’s called to the ministry of rebuke. I know some of you think you are; you’re not. That’s not even a gift. But in your relationship with people that you know, it’s certainly important that you don’t just look at your own life but look at the lives of those around you. We’ve got to get there together. There’s a road, right, that we’re on, and

there're a lot of ways to fall down that road. So we have to watch out for one another, to really look out for each other, if you will.

So I think it was Wiersbe who said that "church discipline is not a group of pious policemen out to catch a criminal but rather it's a group of broken-hearted brothers and sisters seeking to restore an erring family member." And I think that's the case. If a church member refuses to face his sin, eventually, at least from Matthew 18 where Jesus gives us great direction on church discipline, the end result is he has to be asked to leave the church because we cannot and we should not and we must not just allow sin to go uncontested. We're all in this together, man, we're all fightin' the enemy and the flesh and the world. But we can do it together. Strength in numbers, isn't there?

If you go back to Matthew 18, and you read there that Jesus said, "If your brother sins against you, you go tell him his fault. Keep it between you and him. If he'll listen to you, you've gained a brother. Now if he won't listen and he continues, then," He says, "I want you to take one or two people with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word can be established." He's not suggesting you take your friends and gang up on somebody; He's suggesting you find a couple of people who are arbitrary and willing to judge righteously and kind of put a little bit more pressure on that person in the church who is not doing well. Jesus continued on, and He said, "If he still won't listen, then go tell the church, and if he won't listen to the church, as a whole, let him be to you like a tax collector or like a heathen." And then the Lord said this, "Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." And then a verse that everyone takes out of context, "Wherever two or more are gathered together, I am in their midst." It's given to us in the context of church discipline. In other words, the Lord said, "If you, as a church leadership, ask someone to step out because of their sin that they've been confronted with and all, and they don't listen, then you ask them to leave, put them outside of the fellowship, deliver them to Satan," if you will, "where he runs the show out there." And then the Lord said, "If you agree together to do this, I'll stand with you." I hear that verse all the time, "Oh, we're praying.....wherever two or more....." No. If you pray by yourself, you'll be fine. It's just a completely misquoted Scripture. But, needless to say, "I'm with you even in the midst." It is a promise from the Lord to stand with them.

So, church discipline is a process that begins with a single saint and may end up with the expulsion from an entire congregation. And Paul speaks of that last step here. Right? This has been going on a long time. The whole church was aware of it. The Lord needed to be honored through it. They hadn't acted upon it. And so Paul says, "Put him out there in the world so that his spirit might be saved." You know, the only – and maybe the first and only – driving force behind church discipline is the love of an individual and the desire for their restoration. It's all we really should care about. We want to all get there the way that the Lord would be honored. Right? We want to keep Him first. "If a man is overtaken in a trespass, you that are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of gentleness, and keep an eye on yourself because you could fall, too" (Galatians 6:1). Be merciful. Right? Be kind.

I think the church, as God's family and God's people, we have to be looking out for one another, and we're all susceptible to falling, and we need help. But if the sin is public – and notice here the sin is public – Paul calls on them to deal with it publicly. We don't have to tell the whole church. We have to deal with those who are touched by the individual.

Over the years we've been involved with churches that had pastors go bad. I was involved with one years ago that the pastor of the singles ministry got involved with a woman, got her pregnant, just denied the whole thing. And so when we found out – and he wasn't going to repent, he could have cared less about what we thought – so I went in front of the singles group, and I said, "Look, this is what happened, this is the guy. We've asked him to do these things. We'd love to have him sit and grow and get through this. But he doesn't want to." But we didn't go tell the whole church. We went and told the singles group; that's where he was involved.

So I think it's important that we minister to the people that have been affected by that. I think when Paul wrote his first letter to Timothy there in Ephesus, as the pastor (1 Timothy 5:19-20), "Don't receive an accusation against an elder unless there're two or three witnesses. And if you rebuke those in the presence of all, that all may fear." So he warns us. Do it without prejudice. But there's something to be said for us policing ourselves and trying to keep us together in our walks with the Lord that would honor Him.

Verse 5, "deliver him to Satan." You know, Paul urges them to excommunicate this man, to put him out in the world, out from under the protection or the umbrella, if you will, of the church, out there where Satan runs the world. Why? Because, really, alienation from the life in the church and fellowship without the love and support and love and hope and joy that you can find here, hopefully he'll get out there and go, "I miss people really loving me. I miss what I once had."

There've only been three times in our 40-year history where we've asked someone to leave the church because of the lifestyle that they've chosen, and they chose to make it public. And none of them have been easy. To be honest with you, none of them have gone well. But I think we did the right thing. And all of them involved adultery, which is interesting. But church discipline is mercy in its severest form. It's the highest good. It's what God approves because we're out to get someone back who is being tripped up.

The word "deliver," "paradidomi," means to hand over to somebody else. Hand him over to the enemy. Let him go and live that kind of life in the world where it is approved. Take him there. I think Paul, when he wrote to Timothy – because Timothy had taken over the Ephesian church – he warned him about some folks who had made the faith shipwrecked (I think he called it), and he mentioned a guy named Alexander and Hymenaeus, and he said (1 Timothy 1:19-20), "I've delivered them to Satan so they might learn not to blaspheme," or, "I've asked them to get out of the church because they're just bringing ruin to those things that are around them." I think it's important that,

in reality, church discipline and expulsion only give the wayward what they want, and yet, hopefully, as they pursue it with vigor, they'll desire to come back to where they need to be. It separates you and me from the wayward heart, and it sets a good example.

Now, here, let me give you the practical application here. The three times that we've been involved with that over the years.....because we live in Southern California, there're 100 churches within 10 miles of here you can go to. And that's what happened, you know? It's almost futile to put them out because unrepentant folks just find another place for fellowship. They sit down, everything is fine, the shame is gone. They can pretend as if all is well. Well, I can't do anything about that. Unfortunately when they get to the new place, they often act like the victims rather than the sinner that they've chosen.

So, when Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, he said, "Look, if anyone doesn't obey the words of this epistle, note them, have no companionship with them so that they might be ashamed. Yet don't treat them or count them as an enemy; instead admonish them as a brother" (2 Thessalonians 3:14-15). In other words, our attitude should always be one of restoration and kindness. We're not looking to get even. We're just looking to get them back.

And so there's a lot to be said in the Scriptures in regards to how we go about..... you know? But notice verse 9 here. Paul said, "I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people." And he'll say that again here in a moment. The sin does not need to be against us; it needs to be against God's ways. It isn't you..... "Well, they've always been nice to me." That's not the issue. The issue is how are they doing and are you caring for them and loving them? Are you treating them as family? I think we have to – with one another's walks – take a stand for the Lord. Tough love is still love. And oftentimes the cure for choosing sin is to go out and have that lifestyle. "Okay, you want sin, go have it. Have your way. Enjoy your life. Date the unbeliever, take the drugs, go to the clubs, get in the bars. Get it out of your system. I hope you'll see that this is not going to work. The door'll be open the minute you want to just come and walk with Jesus again. That's our prayer for you."

On the flip side, if people repent they ought to be received and restored. Now, we meet this man without a name, situationally. He does repent eventually, and when he does, the people are very slow to embrace him. I suspect it was a very caustic time for a while. There were a lot of hurt feelings and maybe words that shouldn't have been shared. But if you get to 2 Corinthians 2, beginning in verse 5, Paul kind of goes after the church again, and he said, "Look, the punishment which you've afflicted by the majority is sufficient for this man. So, look, he's ready to come back, so forgive him and love him lest he be swallowed up with too much sorrow, and reaffirm your love for him. I forgive him. You should forgive him lest Satan take advantage of us because we're not ignorant of the way that he works." So, it's a tough gig. The whole process can be replete with difficulty and danger, but we've got to watch out for each other and have a lot of joy when people repent. Now we've had people in church we've confronted, and they go, "Oh, we're sorry, we're gonna straighten it out," and it lasts for about three

weeks. And then they're back at it again, and in six more weeks, you just.....love believes a lot of things. So it hides a multitude of sins (1 Peter 4:8). So Paul tells us to treat them as brethren when he writes to the Philippians. Love them as family. Stand with them.

Now, if you've read Matthew 7 before, you know that we are not allowed to, like I said, judge motive and intent. But this isn't that issue. This issue is outward behavior that can certainly be judged – lifestyle choices, openly. Look, all of us are sinning daily, but I think most of us would like to not do that. This situation is different. This is flagrant. This is stick-it-in-your-ear, buddy, you know, this is the way we're gonna live.

Verse 6 Paul says, "Your glorying is not good." Remember, back in verse 2 they were very proud of themselves for being so liberal. "Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." Discipline can be necessary, and it can certainly be severe. But the consequences of not doing anything are far worse. And Paul says so here. If we just let it go, one becomes two becomes five becomes ten, and the enemy gets a foothold, and then he moves in and takes over. "Your glorying is not good. Your liberal tolerance and acceptance is not good." Why? It's going to pollute you. Sin is almost spiritual malignancy, you know? If you don't catch it early and get rid of it, it's going to spread. That's always been the case. So we would do well to watch over each other.

The typical example that Paul uses of leaven or yeast that you put in the dough, and it spreads, and it makes the dough rise, working through rotting, it becomes – almost throughout the Bible – a biblical simile for sin and the ability that it has to rot everything around it or to have great amounts of influence. I think verse 6 is almost the biblical version of one bad apple spoils the whole barrel. Sin spreads. Get rid of it! You used to be dominated by sin, but you're not anymore. You're unleavened now. God has delivered you from that sinful lifestyle. And so a little leaven.....you let a little sin go, it can eventually infiltrate the whole church.

And notice Paul uses these words "don't you know?" which Jesus used them, too. They're very powerful. It's almost like an insult, like, "Are you dumb enough not to know this? Don't you know?" I always read it that same way. The Lord did it with the Pharisees a lot. At Passover time, the Feast of Unleavened Bread immediately followed the sacrifice of the Passover Lamb. So in preparation of that, the Jews would hunt through the house to get rid of every vestige of leaven, a type of sin, because the Passover represented their deliverance from the old life in Egypt, from the bondage that they were in there. They were now going to get a new life under God's care, headed for the Land of Promise. But the leaven of sin left behind, it can wear us out. And we've been cleaned. We have Jesus, the Passover Lamb who has paid the price. So we should "purge out." The word "purge out" is the same word that you find (in the Hebrew sense) of cleaning out or removing entirely. In this case, what? An illicit relationship

known by all and left to be fine because the Lord will help us to overcome sin. And we're truly unleavened. Our practice needs to measure up to who we are. Right? God has cleansed us. Let's try to be pure together, and let's encourage each other to do just that.

I was thinking about that.....you're truly unleavened, you know? When Achan stole, there in the Old Testament in Joshua 7, his unwillingness to be honest with the LORD led to the destruction of his entire family. His sin ruined a lot of people's lives. Leaving sin in our midst can ruin a lot of folks' lives. You know, the young people that look up to you, the young Christian that wants to know what the Lord wants.

So Paul says to them, in verse 8, "Keep the feast." Celebrate what God has done through His Son, and gather, not with the old leaven of malice or wickedness, not the old ways of life, not the evil motives of life, but a life that's sincere and honest and devoid of sinfulness. We're called to worship Jesus, doing the right things rather than allowing sin to be paraded about.

Well, then, Paul continues, and he says, in verse 9, "I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people." Apparently in the letter that Paul wrote that preceded this one, he had had to deal with this before. "I've told you." And yet this is 1 Corinthians. "I've told you." So this open sin thing was going on already, apparently, and Paul had written them, and it had fallen, kind of, on deaf ears. And so he says that again, here in verse 9, and he uses the word "keeping company." The word there – it's a long, complicated Greek word, a compound word – but it means to mix together or to be intimately in contact with. Paul, in the context of the chapter, says he wrote to them about separating from professing believers who live like that. But it could have been, at least from what we read in verse 10, that some folks interpreted his first letter, saying, "We should get away from the world. We've got to live completely devoid of the world because the world is full of people like that."

But notice that Paul says, in verse 10, "Yet I certainly did not mean with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner – not even to eat with such a person." Paul says it's not the world you have to separate yourself from but those who say they're saved, those who declare that they know the Lord. Don't have fellowship with them. Why? Because they're not in fellowship with you; they're out there living their own lives apart from God. You really have nothing in common with them in terms of their relations to the Lord.

I have seen in our church and other fellowships the people who have taken a stand against those living in sin and then heard from another person who said, "Yeah, I went to dinner with so-and-so." "What're you doing going to dinner with them, man? They're not walking with the Lord, they're not doing...." "Well, they've never done anything to me." You know? Well, outside the body, in the world, all kinds of sin abounds. You

can find it anywhere. We're not called to be monks or to live apart from the world, but we're supposed to be lights out there. And the best way to be lights in here is to keep each other honest with the things that the enemy would like to take us out with.

So, when I share with people in the world, here's what I never say to them, "You shouldn't cheat on your wife, you shouldn't lie, why are you drunk all the time?" Because that's pretty much the hallmark of an unsaved person. That's what a person does. They live the life of the world. So for me to go after that is foolishness. What I will say is: sin will destroy you, and Jesus came to save you. And I'll try to focus their attention on the Lord's love for them because moral or immoral, when you're not saved, doesn't really make much difference. Everybody has a sliding scale. But once you get saved, then God begins to make clear to you what His intentions are. And I guess I expect the world to be like the world, but I expect the church to be like the church. So we have to address those things to one another, and hopefully we can get there together.

Verse 11, "I've written to you not to keep company with those who call themselves brothers," and he makes a whole list of sinful ways. Again, these are lifestyles. Sins are not sins of occasion. It's not losing my temper, being angry and swearing. It's a daily choice to be an idolater, to be a reviler, to be a drunkard. That's a lifestyle. "Don't eat with them." I want you to read that. "Don't eat with them. Have no fellowship with them." More importantly, confront them. Call them back to a holy life. Though the unbeliever lives in sin and doesn't know it, the believer falls into sin and has to be rescued from it and encouraged to flee and come back to the fellowship and all. So, don't have dinner with them. Maybe that seems trite, but the love of God is what keeps you and me together, isn't it? And so it is serious but vital that the price for sin in the lives of the saints is experienced at the fellowship level. Do you love sin more than you love God? Do you love your relationship with this person more than your relationship with the body? How much will you sacrifice to continue to live that kind of life? And a lot of times, when you put it in those terms, it isn't long before people go, "I don't like this." The world is not for fellowship. Right? The world is for ministry. The backslider has the same definition. He's not for fellowship either. He's for ministry.

So Paul goes on in verse 12, and he says, "For what have I to do with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside? But those who are outside God judges. Therefore 'put away from yourselves the evil person.'" The world God will judge, but we have a responsibility to make good judgments within the church and help each other out. We're co-laborers, right? If there's sin in the camp, let's do this together. And so the Lord says, in verse 13, "Do it. So put away. Act upon this." That's why Jesus came to Calvary. So should we come there. It should be our goal.

So, I know it's not an easy topic. It's even harder to apply because we like everyone to like us. We don't like people to be angry with us. We get these kinds of calls. "Hi, Pastor. This guy is doin' this stuff. You call him." "I don't have his number." (Pastor Jack indicates he hung up the phone.) (Laughing) Don't rat him out to the church. Go take care of it! I can't be the only one not liked. You know what I mean? (Laughing)

Share the burden. Now this is a thing we've got to do together. We're family, are we not? Okay. Let's pray.
Submitted by Maureen Dickson
July 15, 2024