

TITLE: PURITY IN THE CHURCH (JUDGING & DISCIPLINING)

TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 5

INTRO: Several years ago I began worshipping at a congregation that had gone through a split 6 months earlier. I was told that the 2 of the men had been cheating on their wives. Both knew the other's sin, but had a "gentlemen's agreement" not to tell. How would the congregation have felt if they had known? How would they have responded?

I. SIN IN THE CHURCH – A SPECIFIC ISSUE (v. 1-8):

A. The problem – fornication & pride (v. 1-2)

1. (v. 1) The sinner's problem (fornication)
 - a. *It is reported* (heard, probably from the house of Chloe–**1:11**) *commonly* (completely, utterly; i.e., it is well known) *fornication is among you*.
 - b. *One has his father's wife* (incest). This is his stepmother, otherwise why say "father's wife"? Is the father still alive? Seems he is (**2 Cor 7:12** - he that "suffered wrong"). What are the real details of this sin? I personally don't want to know! The fact is that their action qualifies as "fornication," which is sin!
 - c. *And such fornication as is not even named among the Gentiles!* **Any** fornication in members of the church is wrong – one type isn't worse to God than another (sin is sin). However, in *human* estimation, what was happening at Corinth was *excessively* bad! The *Gentiles* don't even consider this action acceptable (doesn't mean it didn't happen though)!
2. (v. 2) The church's problem (pride)
 - a. *You're puffed up* (arrogant, haughty–**4:18**)! Not only was it was happening, and they were accepting it, but they seemed to be **proud** of it! It's one thing to suspect a member is sinning. It's different to know it (need to address it). What about knowing it and not addressing it? This is wrong, but understandable (difficult to do). But it's not even fathomable that the church knows it, accepts it, and is even proud of it! This is a SERIOUS problem (who's worse in this case, the erring member or the church?)!!!!
 - b. *You should've mourned* (grieved) – With a sinner, godly sorrow for his sin is what causes him to fix it (**2 Cor 7:10**). This is also true regarding the church and its discipline.
 - c. *This violator should've been taken away* (removed from your midst) *from you* (the church).
 - i. "*He*" – apparently *she* wasn't a Christian – and therefore not to be judged as such– **v. 12-13**).
 - ii. The church doesn't withdraw fellowship from every member that sins! All members sin. But most aren't *living* in that sin. We realize our sin and repent of it on our own. Otherwise, the church must try to restore us (**Gal 6:1**).
 - iii. Discipline is necessary when a member *will not* repent on his own.
 - iv. There seems to be the knowledge on Paul's part that this man is *not* going to repent w/out being disfellowshipped. Children are a good example of this. Even though a child knows that something he did was wrong, many times it takes punishment to cause him to have a change of heart. Otherwise, if an adult doesn't say something, he may assume that what he did isn't that bad after all (he never learns his lesson)! Church members are no different!

B. The solution – disfellowship (v. 3-8)

1. (v. 3-5) The benefit for the sinner

(v. 3) *Though absent in body but present in spirit, I have already judged him.* **You** should've, but didn't; so I have! This situation is not that difficult to judge. I don't even need to be present physically to make the call! So why couldn't *you*?

(v. 4-5) You didn't discipline him, but now you must.

 - a. How: *In the name of Jesus Christ* (this is with Jesus' authority). Discipline is part of Jesus' will for the church!
 - b. When: *When you're gathered together* (not to be done secretly; the whole church needs to know and be involved, and must agree on this action–**1:10**). *And my spirit* (I'm w/you in spirit–**v.3**).
 - c. What: *To deliver...unto Satan* – Satan works through the temptations of sin (the works of the flesh). Sin is often referred to as "fleshly" (carnal–**3:1**; works of the flesh–**Gal 5:19**). Christians are to be spiritual, not fleshly, and we are **not** to have one foot in both! So since disfellowshipping someone is removing him from among the church (**v.2**), it is also to remove him from the *spiritual*. He is being handed over to the fleshly, to Satan. **2 Thess 3:14-15**–*And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him* (same word as in **v. 9**), *that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother* (it's not "excommunication!").
 - d. Why: *Destruction of the flesh, and saving of the spirit.* Many members will say, "but isn't this just making it worse for him?" This man needs to make a decision: Christ or the world? Jesus wanted the Laodiceans to make this same decision – be hot or cold (spiritual or fleshly)! This brother's congregation can help him by *forcing* him to decide. The goal the "*saving of the spirit.*" We want this brother to **repent and return** (**1 Tim 1:20** – *I delivered H&A unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme*). This person now sees the seriousness of his sin – *he* may tolerate it in his life, but it won't be tolerated in the church! The church **must** keep itself pure, so Jesus won't have anything against us (**Rev 2:20** – Thyatira "suffered that woman Jezebel").
2. (v. 6-8) The benefit for the church
 - a. *Your boasting isn't good* (reference to their poor attitude about this problem – accepting instead of disciplining).
 - b. *A little leaven leavens the whole lump* – simple lesson taught from a cooking fact. The leaven is sin. *Purge out the old leaven...ye are unleavened* (Christians don't live in sin any longer).
 - c. *Christ our passover* (lamb) *is sacrificed for us*. Christ is the Christian's Passover. He has been sacrificed. When we partake of Him ("keeping the feast" – partaking of Him through our service & worship) we must be free from all sin (leaven). This is the example Paul gives to show the seriousness of removing sin from the church.

II. PURITY IN THE CHURCH – A GENERAL COMMAND (v. 9-13):

A. A Fellowship issue (v. 9-11)

1. (v. 9) *I wrote unto you in the epistle not to company with (associate with) fornicators.*
 - a. Had Paul written another letter before this one? Some say no – he’s referring to this letter (v.2). Others say yes – it’s the logical conclusion, he says the same thing in **2 Cor 7:8** in reference to 1 Cor, and he seems to make a distinction between this letter and the first in v.11.
 - b. Either way, Paul makes it clear that he has already told them this – don’t associate with fornicators! A fornicator is one who practices any one of the many forms of illicit (unauthorized) sexual activities (i.e., sexual activity with **anyone** or anything *other than* your spouse to whom God has joined you for life)! This is a frequently violated command (then & now). **Don’t associate with them!**
2. (v. 10) Now he clarifies this restriction with them: *Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world.*
 - a. Terms: **1) Fornicators** – already defined. **2) Covetous** – desiring more; eager for gain; defrauder – condemned in **6:10 & Eph 5:5**. **3) Extortioners** – ravenous, greedy, insatiable, robbers – takes “covetous” to the next level! (also condemned in **6:10**). **4) Idolaters** – worshippers of idols. Covetousness is a disease that affects many in the world and in the church. We all need to be aware of our society’s propensity to want more, and fight the desire to conform!
 - b. Paul here is saying, I’ve told you not to associate with these people, but I’m not talking about these people in the world, but in the church! This means that, sadly, there were (and still are) obviously Christians who still practice these things.
 - c. *For then you’d need to leave the world!* What is Paul saying regarding our interactions with these people in the world (as opposed to the church)?
 - First, he’s simply saying that he’s not talking about them! He’s talking about these people in the church.
 - Second, by this Paul isn’t saying to hang out with these kinds of people from work, school, etc. It’s obviously good and wise to watch who we spend our time with, recognizing that “*bad company corrupts good morals*” (**1 Cor 15:33**).
 - He’s saying don’t completely disassociate yourself with non-Christians just because they’re sinners. How can we be lights to the world if we’re not in the world? How are they ever going to trust us if we refuse to spend any time at all with them? But beware how much time you spend with them (who’s influencing whom?)!
3. (v. 11) *I have written unto you not to keep company (don’t associate with), if any that is called a brother be a fornicator....*
 - a. So now he clarifies what he means in this chapter. He’s not talking about the world; he’s talking about Christians. Don’t associate w/Christians who are... He adds *railers* (reviler, abusive) & *drunkards*, both are condemned in **6:10**.
 - b. *With such a one no not to eat.* This is a common meal, not the Lord’s Supper. Eating together has always indicated an acceptance of one another, especially in a religious setting (cf. **Gal 2:11-14** – Peter ate with the Gentiles until the Jews arrived from Jerusalem. Then he stopped, because he recognized it showed acceptance as equals, which many Jews refused to embrace, and therefore wouldn’t eat with the Gentiles).
 - Even today, eating with church members who persist in their sins shows that we accept it!
 - The world needs to see that the church doesn’t tolerate sin (again, this refers to *living* in sin, refusing to repent, not a situation where a Christian sins, repents, and is forgiven).

B. A Judgment issue (v. 12-13)

1. It’s obvious that it requires exercising proper judgment to take the action commanded in this chapter. We see a brother living in sin, we’ve tried to restore him (**Gal 6:1**), but he refuses. Unless he repents, he will perish (**Lk 13:3**). So we “judge” him according to the Word, exercising the appropriate discipline. We are to do this to brethren, but cannot to non-Christians.
2. (v. 12) *What have I to do with judging outsiders (non-Christians)?* I don’t judge them in this same way.
 - a. We can obviously judge what is right & wrong based on God’s Word, which will judge us all (**Jn 12:48**). **Eph 5:11** says to “*have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.*” So we *do* judge the world as being sinful based on the Bible’s standard.
 - b. But this is not the same judgment as what’s happening here with the church. Even Paul says he doesn’t have anything to do with exercising this judgment on the world. How could he question a non-Christian about his/her sinful actions if that person doesn’t even believe in Christ? A non-Christian can live in any and every sin he wishes to (and be lost for it), **until** he desires to be a Christian. **Then**, he must conform his life to the Word. He must be willing to accept judgment – having his actions judged by the church, as well as judging the actions of the church!
3. *Don’t you judge them that are within (Christians)?* This is a rhetorical question! The clear answer is ‘Yes!’ This is seen in **ch. 6** in their responsibilities to judge within the church! Shouldn’t you be handling a situation like this within the church?
4. (v. 13) *God will judge them that are without.* Non-Christians live life in complete opposition of and hatred for God. It is not our job to judge them **the way we do Christians**. A Christian knows better! If he doesn’t we teach him. If he still refuses to repent, we are to *therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person!* As long as he continues his sinning, he is not to be among us!
 - a. His decision will cost him his salvation (**6:9-10**)!
 - b. Our failure to discipline will cost the church its purity, and if not corrected, its lampstand (**Rev 2**).

CONCLUSION: Church discipline (especially disfellowship) is a difficult topic. Nobody enjoys doing it! But sin cannot be allowed to remain in the camp. The best and easiest way to take care of sin in the church is for the sinner himself to repent. Each of us must test ourselves (**2 Cor 13:5**), and remove any leaven! And we must lovingly reprove brethren who won’t, even disfellowshipping if necessary.