

**Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time***

## **Immorality in the Church, Part 2: Disciplining Sin in the Church**

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 5:6-13

Code: 1824

Let's look at 1 Corinthians chapter 5, 1 Corinthians chapter 5. For our visiting friends, let me just say that we believe in just teaching the Word of God. That's what God has called us to do, and we proceed to just go right through the Word of God from book to book, chapter to chapter, verse to verse; and we find ourselves at this point in 1 Corinthians dealing in the 5th chapter with a study of disciplining immorality in the church. If you're here this morning, and you're kind of an outsider looking in, you're not a Christian. You've never committed yourself to Christ, but you're kind of interested, you've come this far. The message that we're going to give this morning is really geared for Christians. It's geared for our church family. We're happy to have you listen in on it and get the inside scoop in what God has to say about some very basic things for the Christian family.

Also, I would add that this sermon is rated PG, so I just wanna say that at the beginning, because of the nature of the subject, so you'll be prepared, and you won't panic when we get into a few things we're gonna discuss.

The title of our subject is "Disciplining Sin in the Church," and that is the subject of the 13 verses that make up the 5th chapter of 1 Corinthians. Now, the Corinthian letter was written by the Apostle Paul, a Jewish apostle, to a group of Christians in the city of Corinth to straighten out their misbehaviors. They had claimed to be believers in Jesus Christ. They had given their lives to Christ; and, yet, they had proceeded to live the kind of life that is inconsistent with what they believe. There were all kinds of sins and problems manifest among them. Paul writes this letter to deal with those problems. One of the problems he has to deal with is the problem of a tolerance of immorality, and that is the theme of chapter 5.

The great missionary, David Brainerd, who spent his life, and a brief life indeed it was. I think he died before the age of 30. Ministering to American Indians, wrote in his journal these words: "I never got away from Jesus and Him crucified, and I found that when my people were gripped by this great evangelical doctrine of Christ and Him crucified, I had no need to give them instructions about morality. I found that one followed as the sure and inevitable fruit of the other." He also said this in another place: "I find my Indians begin to put on the garments of holiness, and their common life begins to be sanctified, even in small matters, when they are possessed by the doctrine of Christ and Him crucified."

What Brainerd was saying was this: that when a Christian realizes who Christ is and what Christ has done for him so graciously as we have been singing about, it tends to have a dramatic effect on his life, not only in salvation, but in holiness. When I celebrate the cross and the death of Christ in behalf of sin, I can't go out and sin and really, truly be focusing on Christ. If I'm glad He died for me, if I'm concentrating on His paying for my sin, I will not go out overtly and commit sins for which He Himself has died; and so a preoccupation with Christ and the cross is its own deterrent to sin.

Now, that is the reason, precisely, that the Apostle Paul wrote 1 Corinthians 2:2, expressing his perspective when he approached the Corinthians. He says there this: "For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified." Paul went into a city that was immoral. It was the vice capital of the world, of that world, the Greek-Roman world; and he realized that he had to refocus them into a whole kind of life that they were unfamiliar with; and so he focused everything on Christ and the payment of sin on the cross and how Christ had died to deliver us from sin and into a new kind of life. That was his emphasis; and, apparently, as long as he was there emphasizing that, they didn't have any problem. As Brainerd said when his Indians focused on that, "Morality took care of itself." But what happened was, Paul left, and the focus apparently changed; and now he has to write back to them regarding the sins of immorality.

They had lost the concentration on Christ, and they had begun to focus on human teachers. They were glorifying their own human teachers. They were glorifying themselves. They were very egotistical, he says to them in verse 18 of chapter 4, "You are arrogant." He says in chapter 5 verse 2, "You are arrogant." And they had a pride problem. They had turned the focus on themselves and, as a result, immorality had come to exist.

So Paul writes this chapter to deal with the consequences of their sin, their immorality. Now, we discussed the first five verses last time, and we'll look at the last section, from verses 6 to 13 this morning. One of the things that I kept very much aware of as I was studying this chapter was how very current it is. This particular immoral situation, the immoral context in which the Corinthian church existed in that city is no different than today. If there was one way to categorize today, we would have to say we live in a sexually mad society. We've gone totally overboard on the subject of sex. We have perverted a very basic thing that God has designed for the happiness and enjoyment and procreation of man; and we've perverted it and twisted it and pushed it completely outta shape so that it's totally distorted.

D. H. Lawrence, who has written many books, none of which I would recommend. I won't even give you the titles. D. H. Lawrence gives us an idea of the modern mentality. This is what he says, "Give me the body. I believe the body is a greater reality than the life of the mind. With the Greeks, it gave a lovely flicker. Then Plato and Aristotle killed it, and Jesus finished it off; but now the body is really coming to life." Everything for him is the body. Well, you know, that's our whole society. The constant pampering of the body. The constant exploitation of the body. The constant presentation on

the screen and wherever else, the body. We are absolutely worshipping the flesh as if it were God. The preoccupation with fashion, with figures, physiques, exposure, pornographic material, on and on and on. The body, we have pushed it so far outta whack, it's incredible.

C. S. Lewis has a beautiful analogy. This is his analogy. He says, "You can get a large audience together for a striptease. There's no question about it. You can get a lot of people to come to a striptease, and they come to watch a girl undress on the stage. Now suppose," he says, "you came to a country where they filled an auditorium a different way. Not by having a girl undress, but that they filled an auditorium. It was packed to the walls; and a guy walked out with a big tray; and the tray was covered with a... with a, some kind of a cloth covering; and wild music began to play and lights began to flash; and all of a sudden, through all of this, in a rather enticing manner, he pulled off the veil; and there on the tray was a pork chop...Wouldn't you think," says C. S. Lewis, "that in that country something had gone wrong with their appetite for food."...

Boy, that is good, isn't it? The Bible, you see, clearly speaks regarding the proper use of the body. In 1 Corinthians 6:13, the Bible says, "The body is not for immorality. It is for the Lord." The body was designed to be used by God, to be blessed by God, to serve God, to be honored. And, yet, what happens in our society? The body is pushed in total distortion to a place of perversion. But, you know, Satan has always done this. How there have been in history some people who fought that, and they went clear the other way. You know, there are some people look at the body as if the body itself were a horrible, evil, rotten, vile thing.

For example, the pagan esthetics in ancient times called the body a tomb. Some early Christians referred to it as a sack of manure, in a very derogatory view of the body. Epictetus referred to himself as a poor soul shackled to a corpse...Plato's account of Socrates' last hour as he says, "I reckon that we make the nearest possible approach to knowledge when we have the least possible communion with the body, and we are not surfeited with the bodily nature, but keep ourselves pure until the hour when God is pleased to release us, and thus having gotten rid of the foolishness of the body, we shall be pure, hold converse with the pure, and know ourselves the clear light everywhere, which is no other than the light of truth."

Now, don't worry about the philosophical jargon. All he's really saying is, "The body's a hang-up. We gotta rid of this evil body." Some Gnostics called marriage a foul, polluted way of life, because it involved sexual relationships. They went to the extreme where any kind of sexual relationship was evil, where the body itself was evil. In fact, in the acts of John, which is an apocryphal writing, not inspired by God, it describes sexual intercourse as an experiment of the serpent which separates from the Lord.

The famous early Father Jerome went so far as to say, "Any bodily contact of any kind is evil." I'll quote him. He said this. "Should your little nephew hang on your neck, pay no heed. Don't return it.

Should your father fall on the threshold, trample him under your foot and go your way. Just don't pick him up. With dry eyes, fly to the cross. In such cases, cruelty is the only true affection." That's weird...

Some monks...some monks regarded it a sin to bathe. Kinda like your children, right?...Some monks regarded it a sin to bathe, because then they would see themselves naked. Athanasius boasted of a man named Anthony. He said, "He was such a praiseworthy man, because he never changed his vest or washed his feet." There weren't a lotta people around who could attest to his praiseworthiness, however. And the worst one of all that I found in looking into the history of this thing was that Antonius proudly related that, "Such was the holiness of Simon Stylites, that when he walked, vermin dropped off his body." Now that is the other extreme.

It all kind of came together in a man named Origin, who believed the ultimate act of worship was to emasculate himself, and that's what he did. Now, you see, Satan takes something very normal, very good, very wholesome, very beautiful, very wonderful, the human body, and absolutely perverts the thing. On one end it's an extreme kind of a cynicism that emasculates the body. On the other hand, it's somebody pulling off the cover and everybody screams. It's twisted and perverted from one end to the other; and in the mainstream of God's revelation, God has a plan for the body; and it is for the glory of the Lord.

Your body is a good thing. Otherwise, God wouldn't want it; but He wants it. It says in Romans 12:1, "To present your bodies a living sacrifice...listen to this...holy and acceptable unto God." Nothing wrong with your physical body. God wants to use it. In marriage, there is nothing wrong with the physical act of sexual relationships. Hebrews 13:2 says, "Marriage is honorable, and the bed is undefiled." On the other hand, we have twisted it and perverted it out of whack; and here you have in the Corinthian church an immoral situation where Satan has been allowed to move in and pervert the church so that there is incest going on in the church and not being dealt with. Incest.

Now, Paul says, "What are you gonna do about this? You have a church representing the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ wants His church without blemish, without spot, pure and blameless. He wants a Holy people. He wants a separated, sanctified people. What are you gonna do about the problem in your church?" He gives some guidelines in chapter 5 for dealing with immorality in the church, and here they are. There are four of them. We gave you two last time. Two more today.

What are the guidelines for such discipline in the church? No. 1, the need. This is the idea of recognition. The first thing that has to happen in dealing with immorality in the church is that you gotta recognize that it's there. You have to be sensitive to this as brothers and sisters in Christ. You know, when the church stands oblivious to the sin that's going on in it, it's in a bad, bad situation. If you know of somebody who's living in immorality, if you know of somebody who continues to live a sinful, immoral life in the church, you need to follow the procedure of recognizing that thing, going to

that person, according to Matthew 18. We saw all this last week. Apologizing to you who weren't here. And then, though, if they don't listen to you, take two or three witnesses. If they don't listen to them, tell it to the leaders of the church that they might be disciplined. Why? Because God doesn't want impurity in His church. We need to recognize it. We need to see it. When we see it, we need to deal with it.

You know, it's a sad thing when the church gets to the place where it tolerates sin; but look at verses 1 and 2. "It is reported commonly that there is immorality among you, and such immorality as not even as existing among the Gentiles or the pagan: that one should have his father's wife." Incest. You have immorality in your church. It's common knowledge. Everybody knows it, and it's incest; and verse 2 says, "In spite of all of that, you're still arrogant, and you should have been grieving and done something about removing such a thing. Instead of that, you're proud and arrogant."

They were going along saying, "We're the great church, you know, we've got all the spiritual gifts. We've got all the great teachers. We've got all of this and all of that." And He says, "You're all arrogant and puffed up, and you should be mourning and grieving over the sin that is existing in your congregation to the extent that it's common knowledge everywhere.

You know, when the church tolerates sin, the church is in bad shape, isn't it? But it does today. Take the liberal church, for example. Reverend H. A. Williams, who is a preacher, pastor, official in the church in England, who is the dean of Trinity College, Cambridge, wrote an interesting article in which he cited two acts of immorality that were worthy of special praise. This is Reverend H. A. Williams. Listen to what he says. "The first worthy of praise is a Greek film Never on Sunday about a prostitute. She is picked up by a young sailor. In a room, he becomes afraid and nervous and on edge. This is not because he thinks he is embarking on something wicked, but because he distrusts his capacity for physical union. He is a prey to destructive doubts about himself, not to moral scruples. The prostitute gives herself to him in such a way that he acquires confidence and self-respect. He goes away a deeper, fuller person than when he came. What is seen here is an act of charity which proclaims the glory of God."...

He goes on in his article. "The second film is in English, entitled The Mark. It tells of the rehabilitation into normality of a man strongly attracted to small girls. His abnormality, which can do nothing but untold harm to everybody, is due to his fear of commitment to an adult woman. However, in time, a woman of his own age inspires him with enough confidence for them to go away for a weekend together. They have separate rooms at the hotel, but it is clear that, until he sleeps with her, he will not have established enough confidence in himself to deliver him from his utterly destructive abnormality, which tends to exploitation. Will he be able to summon up the necessary courage or not? When he does, and they sleep together, he has been made whole; and where there is healing, there is Christ."

So says Reverend H. A. Williams. That, friends, is the church, not only tolerating sin, but advocating it. Now, you say, "We would never go to that extent." You better believe it. We never would; but I wonder if it's very much worse to just let it exist. It may be a little more subtle; but, frankly, it's just as devastating. The Corinthians probably wouldn't have gone as far as Reverend Williams, but they went far enough to allow sin to become the common ingredient in the life of the community of believers. There must be a recognition of a problem. You've gotta face the fact. Every believer in the church has the responsibility, if he knows of impurity, of dealing with that impurity. It's all of our responsibility.

Once you know the need, the second thing is the method. How do you deal with it? This is the action you take. Paul says in verse 4, "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, in my spirit, and the power of the Lord Jesus, deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the Day of the Lord Jesus." Now, he says that if you know about this immorality, and you've gone to the guy, and you've taken two or three witnesses to the guy, and you've gone through all the procedures of disciplining him and trying to get him to change, and he continues, or she continues to live in immorality, the next thing you do is meet together and put him out of the church. Turn him over to Satan.

You say, "But what happens to him?" Don't worry about him. Satan'll take his flesh, and he may destroy his flesh. In other words, the man may go all the way to the place of death; but if he's a Christian in spirit will be saved. Now, don't fear about that. God'll take care of him if he's His child spiritually; but you don't need that kind of pollution in the church. Deal with it and put him out of the church. We went into that in detail last time.

Now, that brings us to the third point. The reason, and for this kind of severe action, there would have to be a rather striking and significant reason, and it is the reason of preservation. You know, if a fellow has cancer, he goes and gets an operation to get the cancer cut out; and the reason is simple. If he leaves it there, it will metastasize; that is, it will spread; and he doesn't want it to spread, so he gets it out; and we always say, "Isn't it great when they got all of it," right? Because it's out; and the same is true in the church. The reason to cut it out is to preserve the rest of the body from being infected with that disease.

Sin is like that. Look at verse 6, "Your glorying is not good. Your arrogance is not good. Your pride doesn't make any sense. You're boasting about your teachers and your factions and your spiritual gifts and all of this, and here you are tolerating this gross vice. What do you have to be proud about? What do you have to celebrate? What do you have to be glorifying yourself for?" Nothing. It's unbelievable that these people, in the midst of this situation, common knowledge, everybody knows they got all these problems; and they're going around proud about it. They think everything's fine with them. They're in great spiritual shape, and it...it really illustrates a basic point, I think, that we need to

think about; and that is be careful that you properly evaluate your spiritual condition. You know, it's very easy to just look at yourself very biased and evaluate yourself with all the plus signs and never face the facts.

I'm sure there are Christians who go around thinking they're really doing great, because they never really bother to examine the reality. Put yourself against the searchlight of the Scripture. Get down on your knees and spend a little time with the Holy Spirit, and see what He discloses to you; and I think this is part and parcel of every Christian's life.

In Revelation 3, you have an illustration of this. It says in verse 17, "You say, 'I am rich. I'm increased with goods, have need of nothing,' and you don't now that you're wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked." To the Christian church in Laodicea there, he says, "You think you've got it all, and you got none of it. You're not looking honestly and objectively at your own case, your own situation."

Another illustration of that is the Pharisees, Matthew 23. They, of course, thought they were spiritually superior. They were just standing around waiting for the first vacancy in the Trinity. They had convinced themselves...they had convinced themselves that they were far and beyond everybody else; and Jesus approached them and just literally unmasked them. In Matthew 23, all the way through here, "You do this, but the truth of the matter is, you're this. You think you're this, but the truth of the matter is, you're fools and you're blind." And he goes on and on down here. "You pay your tithes, and you give all of this and this, and you omit the weightier matters like justice, mercy, and faith. You strain at a net and swallow a camel. You know, you let big things go down, and you can't handle the little things. You make the outside of the cup clean, and the inside's full of extortion. You're like a whited sepulcher, all painted on the outside and rotten with dead men's bones on the inside. You're full of hypocrisy." And he says at the end of this, "Can you escape the damnation of hell, you generation of snakes?" That's strong language; but here were people who never bothered to really get the truth about their own spiritual situation. There are plenty of people in the world who think they're spiritually okay, and they're not. They're not.

In 2 Corinthians 13:5, the Apostle Paul says, "Examine yourselves whether you be in the faith." Prove yourself. You better look honestly. There are a lotta people, I think they think they're Christians, but if they really got down to the facts, examined their heart in line with what the Bible says a Christian is, they'd get some interesting revelation. Examine yourself. When you come to the Lord's Table, according to 1 Corinthians 11, it says, "And so let a man do...what?...examine himself, and then let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh chastisement to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. And for this cause, many are weak and sickly among you and some sleep."

You better examine your life. You better check your own heart out, or you're gonna be under the chastisement of God. So he says to the Corinthians, "You don't have any reason to glorify yourselves. Your arrogance is ridiculous. Your boasting is foolishness. Look at the sin that's going on." And we talked last week about how foolish it would be for a church to say, "Aren't we great? Look at us grow. Look at how much the Lord is blessing. Look at all of this program, and look at all of that program"; and if there's immorality in it, the Spirit of God would say to us, "What are you boasting about? You're not dealing with the real issue."

Now, here's the principle in verse 6. "Don't you know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?" In Americanese, that translates one rotten apple spoils the barrel. Talking about influence and permeation. You let one little lump of evil in your church, and it will permeate your whole church. "Don't you know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?"

Now, the church here is seen as a lump, a lump of dough. In those days, they made dough to make bread, just like today; but they would put leaven into it to be a starter for the loaf. Now, lemme explain what leaven is. Some of you are gonna say, "Oh, I know what leaven is." Well, lemme give it to you from a Biblical perspective. In those days, when a lady would bake dough, she would get the dough all ready, and she would put it together and put in whatever receptacle it was to be baked in; and she would always take a chunk of it off, so that if she had a whole pile of dough, one little piece was held back. That one little piece was rolled into a ball, and it was put in water. That was leaven. The reason is that, over a period of time, that would sour in the water, and then it would be taken out when she started to make new bread, and it would be put into the new bread as a starter. That sour dough would be used to permeate that new bread to get it started. This was leaven. So leaven has the idea of permeation. Leaven also has the idea of fermentation, because it fermented; and sin corrupts and ferments; but leaven mainly has the idea of something from something in the past brought into something in the present. Just keep that in your mind, and we'll come back to it.

Now, he says, "Look, in your old life, you did a lotta things, and that's like the little chunk that's left over from the old life. Don't bring it into your new life." Leaven means the sins of your former life. Now that you're a new Christian, you're supposed to be an unleavened Christian. That is, you don't have any little leftover from the old life as a starter in your new life. Your new life is unleavened.

Look at verse 7, "Purge out therefore the old leaven." You don't want any stuff from the former life. "That you would be a new lump, and that you would be unleavened." There is no place in the church for any of the old patterns. Immorality, whatever they are. He'll list some more things as we'll see in a minute. But the idea of leaven is the idea of the permeation of evil. Evil in the past held over and integrated into the present. Evil from my former life put into the church context or put into my new life, if you make it an individual way.



The church is to break with the old life. "Purge out therefore the old leaven." Don't have anything in your new life that you had in your old life. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things are...what?...passed away. All things are to become...what?...new." There's nothing to be taken from the old life and put into the new life. That's the meaning of this idea of leaven; because, when you put that old lump in the new loaf, it permeated and influenced the whole thing. Break with the old life. So he's saying to the Corinthians, "I know what your life was before. I know all the stuff you did. I know how you lived in the pagan immorality. In your new life, there's no place for dragging over a little ball of that old life and letting it permeate the church."...

Now, this takes us back to the Old Testament, because he says in verse 7, look, this is a very important point, "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, as you are unleavened. For even Christ, our Passover, is sacrificed for us." Now, when you first read that, you say, "Well, I don't understand the connection. What? He's talking about leaven here, and he's talked about a purged life. Why does he throw in this thing about 'Christ, our Passover, is sacrificed for us?'"

Here's why, listen. If you remember back in Exodus chapter 12 verse 39 when God told Israel it was time to leave Egypt, right? He gave them a feast, a feast of unleavened bread, right? For seven days. Now listen to this. They were a part of Egypt. Now, I'm gonna construct the whole thing so you'll understand it. The Israelites were integrated into the life of Egypt, but God said it's time for separation. The final act of separation came on the Passover. They put blood on the doorposts and the lintel. The angel of death passed by, and the angel of death slaughtered the firstborn throughout Egypt; and God had made a separation; and Pharaoh said, "That's it. Get out."

The sacrifice of the lamb symbolized the separation of Israel from Egypt. The sacrifice of Christ is the separation of the believer from the world. You see? Just as the Passover lamb was the symbol of separation, Israel was leaving the old life. That Passover night was the night in which Israel's freedom was secured, and they left. That's the way Christ, our Passover, died on the cross, severed our connection with the world, and freed us to the Promised Land.

Now, when those Israelites were to leave, it says they were to take only unleavened bread. Not only that, they were to look throughout their entire house, and they were to find every little bit of leaven left and get rid of it. They were not permitted to carry one little ball of leftover dough outside of that land of Egypt. You know why? God didn't want any remnant of Egyptian life carried into the new liberty that the children of Israel were gonna have, and the lump represented the old life. The bread that you made in Egypt, don't bring it and put it into the new bread of the new life. Understand?

That's the meaning. In fact, He went even further. You kill the lamb, you eat the meat; and if there's any meat left over, what were they to do with it? Burn it. Don't take anything out of this country. Don't carry anything with you that has anything to do with this place. Do you see the symbolism of that? The leaven, then, represents something of the old life taken and put into the new. No

unleavened bread. When you leave Egypt, you leave with no leaven. Search your house, make sure you don't carry any out inadvertently in some bag somewhere. Find every bit of it and get rid of it. It's a symbol of the old patterns.

Total separation. You see, the Passover lamb signaled the separation, and the unleavened bread celebrated the separation. The death of Jesus Christ, who is our Passover Lamb, signaled the separation; and an unleavened church continues that separation. We don't want any of the old leaven from the world dragged into the church. Christ made a separation. You have to drag that leaven right by the cross and close your eyes in order to do it. He died to separate us from sin. He died to separate us from the system. He died to free us from the bondage of sin, to release us to the life of holiness. Why would we take some leaven from the old life and integrate it into the new?

He says to the Corinthians, "It's ridiculous." So verse 8, "Therefore let us keep the feast. Let's continue this celebration. Let's continue this unleavened thing. Not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness...two synonyms for evil...but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." Two synonyms meaning goodness. "So let's keep living lives that are good, not evil. Let's not drag in old leaven." The church, then, is seen as a lump. The church is to be unleavened. That is, we are not a combination of something new and something old. We are just new. No old is to have any place.

So the reason for discipline, beloved, is clear. If you allow sin in the church, it just permeates the church. It infests the church. It ferments in the church, and that's a process of decay and corruption. Very often, you know, you see a church, and it may go for a while; and all of a sudden, it'll split and fall apart; and somebody'll say, "Well, the reason it fell apart was such and such and such and such had an argument, or the pastor did this, or this pastor did this, or the board member fought about it." But, you know, that may not even be it at all. That may be very superficial. The reason it was corrupted may be because it was tolerant of evil on the inside, and it just began to suck the life blood right out of it.

In the new lump of the church, there's no place for things from the old life; and they will be dealt with; and they will be dealt with strongly and sternly and lovingly at the same time, if we are to be obedient to God. So the reason for discipline is clear. It preserves the church from permeating evil, and that's what God wants. He wants a holy church. We...if we're not a holy church, we don't have much to say to the world, do we?

All right, that's...let's go to four. The last thing in this in understanding how the church is to discipline sin, the need, the method, the reason, and now the spear. One of the limitations of our discipline. How far can we go? Do we have any limits on our discipline? Yes, we do. What is the spirit in which we are to discipline? Verse 9, this is interesting. "I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with immoral people." Now, he says, "I wrote unto you in an epistle." What epistle? Well, come epistle

that he wrote before 1 Corinthians, some letter that isn't in the Scripture. Wasn't one of the inspired books of the Holy Spirit. It isn't here, but he wrote it to them to tell them not to company. The words company is the most interesting word. It's not just a simple word.

Now in Greek, I'll give you a little lesson in Greek just to keep your thoughts on why this word is important. A verb in Greek has a significance all it's own. It means something just like a verb in any other language. Now, the basic root word...word here means to have any kind of company with, or fellowship with, or be with, or be a part of. But whenever the Greeks wanted to intensify something, in English we would say, "Really don't do this," or "Boy, be sure you don't do this." We have a lotta little epithets that we throw in to make something more intense. What the Greeks did was they started adding prefixes to a word; and if a word was a compound word, it was more intense. This word is not only intense, it is a compound word, which makes it more intense, and then it is a double compound word, which makes it doubly intense.

What he's saying here is, "Look, I wrote to you in an earlier epistle, not on any condition at all, any time, to have anything to do with immoral people. No, do not mix yourselves up with them." That's the literal meaning of the verb. Don't get mixed up with them in any way. No familiar, intimate fellowship. They were to refuse fellowship with immoral members. They were to be put out of the church when they continued immorality.

Now, first of all, as we said they were to be approached, and if they changed and repented, that was great, and restore them in love and all that. Galatians 6. But if they continued in immorality, put 'em out. Have absolutely nothing to do with 'em. Was talking to some college kids yesterday, and we were talking about this up at Arrowhead Springs, about discipline and what you do, and this gal was saying, "Well, what about if you have a gal who comes to your Bible study all the time. She's a Christian, but she's living with a guy. What do you do?" and I said...took her to the Word of God. I said, "Here's what you do. You go to her in love." She said, "I've done that. Several of us have done that. She thinks it's all right. It's fine to live with this guy. She's free as a Christian under grace and all that. She said, "What do we do now?" I said, "Put her out. Put her out of your Bible study. Just dismiss her and have absolutely nothing to do with her. Turn her over to Satan. She may have destruction of the flesh, but if she belongs to God, she'll be there in His presence on the Day of the Lord Jesus. Don't worry about that; but you don't need that kind of influence, that kind of leaven permeating your Bible study.

And then this fella said to me, "Well, what about if you have somebody like that living in your house? They claim to be a Christian, and they're in your...your home. What should you do with 'em?" I said, "Same thing. Doesn't take...doesn't make any conditions here. Put 'em out." In the early church, the church was in the home, wasn't it? And you can believe that many of these people who were excommunicated were put right out of the house. Why? Because the church cannot tolerate that kind of infection any more than your body can tolerate a metastasizing cancer without having

something done about it...and some people just wanna go along and ignore it.

I'll never forget a conversation with someone who was told that they...they were very, very ill. It was a very serious illness, and they were told that they probably could have cancer, and they would not go to the doctor, because they didn't wanna hear that they did. And they went on living their life, and they would not go to find out, because they didn't wanna hear what they might find out. You say, "It's ridiculous." Of course, not unlike many churches and many Christians who don't face the realities.

"I wrote unto you an epistle not to have anything to do with these people. You've gotta cut it out. You've gotta get rid of it in order to be pure," verse 10. Now, they had twisted the thing around, and they had apparently taken it to mean fornicators in the world. You know, they didn't wanna mess with the fornicators of the...immoral in their church, so they said, "Well, he means the world." So they cut themselves off from everybody outside the church. So he says in verse 10, "Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world. I wasn't talking about them or the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, for then must you needs go out of the world." In other words, if you were gonna cut yourself off from all the evil people in the world, you'd have to go to another planet...and I'm sure there are some Christians who would like to get a special trip to the moon and just set up a Christian community up there. Would be undefiled.

I'll never forget O. L. Jaggars one time was...had a whole bunch of property for sale out in the desert. Hew as gonna build a sinless city. I knew a lady that bought some property. They were gonna put...build a wall around it to keep sin out...It's a great idea. Made him rich. He also wound up in jail...You see, you can't...you can't avoid that. Paul says, "I'm not talking about the world. I'm not talking about cutting yourself off from the world. That isn't the point at all." And notice he classifies the sinners of the world in three primary categories: fornicators, or immoral; covetous, and extortioner ties right in with covetous; and idolaters. If you notice those three sins, you pretty well sum up the whole of human philosophy. Immorality is hedonism. Covetousness is materialism, and idolatry is religionism, and it's pretty well all there.

The sin of fornication is the sin against the body. Covetousness and extortion is the sin against others where you regard people as objects to be exploited; and the sin of idolatry is a sin against God where you allow something to substitute for God. So here you have all of the sins possible: against self, against others, against God. All of the kinds of philosophies, whether they be hedonism, the libertarian philosophy of the expression of the body, or covetousness, materialism, idolatry, religionism, it's all there.

You look at the world, and all its philosophies and all of its approaches; and I'm not saying cut off from them. You have to go to another planet to do that. But verse 11, "I have written unto not to keep company of any man is called a brother and be a...an immoral man, covetous, idolater, a railer, drunkard, extortioner. No, don't even eat with such a person...verse 12...I am not talking about the

ones that are outside. I don't have any way to judge them...verse 13 says...But them that are outside...who judges?...God judges. I'm not talking about the outside people."

"Well," you say, "what is the Christian's relationship to the world?" I'll tell you what it is. It is not no contact. It is no conformity. The Christian's relation to the world is not no contact. It's no conformity. You know, Jesus spent a lotta time with drunkards and prostitutes and tax collectors and lots of people that were really looked down on in the society and culture. Why? Because they were the people that needed Him, and when they criticized Him and said, "What are you doing with those people?" He said, "They that are sick need a physician, not they that are well." That was a sarcastic answer, really. "You think you're well. They know they're sick, and they're open to My healing."

No, we're not to avoid the world. We're to be in the middle of the world. We're to love the world. We're to take the people who are adulterers and...and fornicators and covetous and idolaters and everything else in the world, and we're to love them, the love that Jesus has. We're to be with 'em all that we can in order to win them to Christ. We're not to do what they do, but we're to contact them for Christ's sake.

Listen to Matthew 5:14 or 5:13. "You are the salt of the earth. If the salt loses its savor, then there's nothing to be salted. It's no good except to be stepped on...he said...You're the salt of the earth. You're supposed to be in the world doing something to give an influence. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill can't be hid. Neither do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a lamp stand, and it gives light to everybody in the house. So let your light shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your fathers in heaven. You've gotta get in the world, let your light shine in the world. You're to be in the middle of the system. You're to be contacting it, up against it, hearing what it's thinking, seeing what it's doing, and winning the people that are in it and loving them in the love of Jesus Christ without conforming to them."

In Philippians chapter 2 verse 15, again it says this, "You are to be blameless and harmless...listen...children of God without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation among whom you shine as lights in the world." You get in the middle of the world, and you shine as lights in the world. You're blameless, you're harmless, you're without rebuke, but you're there in the middle shining with the message of God. Jesus prayed in John 17:15, "Father, I pray not that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one."

I heard some Christians the other...other night, and they were sitting around, and they were saying, "Oh, won't it be wonderful when we all go to heaven? I can't wait to get to heaven. We're all gonna see Jesus. We're gonna leave this world. We're gonna get out of this whole world. Oh, I long to leave." And I kept thinking, "Boy, that is really sickening"... You know, it was so obvious that they had no balance between the desire to be with Christ and the desire to see men come to know Christ. You know, when Jesus comes, it isn't just that you're gonna be in heaven. It's that the rest of the

world's gonna be in hell. See? And there oughta be some sense of preoccupation with that side of it, like John in Revelation 10 who ate the little scroll, and it was sweet in his mouth, but bitter in his stomach. So there needs to be a sensitivity to the world. We're not isolating ourselves from the world in some kind of a little commune where we don't touch anybody who doesn't agree with us, and where we don't wanna mix with the people. We wanna find out where they are and take our Christ to them. That's what He would do...

And so he says, "I'm not telling you to cut off from the world. I'm telling you to cut off from Christians who live in immorality and other sins. Verse 11, "If any man who is called a brother," and we don't know if he really is. If he calls himself one, only God knows if he's truly saved. But, "If he calls himself a brother and he is immoral, or covetous...and that means greedy...or idolatrous...worshipping false gods...or a railer... and the word railer means slanderer, somebody who goes around abusing people, always has something critical to say, always something unkind, always something nasty and cutting about other people, slanderous...or a drunkard...that's somebody who's an alcoholic, continually or somebody who is on drugs, continually...or an extortioner...somebody who uses other people to gain his own money, who steals from them, who extorts from them."

Do you know what's interesting about that list? Oh, man, was that...that musta hit like an absolute bomb in the Corinthian assembly when that was read. You know why? Every one of those sins can be found in 1 Corinthians. They were immoral, right here in chapter 5. That was the start. They were covetous, chapter 10:24, he tells 'em to "quit being greedy for things and seek other people's wealth." They were also idolatrous in chapter 10, 20, and 21. They were going to the assembly of the believers, and they were going to worship at the pagan temple, and they were having fellowship with demons. Not only that, they were slanderers. They had these little factions, and one group was slandering another group. Even when Paul sends Timothy in 16:11, he tells him, "Now, you be easy on Timothy, and don't speak evil of him," because this is what they were doing. They were drunkards. In 11:21, it says, "They would come to the Lord's Supper and get drunk at the Lord's Supper." They were extortioners, according to chapter 6. They were taking each other to court. They were taking money from each other, and it caused all kinds of conflicts and problems.

Every single one of those sins that are mentioned there was characteristic of the Corinthian assembly. And he says, "Look, you find all those people and put 'em out." You know, they probably woulda had a handful of people left if they'd really done it. See, isn't that the opposite of church growth? That's really part of it if your growth is on the right basis. You can't just accept everybody who calls himself a Christian, no matter what he does. If he's a crook in business, he goes out. If he's a drunkard, he goes out. If he's a slanderer, out. If he's covetous and greedy, and it becomes very apparent that all he's after is money and possessions, he goes out. If he's immoral, put him out. If he worships false gods, or if he has some other idol before God, put him out. Anything that he would worship above God is idolatry.

You see, the church must deal with these kind of things... and it isn't that you get up there and you do this with venom and...and you do it with some kind of glee. It's...it's a sad thing. It's a tearful thing. It's a heartrending thing. It's an aching thing to have to do this, and I'm telling you it isn't easy. It's the hardest thing in the ministry to do. Believe me, it is, and our elders, and I thank God for them, and our leaders in our church, they do this, and it isn't easy to do this. It is difficult to do it, but it's right to do it, and that is one of the reasons, beloved, why God has preserved the testimony of this church, and why it continues to be preserved, because we are trying the best we can in the strength of the Spirit to carry out the Scripture.

This is what is integrity. I can't get up here week after week and preach the Bible if we don't obey it, can I? You won't even believe me. It has to be done. It isn't that we don't love those people that are immorality. It isn't that we don't love the people who are greedy, that we don't love the people who are slanderous, or who...who have other things before God, or who are alcoholics or drug addicts, or we don't love the people who even do wrong things in business and rob money from other...It isn't that we don't love those people. It's that we love the church more, and the purity of the church is key, because Christ demanded the purity of His church; and we'll pay the price for the purity of the church. Of course, the thing you hope is that when you confront the person about his sin, he repents and changes, and you can restore him in love, and you won't have to put him out. But if it persists, you have to, because a little leaven will leaven the whole lump, and the whole church will be destroyed by that kind of toleration of evil...

Verse 12, "For what have I to do to judge them that are outside?...Paul says. He says, "I'm not talking about outsiders. I have no responsibility for them. Do not ye judge them that are within?" That's what we're supposed to be doing. Supposed to be taking care of the...of the house, the ones that are inside. "What have I to do with outsiders?" Nothing. The literal way to translate the last part of verse 12 is this. "Is it not those within the church you are to judge? Is it not those within the church you are to judge?" The answer is yes.

Now, you say, "John, does this mean that everybody in the church has to be perfect?" No, no, because then there wouldn't be a church. People always say, "Well, I don't go to church. There's so many imperfect people there." The church never claimed to be the society of the perfection. The church is a hospital with people who at least know they're sick, and they're there because they seek to be what God wants 'em to be, and that's all God's asking. He's not asking for perfection. He's asking for the desire for it.

You know, all you can expect out of a Christian is not that he be perfect, but that he want to be, that he want to live for Christ, that he want a pure life, pursuing those things. Verse 13. "Them that are outside, God will judge. Therefore you put away from among yourselves that wicked person. You discipline inside your assembly," and that's a quote from Deuteronomy 17:7 and 24:7, and that's an

old principle with God. Don't let sinner remain in the congregation of the righteous. Cancer must be cut out. Leaven must be left out of the lump. We must protect the church from the infection of the world.

I guess a little bit of sin comes into the church, and it exists for a while, and then you find about it, and then you deal with it. And in a sense you've had a little bit of it, but it's kinda like a vaccination. You get a dose of the disease, and if you kick through the disease in time, it becomes an immunity, doesn't it? The church begins to build an immunity, and so discipline is kinda like vaccination. You get a little dose of the disease. You fight against it, and that builds immunity. That's what we desire to see.

You say, "John, what's all the relevance of this for today?" It's simply this: as an individual Christian, we have to be sensitive to the purity of our own life, first of all. Secondly, we have to be sensitive to the lives of the people around us, to be sure, for their benefit...you know, if I go to my brother in sin and tell him in love that he's sinning, I've done him a favor, haven't I? Because if he turns from his sin, I've gained a brother back, and not only that, he's gained the blessing of God...

Somebody said to me yesterday, "When do you start to do that?" I said, "Well, lemme give an analogy of my child. My little kids were little, I didn't want 'em to run in the street. When did I tell 'em not to run in the street? The first time I saw 'em looking that way. I didn't wait till they were in it. Most of 'em never even got to the street before I was on 'em," and I think in discipline and admonishment, we have to be ready to do that just as soon as we see the first attitude that's going that direction. We're called to discipline. We're called to maintain the purity of the church.

Will you help us? I can't do this. The elders can't do it. The deacons can't do it. The leaders of the church can't do it all. You gotta help us. You gotta guard your own life, pure before the Lord, and then you gotta be on guard for those around you, because this is Christ's church, and He wants a pure church, and it's our job to do all we can to ensure that. And you know what? When we do that, we'll see the sinners reformed, the church purified, and we'll see the name of Christ honored in the world, and those are pretty good reasons, aren't they? Let's pray.

Father, thanks again for Your Word. We thank You for the ones who are visiting with us this morning who've come along and shared in this hour with us. We pray that You, Father, would speak to their hearts very clearly in terms of their own relationship to You, whatever that might be; and if there are some who do not know You as Savior and Lord, that they might come to know You, become a part of Your glorious church. We thank You for the...the instruction that's so clear to us; and we pray that we would be obedient to carry it out, to be pure, to live a pure life in the energy of the Spirit. Deal with those things that we see defiling the church, Your church for which He died. In Christ's name. Amen.



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