

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

### **Sexual Purity in the Church**

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: 80-25

If you will I'd like you to turn your Bible this morning to 1 Corinthians chapters 5 and 6.

I had an occasion last night to spend some time on the telephone with a pastor - former pastor, who through some indiscretions in his own moral life has fallen from the pastorate. And he asked me could I have people go to you as a reference should some church want to consider me as a pastor? "Would you give me a reference?" And my answer to him was, "No, I will not." He said, "What about forgiveness?" I said, "This is not an issue of forgiveness. I don't have a problem with forgiveness." He said, "What about restoration?" I said, "This is not an issue of restoration. I pray that you're fully restored to a place of usefulness to the Lord." He said, "What is the issue?" I said, "There is an issue of example. There is an issue of setting the standard for the kind of holy life that the church people are to be called to. And when you have forfeited that publicly you no longer can stand in the position of that exemplary individual. That's the issue. It isn't that God won't use you. It isn't that God won't forgive you and bless you. It is that you are no longer qualified for the role of modeling what Christian character is all about in the position of an elder or a pastor."

Well that was sort of the latest healing with that issue up until yesterday within the last two weeks five other pastors' names had come to my attention who had defaulted from the ministry because of immorality. Over the last six months or a year I have been recognizing that what we are now facing in Christianity is a epidemic of sexual immorality. And the church, instead of holding up the standard, seems to be widening it's tolerances to embrace anybody and everybody who wants forgiveness, restitution, and restoration, and placement back in positions of leadership.

I had a occasion last week to speak with several wonderful Christian women whose husbands had been very active in the church, leaders in the church, teachers in the church, and after 20-25 years of marriage had decided to run off with another woman. And in the cases of these women the church had done nothing about it. In fact, one lady went to her pastor of a very significant Bible teaching church and they have chosen to do nothing at all about it.

There is, obviously, you well know, among "famous" Christians an epidemic number of divorces and scandals of one sort or another. There has been one person in the country who has been highly critical of me, a pastor. In fact, has said much against our ministry here. He is now trying to defend himself in a court of law in a rather severe and far-reaching morals charge. There almost seems to be a head in the sand approach to some of this. Churches have become far more tolerant of it.

Institutions and schools and seminaries, which at one time in their history would never admit men to study for the ministry who did not have an impeccable record as a Christian, have now widened their permissiveness to embrace anyone who will pay the tariff, as it were. And sometimes in the name of Grace, and there is a place for Grace, in the name of love, overlook some things that would disqualify a man for ministry.

And what I see happening in the church, I believe is at an epidemic proportion. And I just feel that perhaps to set the record straight and get the focus clear it would be well for us to look again at what the Apostle Paul has to say about sexual purity in the church. Obviously, society around us puts pressure on us. We live in a debase society. We live in a society that panders the lusts of its populists. Immorality is totally acceptable with our society, but totally unacceptable with God and it must be as unacceptable to the church as it is to the Lord of the church. Finding that one-woman man fit for leadership, finding that one- man woman fit for service in the church is becoming more and more difficult. And instead of the church holding it's standard against the tide it seems to be lowering it's standard to accommodate the shortage of qualified people.

Society is jaded about purity and the church is becoming jaded along with it. We tolerate people who are proclaimers, in one way or another, of the Gospel, whose lives, as someone said, "Would make a black mark on a piece of coal." Tolerance has become the norm. Constant overexposure to sexual sin has dulled all of our sensibilities to it. And we are very much like the Church of Corinth, which was victimized by pagan immorality, and the church, I believe, has to fight against that, just as the Corinthian Church needed to fight against it in its own time. I don't need to belabor the issue and read you throughout the Old Testament the words of the Lord against these sins. You can read Deuteronomy 22, 23, and 24. You can read Leviticus 19, Leviticus 21. You can read Proverbs 5, 6, 7, and 9. You can read many New Testament passages, 1 Corinthians 6 being one of them. Ephesians 5, 1 Thessalonians chapter 4 and many others, Revelations chapter 2, many, many places in the word of God where this matter of sexual sin is spoken to.

Those who commit this sin, and just two days ago a letter crossed my desk giving testimony to someone in our church whose been here for a long time and apparently off and on during that time engaging himself in fornication to one degree or another. I don't think it's at an epidemic level in our church but I am confident that it is present in our congregation. And I am confident that the enemy would do everything he can to make it as widespread as possible to discredit the name of Christ and the ministry of the church.

So it's well for us to take a good look at this issue in reference to 1 Corinthians. And I want to treat it in two ways: first, how do we deal with sexual sin on a personal level, secondly on a corporate level? And this message this morning brief and abbreviated is by way of reminder from the study we had many years ago in 1 Corinthians 6. A fuller explanation even than I can give would be found in the commentary and written on this epistle.

Let's look together at chapter 6 then, verses 12 all the way through verse 20 and deal a bit with the personal aspect of dealing with sexual sin; the personal aspect. Here Paul speaks to the sinner, "To the one who would engage himself or herself in sexual immorality." And here his word is a very direct word. On the Corinthian situation it's best understood by a look at the little slogan at the beginning of verse 13. If you look at verse 13 you will notice a verbalist slogan, "Food for the body and the body for food. Food for the body and the body for food." Now what is the significance of such a slogan? Well, the slogan is emblematic of an attitude that became a philosophical justification for immorality. And what the slogan is intended to say is, "Food was made for your stomach and your stomach was made food." There's certainly nothing wrong with eating. Eating is biological. In a sense this is a euphemism for sex. It implies sex for the body and the body for sex. It's just like eating, drinking, sleeping. It's biology. Don't latent it down with any kind of moral connotations. The sexuality and sexual activity is nothing more or less than sheer biology. It's just physiological activity. We are animals, the body was made for sex, men are men, women are women. The obvious intention of that is to bring them together in that physical biological act. Why are we so concerned about it? "Food for the body and the body for food." Food was made for stomachs, stomachs were made for food; it's just biology. The implication being sex is for the body, the body is for sex. It's nothing more than biological function.

And that is precisely the justification that we face today; that man is nothing more than a biological animal with certain added mental capacities. His basic biological physiological functions are moral and he may engage himself to any degree he chooses. Anything is right. Anything is optional. Anything goes. That is the mentality of our day. To point out what a change this is, in 1969 there was a national survey done on the suitability of extramarital or premarital sex. The survey indicated that over two-thirds of the population of the United States felt that premarital and extramarital sex was wrong. The same survey was given in 1985, 16 years later, and over two-thirds of the people in America now believe it is right; a reversal of moral standards of rather massive proportions in a period of 16 years, a direct result of the onslaught of a decadent media and a tolerant society. The church necessarily, because it is made up of people in this society, is bound to have to fight that battle. But the way to fight the battle is not to accommodate the system, and that is precisely what has happened.

I grew up in the church. In fact, when I was 17, on my 17<sup>th</sup> birthday I was living in my 17<sup>th</sup> house. My mom liked to move and fix up houses. And so when I look at my childhood I don't think of the house I think of churches. We were involved in pasturing all my lifelong. And I cannot remember in the life of growing up in the church ever hearing about a divorce, sexual immorality among Godly people, among leaders in the church. That just was not part of that world. I'm sure there were those occasions when such a thing did happen or would happen. It was something very, very secretive and anyone who fell in that way was forever banished from any public ministry.

So much as changed but nothing in the word of God has been altered at all. And so it is incumbent on us to look together at the word and see how these things can be dealt with. Now remember that the Corinthian's were basically a vile society. The verb in the Greek to Corinthianize means basically to have relations with a prostitute. The whole city was associated with prostitution. And when people came into the church and named the name of Christ they brought a lot of immoral baggage with them. Certainly, they were cleansed by the work of the Savior in their life but there was an awful lot of leaven from that past society still permeating their new life, and therein lies the problem.

Beginning in verse 13, "The Apostle then begins to deal with the perversion of sexual immorality." And this, again, as I said, relates to it on a personal level. Here is how we must see it personally. He wants to point out how harmful, how controlling, how dominating, and how perverting this particular sin is. Notice what he says then in verse 13, "Food for the body and the body for food: but God shall destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for pornography, fornication, sexual sin, but for the Lord: and the Lord for the body. And God hath both raised up the Lord and will also raise up us by his own power." The first point he wants to make is that sexual sin, that is a sexual relationship outside the man/woman marriage bond is a perversion of God's intention, first of all, because the body was not made for sex, the body was made for whom, for the Lord, for the Lord. Your body is not your own to do with what you will. Your body belongs to the Lord.

They were using this little slogan trying to celebrate the fact that sex, like eating and drinking was nothing more than a natural function without spiritual meaning. And here the Apostle Paul says, "You cannot treat your body in such a way. Food for the body. Look at it, or stomach and the body for food, but God shall destroy both it and them." What does he mean? God will destroy food and God will destroy stomachs. The point is the biological process will stop. Yes, eating is a normal biological function. Food and stomachs do go together but God will destroy both food and stomachs. In other words, in the future, they'll be a time when we have a glorified body, not dependent on food and not dependent on a biological digestive system. That's temporary, that's transient. God will do away with that, but the body is not for pornography, but for the Lord and the Lord is for the body as proven in verse 14 by the resurrection.

"For as God raised up the Lord he'll raise us up also. And as he had a glorified body recognizable to be the very form in which he was before his death so will we have a glorified body also recognizable." And what he is saying here is that while food and stomachs are temporary, bodies of believers in a glorified state are eternal. So what you do with your body is a very grave concern to God because your body is not for sexual sin but for the Lord. If you want a slogan then let your slogan be the body for the Lord and the Lord for the body. The body is to be set apart under the Lord. It has a very special purpose.

On a far higher plane than the stomach and food biology will cease. That's a temporary function, that the body has a permanent future. Food and stomachs are on a horizontal level. Bodies and the Lord

are on a vertical level. "What I do with my body is very important because my body belongs to the Lord," Romans 12:1, Present your body as a what, living sacrifice holy and acceptable under God, which is your act of spiritual worship. My body doesn't belong to me. My body is far more than just an animalistic biological physiological functioning organism. My body is the possession of the Lord Jesus Christ. For a Christian then to commit sexual sin breaks and destroys that vertical relationship. It violates that vertical relationship. For me, as a believer, to look at the body as if it were nothing more than some physiological animalistic tool to be used in any way I wanted is to ignore the fact that the body is for the Lord.

Your body was not made for sex; your body was made for God. And God has a specific design for it. That's why verse 14 says, "As he raised up the Lord he'll also raise us up by his own power." Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15, "We'll put on incorruption. This mortal will put on immortality. Death will be swallowed up by life. We will enter into a new and glorious existence. We shall have an exchange of this vile body." Philippians 3, "For a body like unto his glorious body." In other words, you've got to realize that your body is sanctified as a vessel unto God. It's a powerful point. So don't run around saying, "Sex is nothing but biology," and feel you have a right to do anything you want because it's nothing more than a physical function. It is far more than that. Your body belongs to God.

A second point that he makes is very very important. "Is that it is one with Christ. It not only belongs to God but it is one with Christ." The whole trinity's gonna get involved in this. It belongs to God; secondly it is one with Christ. Verse 15, "Don't you know that your bodies are the meele - that's the ordinary word for limbs and members of a human body - don't you know that your members or your bodily members are members of Christ?" In other words, your link to Christ. Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them the members of a prostitute? Now this makes the thought of sexual sin almost as sickening. He appeals to common knowledge, "Don't you know that your bodies are members of Christ?" You are not united him you're in Christ and the closest most intimate way. We are one with Christ. It would be unthinkable to use Christ's body for sexual sin. No would knowingly take the body of Christ and put it with the body of a prostitute. And yet, that's exactly what you do when you commit sexual sin. You have to see the picture the way it is in the word of God.

I hear people who say, "Well, but you know, I'm unhappy with my wife and she doesn't understand me." And, "oh, this is such a wonderful love and we have -" This one lady said to me one day, "I just love his caresses." Well just get the prospective will you, that you have indulged Christ in your illicit affections? You cannot separate yourself from him. Now just know this that if you choose to do it you violate the fact that your body belongs to God and has an eternal destiny and, secondly, you indulge the Lord Jesus Christ in your illicit sin. He is untainted by it, but nonetheless, you have drawn him in. And so he says in verse 15 at the end, "God forbid. May genna way ta, may it never happen." Strong negatives saying, no, no, no, impossible, unthinkable. And somebody would say, "Well, yeah, I would never join Christ to a harlot but we're in love." Do you know what a harlot is, a prostitute? Do you know what a prostitute is, anyone who prostitutes the intended use of sex for personal purposes.

Everyone who engages in an illicit relationship is a prostitute by the simple definition of the term.

Sexual union is two becoming one. Thus in a Christian's immorality there's the most gross profaning of making Christ one with a prostitute. That's unthinkable, absolutely unthinkable. And that's the prospective that Paul wants us to have.

Verse 16 he follows on what? "Do you not know that the one who is joined to a prostitute is one body?" And then he quotes from Genesis 2:24, "Two shall be one flesh." When you enter into a sexual relationship to become one flesh, by definition of God in Genesis, you become one. And that is primarily speaking of the sexual union. So if you are a member of Christ and you become one with a harlot, you have made Christ one with that harlot.

Verse 17 follows up even the same idea, saying it another way, "He that is joined onto the Lord is one spirit." The word for joined; columinized means bonded or glued. It isn't some passing thing. You are literally glued to the Lord and being stuck, as it were, to the Lord, glued to the Lord, bonded to the Lord. You engage yourself in an illicit sexual relationship and you have dragged him and desecrated him by that. And I would say that if you have done that to the Lord you have forfeited a right to be his representative in many ways. He doesn't need such representative. You have become one spirit. You're one with the Lord. So God is involved. When a person engages in sexual sin they are denying that their body belongs to God. They are joining Christ in this prostitution.

Because of such seriousness notice what he says in verse 18, "Flee pornaya." Present imperative, make it a habit to continue running. The best defense is to run. Remember Genesis 39? Joseph, Potifar's wife came after him and he did a smart thing, he ran. She grabbed his cloak and tried to use it as incriminating evidence but he ran. And that's the right thing to do. You don't stay around and say I'm going to stay here and get the victory. It's the same thing in 2 Timothy 2:22 where Paul says to Timothy, "Flee youthful lust. Run away from the source of temptation." You know this is very important for even young couples who love the Lord and are planning for marriage and find themselves in a compromised situation because they can't control their physical desires. The best thing to do is stay apart. Stay apart. You don't want to put yourself in a position where you're going to join Christ in a prostituted relationship. And it's a prostituted relationship even if there's a covenant of marriage coming along in the future because it's outside that covenant itself. Don't flirt with it, run from it. Watch what you see, watch what you read, watch what you hear, watch what you look at, watch what preoccupies your mind. I mean people it's just so basic as controlling what goes into your mind.

In verse 18 he further says to show us the seriousness of this sin, "Every sin that a man does is outside the body. And he that commits fornication sins against his own body." It's very difficult to know precisely everything Paul has in view here. But what he seems to be saying is that every other sin approaches from the outside, but this one rises from within. Other sins have external stimulus. This seems to have an internal one. The cause of other sins may be outside. The cause of this is

inside. It is a strong consuming impulse and drive and has the capacity to corrupt more deeply and widely than other things. Personally, I believe it's more destructive than drugs, more destructive than alcohol, more destructive than patterns of crime, and, very often, all those go together with it. But something deep within a person is affected by this sin, so that he sins against his own body in a very, very serious way.

He may have in mind venereal disease. Some people think that all venereal disease is a reaction of God's wrath against sin. I'm among them. I think all venereal disease is a divine reaction against sin. I don't think all the victims of venereal disease or AIDS or the other ones are necessarily the sinners. I think there are some people who in one sense or another may be innocent bystanders who acquire the disease through means other than sexual sin. But surely it is a judgment of God on a sinful society. There is in this physical sin something so deep and compelling in a person - and I have seen this through the years, that it holds people in its grasp in ways that other sins do not seem to do.

I have, for example, in the years of church discipline and grace noted that, at least, 9 out of 10 or more church discipline situations, maybe 99 out of 100, I'm not sure, but somewhere beyond 90 out of 100 of church discipline situations are related to sexual infidelity. And the reason is because that's the sin that people can't seem to stop. If you confront a person about gossip or about lying or about cheating or whatever it might be, about an unfair business practice, they would usually do the best they can to shape up if they have any desire to follow the Lord. But there are people who get engulfed in this sin, and it is so driving and so compelling, that literally they behave as if they were nothing more than mindless fools.

You watch a person after 25 years of marriage and a wonderful family and serving the Lord, Jesus in the family, the Lord, the church, their friends, everything, down the drain for one absolutely uncontrollable and compelling urge for someone they have no right to be with. It blackens their thinking; it twists and perverts any semblance of wisdom, and leaves a tragic imprint on their own person.

There are sins that men do that are from the outside that seem not to be so compelling. This one seems deeply compelling and it seems also to be a sin committed, as he says at the end of verse 18, "Against the body in ways that other sins are not. It brings about terrible bondage, terrible debilitation." Even David cried out about being sick after he had committed adultery with Bathsheba, about being weak, about all of his life's juices drying up within him. Cried out about his loneliness, and his sadness, and his brokenness, and his grief. And spent his whole life really never being able to come out from under the fullness of that grief. It destroys deep inside, it shatters relationship, it devastates trust, it is a profound and penetrating sin.

"So, would you join Christ in a sin like that?" That's the question Paul asks. The third issue takes us from God to Christ to the Holy Spirit. Verse 19, "What, again incredulity marks his words. He can't

believe that they wouldn't know that their body is also the maos, the shrine, the sacred dwelling place of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God as a gift, and you're not your own. You have been bought with a price." So he is saying, when you enter into sexual sin you violate the fact that the Lord is the one to whom your body belongs. That the savior is the one with whom you are one and that the Holy Spirit is the one whose temple you are. Literally, then, as David said it so well in Psalms 51, "Against thee, the only have I sinned." And this sin, in particular, and that's the sin of which David spoke, is a sin against God of massive proportions implicating the whole trinity in its sinfulness. "Can you, Paul says, ignore the fact that God has an eternal plan for your body and it belongs to him? Can you ignore the fact that in your sin you are uniting Christ to a prostitute? Can you desecrate the sanctuary of the Holy Spirit?" "You have to see the sin for what it is," that's what Paul is saying. It is not simply a mistake. It is not simply some small indulgence. It is not simply some biological act. It is not merely a biological event. It is a desecration of God himself.

Therefore the conclusion is in verse 20, "Glorify God in your body and your spirit, which are God's, glorify God." "Fornication, Ephesians 5:23 says, "Let it not be once named among you." Hebrews 13:4, "Marriage, let it be honorable, the bed undefiled, but fornicators and adulterers God will judge." What if you've done it, will you be forgiven? Yes. Will you be harmed by it? Yes. Can you be enslaved by it? Yes. Will you be perverted by it? Yes. There are people who go in saying, "It's forgivable." What they don't count is the harm, the enslavement, and the perversion. There's no escape from the consequences. Personally, run from it. Consider your body belonging to the Lord. Unite it to the Savior and containing the Holy Spirit. And with that sacred view of yourself, if you have any love for God and any concern for his holy nature, you'll not violate his word in this area.

Now let's go back to chapter 5. And as we come to the conclusion briefly this morning I want to draw your attention to the thought of what the church is to do about this. This is the corporate aspect. The personal aspect we saw in chapter 6, the corporate aspect comes in chapter 5. What do we do about this as a church when we know about it? This dear lady cheerfully talked to Patricia and I, and she said, "I can't get my pastor to go to my husband. My husband has left me. My husband is living with another woman. I can't get my pastor to go to him. I've asked him, I've asked the associate pastors, no one will go. No one will confront him. What do I do to try to demonstrate to him the consequence of his sin?" There are those who are advocating a softness. Those who think that the Lord just forgives and restores and he'll do it in his own time and we shouldn't get involved and it's none of our affair, etc. What is the church to do? What is the stand of the church? Well, we find that in chapter 5. Paul is very clear about it and you'll see it, I'm sure, quite evidently as we look at the text.

The first thing in guidelines for the church dealing with this sin is recognition of it. Verses 1 and 2 deal with the recognition. Paul writes, "It is generally reported." In other words, it's just the common knowledge. It's just something everybody's aware of. It's well known. "That there is pornaya, sexual sin prior to marriage among you. And such sexual sin, perhaps could also involve an adulterous situation used in a broad sin. As is not even as much named among the pagans." In other words, you



have a reputation for sexual sin that goes beyond the unregenerate, namely that one should have implied an ongoing sexual relationship with his father's wife.

The church, if you can get this, is shocking the world. And I'll tell ya the world must be fairly well convinced of the church's lack of integrity and lack of difference if they're looking at the scandals that are going on, and on, and on, and on in today's church. The church is shocking the world. And Paul is even more shocked that the church isn't doing anything about it.

It is commonly being reported (present tense) everybody knows it, that you have a kind of sexual deviation that even the pagans don't practice, namely incest. His father's wife is an indication of a stepmother and by Greek definition, according to the writings of Checksalice, Cicero, and Yuripides, this was considered to be incest, even though it was a stepmother. It was incest just as if it was a birth mother. It may have been that this woman was still married to the father and the word pornaya is used in a broad sense embracing adultery. It may have been that this woman was divorced from the father and the fornication is used in its more exact and technical sense and now the son was having a relationship with his father's former wife. Whatever the marital status, and I don't know that we can be conclusive on that, there are several things about that relationship that I want you to know. Number 1 it was an incestuous relationship by definition of Leviticus 18, Deuteronomy 22, as well as the Greek culture. Secondly, it was an ongoing, continuous, lasting, permanent relationship, as indicated by the verb that one has his father's wife. Has, in the sense of continually. Furthermore, the woman was likely not a Christian. Because there is no word given here relative to any discipline directed at her. The discipline is directed at the man who is a part of the assembly.

So here is a man who claims to be a Christian, he's in the church, he's involved there, he is having an incestuous, ongoing, sexual relationship with his stepmother who is not a believer. If that doesn't shock you then get to verse 2. "And you are arrogant he says." "You are arrogant about it. You haven't mourned that he that has done this deed might be removed from among you. Your continual arrogant pride in the midst of gross sexual vice has caused you to overlook this thing." They were so puffed up about their imagined wisdom and so proud of their respective factions and their pride had blinded them, perhaps, to the cancerous sin that invaded their body. It may also have been that they were even proud of the sin as an expression of what some of them thought was Christian liberty, able to be dealt with by the grace of God, and, therefore, they were tolerant. Whatever their specific thoughts he says, "You're so proud and so puffed up that instead of mourning of the corruption of these evil among you, you have done nothing." An easygoing attitude toward this sin is dangerous - very very dangerous.

Personally, it's been something in my own life that I watch closely in our church fellowship and if ever I see anything that even begins to approach this kind of compromise, if there's a way in which that can be sensed, it must be dealt with with alacrity and severity immediately for the sake of everyone involved. And by God's grace he has preserved us from that kind of scandal. The church cannot

tolerate this. Our dear Lord is so explicit in saying that in many ways but, perhaps, as directly as any in the message to the church at Fiattyra, where he condemns fornication and calls for judgment of great severity on those who do that. "They want to be in bed." He says, "I'll put em in bed alright. It'll be a bed of judgment."

He says, "There is something that needs to be done," in verse 2. "This person needs to be removed." You should be mourning over your sin, not tolerating it. Mourning over it and excommunicating the person, putting them out. Putting them out of the church is defined for us in detail in Matthew 18. We've gone over it before. We won't go over it now. Beginning in verse 3 Paul tell them the method. He's kind of given them the scene in the first two verses, discovered it, and now in verses 3-5 the method. He says, "For I truly, though absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already as if I were present concerning the one that did this deed." Paul says, "I've already passed my judgment. I've already had my court and my tribunal, made my verdict. I know what ought to be done, now why don't you do this? When the word came to me I made my judgment. And what you wanna do, verse 4, "In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ when you are gathered together as a church and my spirit is there -" And he's not talking about some mystical presence of his spirit. What he means by my spirit is the echo of my teaching. "The echo of my teaching, the residual knowledge of the things that I gave you from God when you are together as a church and you recall the instruction and the power of our Lord Jesus Christ is there, then deliver that person to Satan for the destruction of the flesh."

What does he mean by that, "Put him out of the church?" What do you mean deliver it to Satan? Satan is the prince of the world, the ruler of this world, this \_\_\_\_\_. "Put him out of the church," which is the dominium of the Lord. "Put him out from under the protection of that and turn him over to Satan." Just like 1 Timothy 1:20: Hemeinous and Alexander, who were delivered to Satan to learn not to blaspheme." "Put them out. Take them out of the isolated protectiveness of the church. Put them out. Deliver them to Satan. The world which was his dominium will have its effect on them." "What will it do for the destruction of the flesh?" he says. It is apparent that this man was given to Satan to receive some bodily evils, some bodily afflictions, and his flesh was to be debilitated, maybe a physical suffering, maybe venereal disease, maybe some other kind of physical ailment. "Turn him over to the devil who can destroy his flesh." But it says that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. I believe you have a believer here and the promises that his spirit is secure, because he belongs to the Lord and he will receive the Grace of Salvation. Spiritually that is God's promise to him, but physically his sin puts him in a position to suffer greatly.

That is the method of discipline. The church comes together, lead by the elders in the authority and with the intended power of Jesus Christ and by the teaching of the word of God, excommunicates the immoral person so that Satan can afflict him, and in such affliction there will be a remedial effect. Hopefully, drawing him back to holiness. That's the desire.

"So, you see the need?" He says. "You need to act. The church must act in its own defense in the matters of purity." Why? Verse 6, "Your boasting is not good." And, again, they may have been proud about things when they should have been in abject humility. Whether they were overlooking this evil in their pride or whether they were proud about this evil, as some way in which God's Grace could operate, either one was bad. It's not good. Don't you know that a little leaven - leaven, of course, kept from dough, keep in water, then used to start and permeate and provide yeast effect to a new loaf, speaks of permeating influence.

In the Old Testament when the Children of Israel left Egypt they had to eat unleavened bread, which meant that there would be no leaven put in that bread. That was symbolic of the old life. They were to bring nothing of Egypt into their new life. They were to start brand new. And what are you saying to the Corinthians is the same thing. He says, "Look, Christ - verse 8 "Purge out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, unleaven, no influence from the past, or even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us." So the death of Christ we enter into new life. In that new life we start fresh. We don't bring the permeating influence of our prior immoralities to infiltrate our new life. You can't have that in the church. You can't tolerate that in the church. It can't be there.

And that's why I say when a man in leadership defaults in this area to put him back into leadership is to say, "Well, it is tolerable." That communicates something to people that you really don't want to communicate. "Don't you know," he says, "That a small portion of unbaked dough kept back and preserved in water from the last batch and uses as a starter for the next batch is gonna permeate that? And don't you know that immorality in your church is gonna permeate and a tolerance for that, at one level, becomes a tolerance for it at other levels, the old story of one rotten apple spoiling the barrel? It only took a worm to destroy Jonah's gourd? It only takes a small cancer cell to metastasize and destroy a life. Get a little and the whole church can be absolutely corrupted."

So in verse 7 he says, "Purge it out. Christ wants a new loaf, unleavened. He sacrificed himself to make that a reality. So let us keep the feast," verse 8, "That new feast, as it were - eluding to the Old Passover. Let us keep that New Passover feast, not with old lifestyle - old leaven. Not the way we used to. Not the leaven of evil and wickedness. Don't let that be a part." The word evil seems to be directed at malice and attitude. Wickedness seems to be directed at action. Let us not carry on the attitudes and acts of our former life, but rather let us enjoy the uninfluenced pure breed of sincerity and truth, sincerity and truth.

God says, "I want a one-woman man." And implied also God wants one-men women. He sets up men in the church to be the model of that kind of virtue so that everyone knows what the standard is. And I really believe that we have a tremendous battle on our hands to maintain that in days ahead. If you have sinned in that are, yes, God will forgive you. But there is harm, there is a certain amount of control that that sin may exercise over you because of your past sins. There is a perversion, the effect of which may, to one degree or another, still be with you. But God will forgive and God will put you in

a place of usefulness. It may restrict the office, the function you can hold in the church. But we cannot lower the standard. It must be constantly left at the level where God has put it in his word. We're not trying to be uneven; we just want to be consistent to set the standard where God would have it for the sake of his people.

I can only think about my own children and my own grandchildren in the days ahead and your children and grandchildren and hope that a generation from now there are still people holding the standard of purity consistently with the word of God, for their sake and that for the sake of the Lord's honor, as well.

Let's bow together in prayer. I want you to just spend a moment in silent prayer and I want you to ask the Lord to work in your life in this area of purity and thought and deed that you might be faithful to this, his command. And that you might do so, not just in the negative sense of restricting yourself, but in the joyous privilege of being obedient. Just covenant in your heart and ask that the spirit of God will enable you to live a pure life.

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