

I CORINTHIANS
Chapter 5:1-13

INTRODUCTION:

Several years back I heard of a lady being disciplined from a Baptist church because she exposed her ankle while getting up on a buggy. Exposing her ankle was considered indecent or inappropriate exposure for a Christian and worthy of discipline.

Discipline of this nature is considered ridiculous today, but it does show how it used to be taken seriously by churches. It is rare to hear of church discipline since it is not a common practice by most churches today.

Church discipline is not something to do hastily or foolishly, but nevertheless, it is a doctrine to practice even to this day and time. The church is not to be on some spiritual witch-hunt, but when the need arises, it is to be practiced and obeyed.

In ***I Corinthians 5*** we are given instructions and an example of biblical church discipline.

VERSE 1:

"It is reported commonly" - Paul was not dealing with gossip or rumors, but was dealing with facts. This member's sin was common knowledge based on fact. People can be good at hiding their sin and we never know what is going on in the private life of others. But, the case at Corinth was not private, it was public. Everyone in the church knew about this sin. Not only was it known within the church, but the outside world knew of it also.

". . . that there is fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles" - A young man took his father's wife, his step-mother, and was committing fornication, a sin which was not even tolerated by the lost heathen, the Gentiles. Fornication: specific term is pre-marital sex - ***I Corinthians 7:2, 6:9; Matthew 19:3***. General term: all sex sins, from pre-marital sex, extra-marital sex, prostitution, to homosexuality.

VERSE 2:

"Ye are puffed up" - You are filled with pride and vain conceit of your wisdom and purity. They were so concerned with themselves and their knowledge, and were so busy being split over preachers that this gross sin was going on in the church unattended. They were so proud of themselves they didn't even take notice nor care. Had they hated sin and loved the church this man would not been permitted to stay as a member as long as he had.

". . . have not rather mourned" - Yes, they should have been made to mourn and feel deep sorrow for such a thing within the Lord's church. It was like Paul saying, "Why are you so proud? You have a member living in a way that lost people would never think of living. Instead of being proud, you ought to be grieved."

Sin in the church ought to be taken seriously. In the life of the Christian, sin ought to be a very serious matter and should break our hearts whether it is in our own life or in the church. It is a sad day when we no longer are bothered by sin, and a tragedy when the church either condones or ignores it within the membership. This church was indifferent to the whole situation. Indifference is always to be condemned especially when it comes to sin.

" . . . that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you"
 – He should be dismissed from the church, and should never be permitted to remain within the church membership while in this state of sin.

VERSE 3:

Paul was saying even though he was absent, he had already come to a decision about what must be done.

He was preparing to explain through God's leadership his idea of how this situation should be handled. Paul was now in prison, yet this news had reached him. Surely, the situation was bad and something must be done.

Paul begins to make it clear that sin could not be tolerated in the church. He uses such phrases as ***"taken away"*** – V:2, ***"deliver such a one"*** – V:5, ***"purge out"*** – V:7, and ***"put away"*** – V:3, to make it clear the sinful situation had to be dealt with.

VERSE 4:

"In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" – They were to exercise church discipline by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ to His honor and glory.

". . . when ye are gathered together" – Take note here the ***"ye"*** is referring to the church's responsibility to discipline members. It is not to be done by the authority of the pastor, deacons, nor any disgruntled group. This is a church problem and must be dealt with by the church body. When you are assembled together in the name of the Lord and under His leadership, take care of this matter.

". . . and my spirit" – As if I were there with you physically. When the church came together, this sinful situation was to be dealt with and handled in a certain way.

They were to do so in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and deal with the problem by His authority. Someone might ask, "But why make such a big deal about the matter?" Sin cannot be tolerated in the church, but has to be dealt with because the Lord commands and authorizes the church to do so.

". . . with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ" – This should be connected with the next verse. That which they do should never be done in the power of the flesh or for personal reasons, but strictly under the leadership and power of the Lord Jesus Christ. This business is done for Him, to protect His church that He bought with His own blood. If the discipline is done in the power of the Lord Jesus Christ, then no one will react according to his own desire and fleshly opinion.

VERSE 5:

"To deliver such a one unto Satan" - What does this mean? John says in - **I John 5:19** - **"And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness"**, or "in the wicked one". This man was in the circle of those who were children of God. Someone might say, "the way to help him is to keep him in the circle, let him sit down with us at the communion table; do not be hard on him, try to win him back, throw your arms of love around him and sympathize with him." The unrepentant man will be more hardened in his iniquity if that was permitted. Put him outside in the devil's domain, let him know that he has forfeited all title to a place with the people of God. He has then been put back into the world where Satan rules. That is when he says - **"deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh."** What caused all this trouble? The activity of the flesh, so put him out in the devil's territory where he will find out - **"that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord GOD of hosts.** Dismiss the member from the fellowship of the church that he might experience the full consequences of his sin.

When he finds himself an outcast and his sin is a stench in the nostrils of Christian people, he may break before God.

If he has really been born again, in spite of his sin, he will break. If he has not truly been born again, he will continue in his sin and go further into the sins of this world. Therefore, church discipline is for the sanctification of the members and destruction of the flesh.

". . . that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" -So one might be corrected, humbled and reformed by these sufferings and come back to the ways of the righteous and Christian living. In the Day of Judgment his life would not be a complete ruin, but one of service. The Lord does not permit his children to continue to wonder in sin without applying the rod of correction. - **Proverbs 3:12; Hebrews 12:6.**

VERSE 6:

"Your glorying is not good" - Your boasting or confidence in your present position is not good."

"Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?" - All cooks know when making bread that just a small amount of leaven in the dough causes the whole lump to grow, even to run over the edge of the bowl. So it is in the church, just a little sin if permitted to stay in the church, it will grow and grow until it has the entire church filled with sin and nothing being done for the Lord. No doubt, one of the greatest reasons churches are not growing today is because leaven is permitted to stay and control the church, and hinder the Lord's blessings on the church.

When sin is ignored in the church in one member, it is sending a message to all the members that it does not matter how they live. A high standard lifts others to that standard. A low standard lowers the standards of others. Sin cannot be permitted to go unchecked in the church, as it will rob the church of its power with God and influence in the community.

VERSE 7:

"Purge out therefore the old leaven" – Put away, free yourself from the leaven of sin. Paul then reminded them of the Passover and how leaven was forbidden.

". . . that you may be a new lump" – A piece of dough before leaven is put in. Make yourself pure and free from the corruption of this gross sin so you are able to be used for God.

Paul says, **"For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us."** Leaven is a type of sin and therefore was forbidden during the Passover. Paul was saying that there could be no fellowship with Christ.

If there is to be fellowship with Christ in either the life of a Christian or the church, sin must be purged. Again, he is speaking of public and known sin. It is impossible to know every sin in the church, and it would bring devastation if the church pursued it. But, when the sin is known and not dealt with, our fellowship with Christ is broken. We are to deal with sin with "sincerity and truth."

VERSE 8:

"Therefore let us keep the feast": - Paul refers to keeping the Passover feast free of leaven in any form. Therefore, as Christ has been sacrificed for our sins, let us keep our service to God free of leaven.

". . . not with old leaven": - the old nature of man.

". . . neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness": - Leaven of unkindness and evil, especially in this case of the man living in sin.

VERSE 9:

"I wrote you in an epistle not to company with fornicators": - No doubt Paul had written unto them at least one other letter that the Holy Spirit did not choose to include in the canon of Scripture.

VERSE 10:

Paul says we cannot completely separate ourselves from this world, or get out of it, but we are not to socialize with such ones as given in this verse. We can treat them nice and be friendly toward them, but we are not to become close friends with them for they will pull us down. As Christians, we should make close friends with other Christians. We should be careful not to let the world rub off on us as we are out in the world living, working, and shopping lest we are pulled into it.

VERSE 11:

Paul was saying, "I want you to understand that I did not mean you should not make contact with those not living for God. The world in which you live is full of such ungodly

people. Sin is what sinners do and we should expect no less. The only way you could avoid total contact with such people would be to be removed from the world."

He wanted them to understand that he was speaking of a sinning church member. They were not to have fellowship with an unrepentant brother. He makes it clear that church discipline is not to be limited to sexual immorality and gives a list of those sins that were not to be tolerated within the church.

". . . not to keep company" - To be wholly separated from and withdrawn from. No form of association is to be had with the following:

". . . if any man that is called a brother" - Any professing Christian; another member of the church.

". . . be a fornicator" - Note **verse 1**.

". . . be covetous" - To fix the desire upon, extreme passion, such a desire for something whether it is good or bad.

". . . idolater" - One who turns from the true God to worship idols, whether openly or secretly; consciously or unconsciously. To simply state the matter, idolatry is anything that takes the first place of our life, and takes all our time before God becomes our God. Therefore, this causes the person to commit idolatry.

". . . a railer" - What is a - **"railer"**? It is a person who has a tongue loose at both ends and on a pivot in the middle, an evil speaker, one who can destroy the reputation of another just as the murderer drives a knife into the heart and destroys a life.

The word **"railer"** - is interesting. It speaks of someone who slanders and runs down others. All too often we endure such things and let them wag their tongue, but Paul declared that such behavior is to be corrected and not tolerated.

Someone may say, "I don't mean any harm, but I am so careless with my tongue." What would you think of someone who goes around with a machine gun and keeps firing away on this side and that and someone says, "What are you doing?" "Oh," he replies, "I don't mean any harm, but I am so careless with this gun." A character assassin is as wicked in the sight of God as one who would take another's life.

". . . a drunkard" - A man given over to alcohol. All I can say is that if a person never wants to be a drunkard, he should not fall in with the present day idea of thinking it is okay for everybody to drink a little. No man or woman ever became a drunkard who was not first a moderate drinker, just one every now and then.

". . . or extortioner" - The word **"extortioner"** - speaks of a swindler, cheat, crook. Many a testimony of a church has been hurt by a crooked businessman, etc., within a church. Such a person is to be confronted and not condoned.

". . . with such a one no not eat" - **II Thessalonians 3:6**. No doubt this verse means not to fellowship or eat with such people. But, I believe this passage has much deeper meaning by talking about the Lord's Supper also. This verse is good proof for closed communion. It is dangerous for a person in such a condition to partake of the Lord's Supper and they should be warned to stay away from it. The Lord's Supper is controlled by the church and it should keep itself clean and without leaven.

Also, if a member falls into the category of the above named and is present at the time the Lord's Supper is scheduled, then Biblically the church cannot partake of the Lord's Supper. It is clear that we are not to eat (partake of the Lord's Supper) if such people are present. No doubt many churches today are committing sin against the Lord by carelessly partaking the Lord's Supper with disregard for those in attendance!

VERSE 12:

"For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? Do not we judge them that are within?" - God judges the world and He will deal with them in due time. But, He calls upon the church of God to maintain careful discipline over its members for the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. His good name is at stake.

People say, "What! Is that one of your members?" Does that person claim to be saved and aren't they a member of your church?" This brings shame on the Lord Jesus Christ and the church that He loved and died for. That is one reason why the church of God is responsible to maintain holiness as it goes on through the world.

The church has the responsibility to judge the conduct and life of those who are members making certain that a godly life is lived. When the church has done its part, the Lord will judge and bring back those on the outside who are truly born again.

VERSE 13:

Those who are put outside the church will be judged by God. If the one put away is lost, then the church is better off without them; if they are saved then God will cause them to get things right in their lives and then right with the church - ***II Corinthians 2:6-8***.

CONCLUSION:

In closing, I must say that church discipline is a painful and difficult step to take. Oftentimes, the people involved are those we love and are close friends. Yet, when there is sin it must be dealt with and cannot be tolerated.

We must never forget that church discipline is still in the Bible. Remember - ***a little leaven leaveth the whole lump?"***.

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Study Guide

1. It is rare to hear of church discipline since it is not a _____ practice by most churches today.
2. Church discipline is not something to do _____ or _____.
3. The sin of this church member was _____ based on _____.
4. This sin of fornication was committed with his _____ - _____.
5. Why was this sinful act permitted by the church for so long?
6. Paul begins to make it clear that sin could not be tolerated in the church. He uses such phrases as "_____ " - **V:2**, "_____ " - **V:5**, "_____ " - **V:7**, and "_____ " - **V:3**, to make it clear the sinful situation had to be dealt with.
7. By what authority is a church to practice church discipline?
8. Whose responsibility is it to discipline members?
9. Church discipline should never be done in the power of the _____.
10. What does - **"To deliver such a one unto Satan"** mean?
11. What will be the difference between a lost person and a saved person being dismissed from church members? Why? Give example. **Proverbs 3:12; Hebrews 12:6.**
12. How can the sin of one member affect the whole church?
13. What does - **"Purge out therefore the old leaven"** mean? -
14. Leaven is a type of _____ and was forbidden during the _____?
15. Give definitions of the following words - **company, brother, fornicator, covetous, idolater, railer, drunkard, extortioner.**
16. What does - **"...with such a one no not eat"** - **II Thessalonians 3:6**
17. Who is responsible to those within the church? Who will judge those outside of the church?
18. We must never forget that _____ is still in the _____.