

The Why of Church Discipline

Some churches celebrate things that God does not tolerate.

1 Corinthians 5:1-13 – *It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife. And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you. For though absent in body, I am present in spirit; and as if present, I have already pronounced judgment on the one who did such a thing. When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord. Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people— not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? God judges those outside. “Purge the evil person from among you.”*

Truth – Don't celebrate what God doesn't tolerate.

- Paul said the Corinthian church was boasting and arrogant. Instead of mourning over sin (remember “blessed are those who mourn.” If we as a congregation don't take a strong stand on sin among us, we are arrogant. If we as Christians are less serious about sin than God, then we're smarter than God.
- We collectively stand on truth, for God, and against sin. We let God draw the line and we hold each other accountable to that line.
- The church must also present a united front on sin.
- Speak clearly. Paul, led by the Holy Spirit, had made a judgment of this man's spiritual condition.
 - Vs. 3 – I have already pronounced judgment on the one who did such a thing.
 - Vs. 9-11 – Sexually immoral
 - Vs. 11 – Guilty of sin
 - Vs. 13 – The evil person
- “Purge the evil person among you.” Evil has a definition. Sin has a definition.
- The collective local congregation must make a judgment about these things. 1 Corinthians is full of examples of Paul expecting individuals and the congregation to make sound judgments. Even the pagans, the Gentiles, the outsiders would make a judgment on this. The outside world was stronger on sin than the Corinthian congregation!
- We assemble to take the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11), edify in worship (1 Cor. 14), and to collect an offering to do God's work (1 Cor. 16). We must also assemble to deal with sin in the camp.
- For further study look at how Jesus dealt with the 7 churches of Asia (Revelation 2-3). He praised local churches that stood strong against sin and he rebuked churches for tolerating sin among them.

Influence – What is tolerated in some of us will become true of all of us.

- The influence of sin among us. A Little leaven leavens the whole lump. The Jews, when celebrating the Passover feast, removed all leaven from their house. They ate only unleavened bread for the duration of that feast. Part of this was to commemorate the rapid departure of Israel from Egypt, but there was also another spiritual application and that is the removal of sin's influence from their camp. Paul is urging the Corinthians to celebrate our Passover, our relationship with Jesus, in the same fashion. Sin and reckless attitudes that are tolerated among us will spread to the rest of us.

- Other examples for your further study (Romans 16:17-18; Titus 1:10-11; 3:10-11).
- Among you. Notice the consistent usage of “among you” in the New Testament.
- “Among you” – There is an identifiable body of Christians assembled in a local place (1 Corinthians 1:1).
 - How can you know when “the church” gathers together in one place if we don’t know who is in the church and who isn’t?
 - How can we know we are “in church” if we don’t collectively make a commitment to join together and form a congregation?
 - For further study: Read 1 Corinthians 11:17,18,20,22,33-34; 14:23,26-35. Notice how coming together in one place and “in church” are used.
- The influence of our congregation in the community.
 - If the church in Corinth was tolerating what even the worldly people wouldn’t accept, what is the effect on their influence to others?
 - The effect on the community of God’s punishment of Ananias and Sapphira was felt even in the community around the church (Acts 5:11-14).

Salvation – We hand him to Satan so he will turn to God.

- What does it mean to hand someone over to Satan?
 - If I chose to follow Satan and go my own way instead of God’s way, then God will “hand me over” to do just exactly how I please (**Romans 1:24,26,28**).
 - What we are doing as a congregation is publicly acknowledging what has **ALREADY** happened between you and God.
 - If that’s how you want to live, Jesus will give you over to Satan, and we as Jesus’ body will will one voice follow His lead.
 - **Important note:** We are not talking about one who is weak, one who is demonstrating a desire to work on their lives, but is just struggling and wants help. This brother or sister is weak or fainthearted. He or she needs to be upheld, strengthened and comforted (**1 Thes. 5:14**).
- For the destruction of his flesh.
 - This does not mean we crush somebody.
 - But the removing of fellowship from the group is intended to pierce the heart of the person who is living in sin. Just like a spanking from a parent to a child. The goal is to produce a soft heart and changed behavior and a renewed mindset.
 - This is a learning process, not a crushing process.
 - Paul also “handed” Hymenaeus and Alexander “over to Satan” so that might “**learn**” not to blaspheme (**1 Timothy 1:20**).
 - The Thessalonians were told to do administer discipline to those who were unruly among them so that they would be “**ashamed**” (2 Thessalonians 3:6-15).
- So that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.
 - Jesus taught that our goal is to “win/gain” our brother back (Matthew 18:15-17).
 - We must have the heart of Jesus, the one who wanted so badly for the wandering sinner to come home, for them to come under His wings, for them to open the door when He knocked.
 - Our goal is not to crush the sinner it is to reconcile him or her to God.
- We must remember this also when that person begins to come back to God (**2 Corinthians 2:5-11**).

TIE THIS INTO FIRMLY ROOTED theme for 2023.

Psalm 1:5 – Sinners shall not stand in the congregation of the righteous.