

# Chapter 5

## Judging Sinful Acts

### Don't Tolerate the Immoral Behavior Practiced by Another Believer but Address and Judge it

**Verse 1**—There was common information available among the believers in Corinth about immorality, *it is actually reported*.

- Paul had already confronted this group in a previous letter *I wrote to you* about this kind of sin, that was lost v 9 and 11.
- So this immorality was not something new to them and their toleration of it was not new either.
- This immoral person was sexually involved with probably his step-mother *his father's wife*, both a blatant and cultural taboo. *Immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles*.
- Believers are capable of the same sins unbelievers commit.

**Verse 2**—But what is particularly disturbing, is the **arrogant indifference** of the Corinthian believer. *You have become arrogant and have not mourned instead*.

- They were either ignoring, excusing, or rationalizing this immorality.
- They should have grieved about this and then have done something to address it.
- We should grieve over a believer's sin, not tolerate, ignore or accept it.
- In this case, *he would be removed from your midst*. That is, if warranted, the believer must be exiled.
- When a believer sins and refuses to repent, we should never tolerate it by saying, 'I need to be his friend.'
- The action must be confronted, addressed, and if necessary, disciplined.
- It's interesting that there is nothing said about the woman being disciplined. Perhaps because she was not a believer?
- Judging actions and not motives was already addressed in 4:1-5, but revisited again due to this real life situation.

**Verse 3**—Paul, though absent, had already made his decision, *for I, on my part have already judged him*.

- Paul judged the fact of the immoral incest, not the motives. He did not make this judgment institutionally. His judgment was personal and relational in nature.
- It was not on the basis of motives, but based upon the immoral person's actions... *judged him who has so committed this*.
- In spite of the Corinthian indifference, Paul was compelled to act.
- We must make judgments about sinful actions, ensuring we do not condone those actions, but instead attempt to address and correct them.

### A Group of Believers Judge Together to Apply Discipline and Remove Fellowship

**Verse 4**—Discipline of a fellow believer is a group thing, not only an individual thing, although it may be initiated by an individual, as Paul did here with the Corinthians.

- Believers who know this person and relate with this person should decide together *when you are assembled* to discipline.
- Invoking the name of the *Lord Jesus* elevates this practice as one associated with the Lord Himself.

**Verse 5**—The discipline is *to deliver* (παραδοῦναι to deliver for judgment, condemnation, punishment) *such a one to Satan*, allowing the sin to take its course in this person’s life. It is handing one over to suffering and even possibly physical death.

- God initiates the discipline of the sinning believer, using Satan as a means of delivering it.
- The reason for this decision is *for the destruction* (ὄλεθρον to ruin, destroy, death) *of the flesh*, a type of physical punishment that could evoke repentance.
- This is not “excommunication” which is institutional.
- It is breaking of fellowship, which is domestic, personal, and relational discipline.
- When the willful rebellion of the sinner is evident, and his sin has already become public knowledge, the discipline must be as public as the sin.
- The words *deliver* and *destruction* are strong words to show both the seriousness of the judgment, as well as the consequences.

At Satan’s request, he was given the authority to attack Job, but this authority has always had boundaries. Satan’s destructive powers and desires extend only as far as the flesh (Matthew 10:28).

- Hymenaeus & Alexander were also delivered over to Satan who each had *suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith...so that they may be taught not to blaspheme* (1 Timothy 1:19-20).
- This type of discipline may include personal affliction or even physical death as warned about in James 5:19-20.
- God promises to discipline His children (Hebrews 12:4-13).
- Our job is to recognize the potential for that and then address it in the lives of believers. This way, we work with God on His priorities for each of us.

## **A Three-Fold Purpose for Disciplining a Sinning Believer**

**Verse 5**—**First**, if he or she responds appropriately, the purpose of the discipline is to preserve themselves from even more severe judgment and loss at the Bema Seat *so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus*.

- This is similar to the one *saved yet as by fire*.
- Again, notice how Paul uses future prophecy to make a case to motivate us to holiness.
- The entire point of addressing the sinful believer is for the purpose of returning to fellowship with Jesus Christ, since this pays dividends in their personal evaluation at the Judgement Seat of Christ.
- It is also a kind of fellowship no longer skewed by sinful behavior, which diminishes the quality, depth, and intimacy of intimacy with God.
- Addressing sinful behavior among believers is actually a means of preparing them for their eternal life.

**Verse 6**—**Second**, the discipline will keep his or her sinful behavior from spreading.

- So *your boasting* (arrogant indifference) *is not good*—because it’s based in tolerance towards incest in the church.
- If left alone, this evil influence will eventually consume, permeate, and multiply *a little leaven leavens the whole lump* until their proud tolerance of this sin allows it to corrupt the entire fellowship.
- Sin is like a malignancy—it will not stay isolated very long. Shutting one’s eyes to this corrupting influence could even lead to advocacy of the sin.

**Verse 7**—**Third**, the discipline preserves the purity of the Christian and the Christian life.

- The remedy is to purge by *clean[ing]* (ἐκκαθάρατε to cleanse thoroughly, to purge) *out the old leaven* (remove the sinful man) *so that you may be a new lump* (the church remain pure from the sinful man’s influence).
- They must remove their boasting about their tolerance of immorality so its influence is arrested.

- This kind of judgment, discipline, and cleansing is consistent with our new standing accomplished by Christ's sacrificial death.
- *Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed.* Jesus Christ has paid for our sin as a Passover, not just covered it over as an atonement.
- This payment allows for making a clean break from our past in the way we live our lives.
- We are part of a new batch *you are unleavened* as new creatures. So our behavior and actions must align with that.

**Verse 8**—After all, we don't *celebrate the feast with old leaven or of the leaven of malice and wickedness.*

- During this feast of unleavened bread, all leaven which represented impurity, was removed from the house.
- So sin must be removed and not tolerated from within God's family. This includes sin like *malice*, and the *wickedness* of the immoral man in their midst.
- Instead, the fellowship should be like the *unleavened bread of sincerity and truth* which is impossible if sin is accepted and not judged.
- So the Corinthians were to put away the indifference and tolerance, and pursue the purity of a sincere and truthful life consistent with their new position.
- Don't tolerate sin in the camp. Don't allow believers to become cavalier about sin.
- Confront sinful behavior to salvage a sinning believer's life and also protect fellow believers from its influence.

## **The Specific Action Is Not to Associate with the Sinning Believer**

**Verse 9**—Paul said *I wrote you in my letter*, apparently, an epistle previous to the writing of 1 Corinthians of which we have no record.

- His message was *not to associate with* (συναναμίγνυσθαι “to mix it up with, to keep company”) *immoral people.*
- From this earlier instruction, the Corinthian believers had only applied this to unbelievers, those outside the body of Christ.

**Verse 10**—Obviously, we have to live in the real world, so Paul said, *I did not mean at all* [to not associate] *with the immoral people of this world.*

- It is impossible to not associate with unbelievers. The Corinthians would have to leave the planet *to go out of the world* in order to do that.
- Nor was the command meant to become disengaged from the world.
- In the daily pursuits of life, we will regularly be in contact with evil people, like *the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters.*
- That does not mean we adopt their lifestyles.

**Verse 11**—This disciplinary action was for anyone who claimed to be *any so-called brother.*

- If a person took part in the life of the church while continuing in sin, then they were excluded from fellowship with other believers, if unrepentant.
- The list of sins to judge and discipline is extended in these verses to include *a reviler, or a drunkard*, in case anyone thought it was just sexual sin that warranted discipline.
- Our removal from them includes intimate things, like even eating *do not even eat with such a person*—an obvious act of fellowship with another.

## Be Careful to Not Apply This Discipline to Unbelievers

**Verse 12**—It is not our business to judge unbelievers sin *for what have I to do with judging outsiders?*

- Again, this may be why Paul never mentioned judging the woman in the immoral relationship.
- So we remove ourselves from sinning believers, not sinning unbelievers.
- We don't participate in or condone their sin, of course, but we maintain a relationship with them.
- We have no right to expect Christian living from those who are not Christians, and every right to expect Christian living from those who are Christians.
- Don't try to fix the world, or the nation, or the government.
- Proclaim the gospel, but don't try to conform society to the righteous standards of Christ's kingdom.

**Verse 13**—However, discipline *within the church* is our responsibility.

- *But those who are outside [the church] God judges.* So we don't have to.
- But we must *remove the wicked man from among yourselves.*
- Ryrie said, "the church should leave the judgment of unbelievers to God and concentrate on setting its own house in order."

### Application

We discipline not because we do not want to associate with a sinning believer, but because we want them to manage their relationship with God first. So, we break fellowship as a means of potentially motivating them to get back on the right path.

- The point is that the sinning believer would understand they have a problem with God that is an offense with consequences.
- So discipline is horizontal for the purpose of addressing the vertical and then to benefit both.
- We cannot bring about the sanctification of others, but we are responsible to not hinder it.
- We are our brother's keeper.