

1 CORINTHIANS 5

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Be Intentional
Philippians 2:12-13
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PAUL NOW DEALS WITH THE SECOND PROBLEM THAT HAD BEEN REPORTED TO HIM: IMMORALITY IN THE CHURCH AND THE REFUSAL OF THE LEADERS TO DEAL WITH THE OFFENDER. HOW SAD THAT SUCH AWFUL SIN SHOULD BE “COMMONLY REPORTED” AND THUS RUIN THE TESTIMONY OF THE CHURCH! PAUL GAVE THREE REASONS WHY THE CHURCH HAD TO EXERCISE LOVING BUT FIRM DISCIPLINE AND DEAL WITH THE OFFENDING MEMBER.

I. FOR THE GOOD OF THE OFFENDER (5:1–5)

DISCIPLINE IN THE CHURCH IS NOT LIKE A POLICEMAN ARRESTING A CULPRIT; RATHER, IT IS LIKE A FATHER CHASTENING HIS SON. THE FIRST MOTIVE IS TO HELP THE SINNER, TO SHOW CHRISTIAN LOVE IN SEEKING TO BRING HIM TO REPENTANCE. FOR US TO ALLOW CHURCH MEMBERS TO LIVE IN OPEN SIN HURTS THEM AS WELL AS CHRIST AND THE CHURCH. THIS PARTICULAR MEMBER APPARENTLY WAS LIVING WITH HIS STEPMOTHER (SEE LEV. 18:8) IN AN IMMORAL RELATIONSHIP. THE WOMAN WAS APPARENTLY NOT A PART OF THE CHURCH FAMILY, OTHERWISE PAUL WOULD HAVE HAD THE CHURCH DEAL WITH HER AS WELL.

WHAT A TERRIBLE THING FOR A CHRISTIAN TO LIVE IN SIN WITH AN UNSAVED PERSON WHILE THE CHURCH DOES NOTHING ABOUT IT!

THE CHURCH WAS “PUFFED UP” AND BOASTING ABOUT ITS “LIBERAL ATTITUDE.” PAUL TOLD THEM THAT THEY SHOULD BE MOURNING, AND THE GK. WORD HE USED MEANS “TO MOURN OVER THE DEAD.” (LATER ON HE COMPARES THEIR SIN TO LEAVEN, AND LEAVEN ALWAYS “PUFFS UP” WHATEVER IT INFECTS.) THEIR “BROAD-MINDED ATTITUDE” TOWARD SIN WAS ONLY HURTING THE OFFENDER AND THE CHURCH, NOT TO SPEAK OF THE SORROW IT WAS CAUSING PAUL AND THE LORD HIMSELF. PAUL JUDGES THE MAN AND INSTRUCTS THE CHURCH TO DISMISS HIM FROM THE FELLOWSHIP. “BUT DOESN’T JESUS TELL US NOT TO JUDGE?” SOME MAY ASK, REFERRING TO MATT. 7. YES, HE DOES; BUT THIS DOES NOT MEAN WE SHOULD CLOSE OUR EYES TO SIN THAT IS KNOWN BY SINNERS AND SAINTS ALIKE! WE CANNOT JUDGE ANOTHER BELIEVER’S MOTIVES (WHICH IS WHAT MATT. 7 REFERS TO), BUT WE CAN AND MUST JUDGE THE ACTIONS OF GOD’S PEOPLE.

THE DISCIPLINE WAS TO BE HANDLED BY THE CHURCH COLLECTIVELY, AND NOT BY THE LEADERS ALONE (V. 4). THE MATTER WAS KNOWN PUBLICLY, SO IT HAD TO BE DEALT WITH PUBLICLY. IF THE MAN REFUSED TO REPENT, HE WAS TO BE DISMISSED FROM FELLOWSHIP. TO “DELIVER A MAN TO SATAN” (V. 5) DOES NOT MEAN TO SEND HIM TO HELL, FOR NO CHURCH CAN DO THAT. RATHER, IT MEANS TO CUT HIM OFF FROM CHURCH FELLOWSHIP SO THAT HE MUST LIVE IN THE WORLD, WHICH IS CONTROLLED BY SATAN (JOHN 12:31 AND COL. 1:13). THE PURPOSE OF SUCH DISCIPLINE IS NOT TO LOSE A MEMBER, BUT RATHER TO BRING THE SINNER TO THE PLACE OF REPENTANCE THAT HE MIGHT BE SAVED FROM LOSS OF REWARD ON THE DAY OF JUDGMENT.

CHURCH DISCIPLINE IS A FORGOTTEN MINISTRY IN MANY CHURCHES THESE DAYS. YET, IF WE REALLY LOVE ONE ANOTHER, AND IF THE PASTOR REALLY LOVES HIS FLOCK, HE WILL SEE TO IT THAT WANDERING ONES ARE WARNED AND DISCIPLINED FOR THEIR OWN GOOD.

II. FOR THE GOOD OF THE CHURCH (5:6–8)

HOW FOOLISH FOR A CHURCH TO SAY IT IS “OPEN-MINDED” AND WILLING TO ACCEPT ANY AND ALL MEMBERS, NO MATTER HOW THEY LIVE! WOULD YOU OPEN THE DOOR OF YOUR HOME TO ALL WHO WANT TO ENTER? THEN WHY SHOULD WE ALLOW ANY AND ALL WHO WANT TO ENTER TO COME INTO THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE CHURCH? IT IS HARDER TO JOIN MANY WORLDLY ORGANIZATIONS THAN IT IS TO UNITE WITH THE AVERAGE LOCAL CHURCH! “YOUR GLORYING IS NOT GOOD,” WARNS PAUL. “DON’T YOU REALIZE THAT ONE MEMBER LIVING IN OPEN SIN CAN DEFILE THE ENTIRE CHURCH?” (SEE V. 6).

PAUL USED THE PASSOVER SUPPER TO ILLUSTRATE HIS POINT; SEE EX. 12:15FF. LEAVEN TO THE JEWS WAS ALWAYS A SYMBOL OF SIN AND CORRUPTION; SO, BEFORE PASSOVER, THEY ALWAYS SCOURED THEIR HOUSES TO REMOVE ALL TRACES OF LEAVEN. CHRISTIANS MUST HAVE THE SAME ATTITUDE; WE DARE NOT ALLOW THE YEAST OF SIN TO GROW QUIETLY IN THE CHURCH AND PRODUCE TROUBLE AND SHAME. CHRIST DIED FOR US, NOT TO MAKE US LIKE THE WORLD, BUT TO MAKE US LIKE GOD. “BE HOLY FOR I AM HOLY” (1 PETER 1:16). THIS DOES NOT MEAN THAT CHURCH LEADERS ARE TO BE “SPIRITUAL DETECTIVES” WHO PRY INTO THE LIVES OF THE MEMBERS. BUT IT DOES MEAN THAT EACH CHURCH MEMBER MUST SEE TO IT THAT THE LEAVEN OF SIN IS NOT GROWING IN HIS OR HER LIFE. AND, IF SIN BECOMES KNOWN, THE LEADERS MUST TAKE STEPS TO PROTECT THE SPIRITUAL WELFARE OF THE CHURCH.

THERE ARE SEVERAL KINDS OF CHRISTIANS THAT WE ARE WARNED ABOUT IN THE BIBLE, BELIEVERS WHO SHOULD NOT BE PERMITTED FELLOWSHIP IN THE LOCAL CHURCH: (1) THE MEMBER WHO WILL NOT SETTLE PERSONAL DIFFERENCES, MATT. 18:15–17; (2) THE MEMBER WHO HAS A REPUTATION FOR BEING A FLAGRANT SINNER, 1 COR. 5:9–11; (3) THOSE WHO HOLD FALSE DOCTRINE, 1 TIM. 1:18–20 AND 2 TIM. 2:17–18; (4) THOSE WHO CAUSE DIVISIONS, TITUS 3:10–11; (5) CHRISTIANS WHO REFUSE TO WORK FOR A LIVING, 2 THES. 3:6–12. THOSE WHO ARE SUDDENLY OVERTAKEN BY SIN WE SHOULD LOVINGLY SEEK TO RESTORE; SEE GAL. 6:1.

III. FOR THE GOOD OF THE WORLD (5:9–13)

THE CHURCH CANNOT CHANGE THE WORLD IF THE CHURCH IS LIKE THE WORLD. READ THESE VERSES CAREFULLY AND NOTE THAT PAUL MAKES A DISTINCTION BETWEEN SIN IN THE LIVES OF CHRISTIANS AND SIN IN THE LIFE OF UNBELIEVERS. SIN IN THE LIVES OF BELIEVERS IS WORSE! PAUL HAD COMMANDED THEM IN A PREVIOUS LETTER NOT TO FELLOWSHIP WITH CHRISTIANS AND CHURCH MEMBERS WHO HAD SINFUL REPUTATIONS AS FORNICATORS, COVETERS, OR IDOLATERS. HE DID NOT TELL THEM TO STAY AWAY FROM ALL SINNERS OF THIS KIND, OTHERWISE THEY WOULD HAVE TO LEAVE THE WORLD! WE EXPECT THE UNSAVED MAN TO LIVE IN SIN, BUT EVEN THE WORLD EXPECTS THE CHRISTIAN TO BE DIFFERENT. ONE REASON THE CHURCH TODAY HAS SO LITTLE INFLUENCE IN THE WORLD IS BECAUSE THE WORLD HAS TOO MUCH INFLUENCE IN THE CHURCH.

FAITHFUL CHRISTIANS ARE NOT EVEN TO EAT WITH CHURCH MEMBERS WHO HAVE RUINED THEIR TESTIMONY BY OPEN SIN AND HAVE NEVER MADE THINGS RIGHT WITH THE CHURCH AND THE LORD. THIS IS A PART OF THE DISCIPLINE OUTLINED IN V. 5. IF A FAITHFUL CHURCH MEMBER FELLOWSHIPS IN

A FRIENDLY WAY WITH A CHRISTIAN LIVING IN SIN, THAT MEMBER IS CONDONING HIS SIN AND DISOBEYING THE WORD OF GOD.

IT SHOCKS SOME CHRISTIANS WHEN THEY REALIZE THAT GOD EXPECTS US TO EXERCISE SPIRITUAL JUDGMENT IN THE CHURCH. WE ARE NOT TO JUDGE THE OUTSIDERS; GOD WILL DO THAT. BUT WE ARE TO EXPEL FROM CHURCH FELLOWSHIP ANY CHRISTIAN WHO WILL NOT CONFESS SIN AND MAKE THINGS RIGHT. THIS IS NOT TO BE DONE HASTILY; ALL PARTIES INVOLVED MUST BE PERMITTED TO STATE THEIR CASE. THERE MUST BE PRAYER AND THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD. THERE MUST BE SINCERE CHRISTIAN LOVE. THE VERY ACT OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE IS A TESTIMONY TO THE WORLD AND A WARNING TO THE CHURCH, AND ESPECIALLY TO NEW BELIEVERS, THAT GOD EXPECTS HIS CHILDREN TO BE DIFFERENT FROM THE WORLD. TO CONDONE SIN IS TO DENY THE VERY CROSS OF CHRIST!