

Righteous Judgment: 1 Corinthians 5
1 and 2 Corinthians Part 6
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Introduction to *1 Corinthians 5*

It's always easier to pronounce judgment on "them" rather than "us" or "me". But we are not called to judge those who are "outside" the church, Paul says. God judges them (v. 13), and even now He is pouring out His wrath against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of people who suppress His truth in one way or another (Rom. 1.18-32). If those outside the Body of Christ need judging, we can trust the Lord to handle it. That does not preclude our calling the world to repentance, only condemning it.

But we must lovingly judge with righteous judgment ourselves and those who are our brethren in the Lord, not to condemn, but to correct. It's always best to begin with ourselves of course, listening for the Spirit to judge, convict, and redirect us (Ps. 139.23, 24; Jn. 16.8-11). But we do not help our brethren increase in Christlikeness by "blinking" at their sin—observing it and passing on without saying anything. Love for God requires that we honor Him by helping our brother repent; love for our brother seeks not to condemn but only to restore to the path of righteousness (Heb. 12.3-11).

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We hope you find this study instructive and helpful to equip you for your walk with and work for the Lord. Thank you for joining us.

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1 The Sin of Tolerance

Pray Psalm 119.25-27.

My soul clings to the dust;
Revive me according to Your word.
I have declared my ways, and You answered me;
Teach me Your statutes.
Make me understand the way of Your precepts;
So shall I meditate on Your wonderful works.

Sing Psalm 119.25-27.

(Festal Song: *Rise Up, O Men of God*)

My soul clings to the dust; revive me by Your Word!
My ways I have declared to You; teach me Your statutes, LORD!

Make me to understand Your precepts and Your ways,
as on Your works I meditate with wonder and with praise!

Read and meditate on 1 Corinthians 5.1, 2.

Preparation

1. What problem did Paul bring up to the Corinthians?
2. How had they responded to this situation?

Meditation

Having dealt with the root problem the Corinthians were experiencing—spiritual pride, immaturity of faith, a judgmental and divisive spirit—Paul moved on to other issues which had been brought to his attention. First in order, a man—presumably, a member of one of the churches in Corinth—was sleeping with his father’s wife (v. 1). It appears from the context that the wife was not a church member, because no action was recommended concerning her.

This was no “secret sin.” It was a public scandal. How had the Corinthians responded? By refusing to condemn the man, even taking pride in their tolerance! After all, weren’t they all sinners? Had not they all received grace for salvation and forgiveness? Who were they to judge a fellow believer?

Paul called out this sin by appealing to the Law of God (cf. Lev. 18.6-8; Deut. 22.30; 27.20). In Paul’s mind, the Law of God, while it will not save us, continues valid as a standard for Christian morality (cf. Rom. 3.31). Perhaps the Corinthians, touting their grace standing in the Lord, had determined that they were “not under law, but under grace” and so did not need to consult or follow the Law of God concerning this situation.

Wrong. It is fashionable today, in some “evangelical” circles, to set aside the teaching of God’s Law on a variety of moral issues, following the spirit of the times rather than the Spirit of God. There can be no doubt concerning how Paul would respond to this situation. Or Jesus (cf. Matt. 5.17-19).

The Corinthians should have disciplined this member by sending him away from the church for a time (v. 2; cf. vv. 4, 5). The Church does not bear the sword and so cannot execute scandalous sinners; but sending them “away from the altar” for a season is an even more powerful judgment, as we shall see.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162.

“Everyone is talking about the terrible thing that has happened there among you, something so evil that even the heathen don’t do it:

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You have a man in your church who is living in sin with his father's wife.
And are you still so conceited, so 'spiritual'?
Why aren't you mourning in sorrow and shame and seeing to it
that this man is removed from your membership?" (1 Cor. 5.1, 2 TLB)

Where are the Pauls and Nathans the church so desperately needs today?

When David was caught out in a similarly heinous sin, Nathan said to him:
"You are the man! Thus says the LORD God of Israel:
'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul...
Why have you despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in His sight?
You have killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword;
you have taken his wife to be your wife...'" (2 Sam. 12.7, 9).

"Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God" (Gal. 5.19-21).

Paul wrote this to the church then, but he could just as easily be writing it to the church today. It is the Word of God. True then, true now.

"But if you are led by the Spirit... [the fruit you will bear will be] love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law" (Gal. 5.18, 22, 23).

We dare not tolerate sin in our own lives nor in the lives of other believers, as the effects of such are disastrous, both personally and corporately. Sin is no joke, and allowing it is the devil's playground.

There is only one way to successfully live like Jesus, and Paul spells it out clearly and plainly:
"And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.
If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit" (Gal. 5.24, 25).

Following God's Law, which never changes.

For reflection

1. How would you explain to a new believer what is needed to keep from falling into sin?
2. How can we know when we have fallen into sin? Does Psalm 1 offer advice in how not to fall into sin?
3. What are the consequences of failing to deal with sin in our lives or churches?

Party spirit, and a false notion of Christian liberty, seem to have saved the offender from censure. Grievous indeed is it that crimes should sometimes be committed by professors of the gospel, of which even heathens would be ashamed. Spiritual pride and false doctrines tend to bring in, and to spread such scandals. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), Commentary on 1 Corinthians 5.1-8

Pray Psalm 119.28-32.

Listen for the Holy Spirit to show you any unconfessed sin. Confess it, repent, and commit yourself to following the Lord in all your ways. Thank Him for His mercy and grace, which is ours in Jesus Christ.

Sing Psalm 119.28-32.

(Festal Song: *Rise Up, O Men of God*)

My soul weighs down with woe, I need Your strength, O LORD!

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Remove from me all lying ways; grant me Your holy Word!

I choose the way of truth; Your judgments I proclaim.
Your testimonies I embrace, LORD, put me not to shame!

Command my course, O LORD; Your gracious truth impart.
I cling to You and know You will enlarge my seeking heart.

2 Righteous Judgment

Pray Psalm 52.1-4.

Why do you boast in evil, O mighty man?
The goodness of God *endures* continually.
Your tongue devises destruction,
Like a sharp razor, working deceitfully.
You love evil more than good,
Lying rather than speaking righteousness.

Selah

You love all devouring words,
You deceitful tongue.

Sing Psalm 52.1-4.

(Warrington: *Give to Our God Immortal Praise*)

Why do the mighty boast in sin? God's love endures, it knows no end!
They with their tongues vain boasts repeat, and like a razor, work deceit.

Men more than good in evil delight, and lies prefer to what is right.
They utter words both harsh and strong with their devouring, deceitful tongue.

Read 1 Corinthians 5.1-5; meditate on verses 3-5.

Preparation

1. What had Paul done concerning the sinful man?
2. What did he call on the Corinthians to do?

Meditation

Paul did what the Corinthians should have done: He judged the guilty man (v. 3).

Oh, no, no, no, no! We're not supposed to judge anyone. God knows we're all sinners. We must be patient and loving and not judgmental.

Rubbish. Jesus called on His followers to judge with righteous judgment, judgment in line with God's Word and will (Jn. 7.24). This is how He Himself judges, and we must certainly use the mind of Christ as He would (cf. Jn. 5.30). In this case, righteousness required putting this man out of the congregation, out of the fellowship of God's people, and into the hands of Satan and the world (vv. 4, 5). Paul could not take this action unilaterally, but he instructed the people to do so in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The goal of such discipline is threefold: First, it reminds the people of God that sin is serious—deadly serious. Second, it removes from the congregation the influence of one who will not repent of his sin, at the same time reinforcing the congregation's call to holiness of life. Third, it puts the unrepentant sinner in a situation where he may come to his senses (think of the prodigal son) and return to the household of faith a cleansed, repentant, and restored brother.

The primary aim of all church discipline is the recovery to Christ of those who become ensnared in sin (Matt. 18.15-17). This is an important function of the church, and we must not neglect to exercise it as needed.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Church discipline also protects others from being led astray.

“The righteous should choose his friends carefully,
for the way of the wicked leads them astray” (Prov. 12.26).

Good shepherds protect their sheep.

To allow this nastiness to infest the church was unconscionable. Then and now.
How could one ever think it was a good idea to let sin go unchecked—either in your own heart or in a fellow believer’s?

Pastors are quick to shut down operations when they think some germ is going to make them or their parishioners physically ill; but can be rather lackadaisical toward the dangers of sin being cavalierly coughed and sprinkled all over their flock—the chance of one leading only to physical death; while the other, most assuredly, to eternal damnation (Matt. 10.28).

Too often, pastors today are the leading perpetrators of sexual sin in churchdom, so therefore, the chances of church disciplinary action taken against anyone else would be self-accusatory. And we can’t have that, can we? In the meantime, the church is being cast aside as the voice of righteousness, when the world so desperately needs the Savior.

But frankly, the world is as appalled by the church as we should be of ourselves!

God has better plans for us than this (Jer. 29.11).

“...for the LORD your God is testing you to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. You shall walk after the LORD your God and fear Him, and keep His commandments and obey His voice; you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him” (Deut. 10.1-4).

God wants believers who trust Him and obey His Law.

“The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD,
but the prayer of the upright is His delight.
The way of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD,
but He loves him who follows righteousness.
The LORD is far from the wicked,
but He hears the prayer of the righteous” (Prov. 15.8, 9, 29).

Let us choose to be God’s delight.
Let us choose to be the kind of people that God loves.
Let us choose to be righteous and to have our prayers heard.
Let us choose to never do anything that would lead another believer astray.
“So shall I [choose to] keep Your law continually, forever and ever” (Ps. 119.44).

“For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?” (1 Pet. 4.17).

Let’s choose to be righteously ready for it, so we can do the work that He has called us to do!

For reflection

1. How well do you understand the purpose and process of church discipline?
2. Why is it important that churches practice discipline whenever it is needed?

3. What kind of discipline do we need to practice on ourselves to make sure we do not fall into sin?

As the Corinthians were wanting in their duty, having condemned their negligence, he now shows what ought to be done. In order that this stain may be removed, they must cast out this incestuous person from the society of the faithful. He prescribes, then, as a remedy for the disease, excommunication, which they had sinfully delayed so long. John Calvin (1509-1564), Commentary on 1 Corinthians 5.3

Pray Psalm 52.5-9.

Pray for the lost people in your Personal Mission Field. Ask God to soften their hearts and to give you an opportunity to share Jesus with them. Pray that you will continue to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Sing Psalm 52.5-9.

(Warrington: *Give to Our God Immortal Praise*)

God will forever break them down, uproot, and cast them to the ground!
He from their safety tears them away, no more to know the light of day.

The righteous see and laugh and fear, and say, "Behold, what have we here?
Such are all who at God conspire, and wealth and evil ways desire."

But as for me may I be seen in God an olive ever green!
Ever in God, most kind and just, shall I with joy and gladness trust!

Thanks evermore to our Savior be raised! His faithfulness be ever praised!
Here with Your people, loving God, I wait upon Your Name, so good!

3 A Little Leaven

Pray Psalm 51.10-13.

Create in me a clean heart, O God,
And renew a steadfast spirit within me.
Do not cast me away from Your presence,
And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of Your salvation,
And uphold me *by Your* generous Spirit.
Then I will teach transgressors Your ways,
And sinners shall be converted to You.

Sing Psalm 51.10-13.

(Passion Chorale: *O Sacred Head, Now Wounded*)

Create in me a clean heart, renew me from within!
Take not Your Spirit from me because of all my sin.
Salvation's joy restore, LORD, and keep me in Your hand;
thus shall I tell Your strong Word to sinners in the land.

Read 1 Corinthians 5.1-8; meditate on verses 6-8.

Preparation

1. How was Paul using the idea of “leaven” here?
2. What did he want the Corinthians to become?

Meditation

Ouch! Paul rebukes their “glorying”—taking pride in not condemning scandalous and public sin. Can they be so obtuse as not to realize the effect this sin will have on all of them (v. 6)? That the more sin is allowed to fester, the greater harm it will do?

Purge it out, Paul insisted, before the leaven of wickedness turns the whole church away from the Lord (v. 6). Christ died that we might be done with sin, not that we might take it into our lives. He is our Passover, the sacrifice for our sins, that through Him we may feast on His life and be renewed (vv. 7, 8). But we must be cleansed of all “old leaven”—every lingering sin—before, as an unleavened lump, we can be leavened with His grace and power for new life.

There is no time to waste. The Corinthians should come together and rediscover their oneness of mind and heart to cleanse the Body of Christ of sin, that they may be “a new lump”, ready for the leavening of cleansing, forgiveness, renewal, and grace that comes through Jesus alone.

What is true of churches is likewise true of us as individuals. If we harbor sin in our lives, not only will God not hear our prayers (Ps. 66.18) but sin will spread to other aspects and facets of our lives, until we have altogether lost our newness and look like “old leaven, old lump” Corinthians, boasting and glorying of their tolerance, their spiritual lives draining away to nothing.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Paul was telling the Corinthian church to get out their big grip crayons, connect the dots, and come to the realization that their overpowering sin would have disastrous consequences (1 Cor. 1.6).

He was also appalled by their spiritual obliviousness and their obtuse ability to continue their “happy, clappy

glorying” amidst this scandalous and public sin.

Private and personal sins are just as unacceptable to God; but this monstrosity was known church- and community-wide. And nothing was happening; no one was dealing with it. Such a horrible testimony!

We are not saved by our behavior; but we proclaim our salvation through our righteous behavior.

“In mercy and truth atonement is provided for iniquity; and by the fear of the LORD one departs from evil” (Prov. 16.6).

“If you love Me, keep My commandments” (Jn. 14.15).

“If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love,

just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love” (Jn. 15.10).

“You are My friends if you do whatever I command you” (Jn. 15.14).

Who do we think we are? Can we live the Christian life differently from Jesus?

How do we think we can manage it without doing what He says?

Why would we ever want to stray from God’s care and love?

What could possibly cause us to not want to be Jesus’ friend?

Any way you look at it we are lumps (1 Cor. 5.7). We might as well be the right kind.

Old leaven purged, new leaven leavening—cleansing, forgiving, strengthening, and expanding—to become more like Jesus every day.

Leavened lumps, God-fearing friends, of our loving, sacrificed, Passover, Savior (1Cor. 5.7).

For reflection

1. What is your approach to keeping yourself free of “old leaven”?

2. How can believers help one another to be a “new lump” every day?

3. How can the weekly service of worship help you to keep free of the “old leaven”?

Just as the sin of one person contaminates many, if it is not dealt with once it is known, so also does the sin of the many who know what is happening and either do not turn away from it or pretend that they have not noticed it. Sin does not look like sin if it is not corrected or avoided by anybody. Ambrosiaster (fl. 366-384), *Commentary on Paul’s Epistles*

Pray Psalm 51.1-9.

Linger in silence before the Lord to hear if He would convict you of any sin. As He does, purge the old leaven of sin by confession and repentance, and seek the Lord for grace to follow Him today.

Sing Psalm 51.1-9.

(Passion Chorale: *O Sacred Head, Now Wounded*)

Be gracious to me, Savior, according to Your love!

According to Your mercy, my sins, my sins remove!

O wash me, precious Savior, and cleanse me from all sin;

look on me with Your favor, and cause my grief to end.

Against You only, Savior, have I become unclean;

thus just the condemnation which You pronounce on me.

LORD, I was born to sinning, while You seek truth within;

to wisdom my heart winning, release me from my sin!

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In Jesus' blood and mercy, LORD, cleanse my evil heart!
Let me washed, cleansed, renewed be and pure in whole and part.
Bring joy again and gladness; look not upon my sin.
Deliver me from sadness; renew me yet again!

4 Out of This World?

Pray Psalm 71.1-3.

In You, O LORD, I put my trust;
Let me never be put to shame.
Deliver me in Your righteousness, and cause me to escape;
Incline Your ear to me, and save me.
Be my strong refuge,
To which I may resort continually;
You have given the commandment to save me,
For You *are* my rock and my fortress.

Sing Psalm 71.1-3.

(Solid Rock: *My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less*)

In You, O LORD, I refuge claim; O let me never be ashamed.
In righteousness deliver me; incline Your ear and hear my plea.

Refrain v. 3

A Rock of habitation be; command Your Word to rescue me;
my Rock and Fortress ever be!

Read 1 Corinthians 5.1-10; meditate on verses 9, 10.

Preparation

1. What had Paul instructed the Corinthians to do?
2. What did he mean by that?

Meditation

Paul is probably here referencing his previous instruction (v. 9; cf. vv. 4, 5). Some think this may refer to an earlier letter, but I don't think that's likely, nor does the context require it. Paul had written that they must have nothing to do with the "old leaven" but should cast it out to become a "new lump." I think he is here referring to that instruction to clarify it.

Paul was not calling the Corinthians "out of the world". Jesus has sent us into the world, just as He was sent (Jn. 20.21). Each of us has a [Personal Mission Field](#) where we work to realize more of the presence, promise, and power of the Kingdom of God. We are constantly involved with people in the world who do not know the Lord. It would be the height of folly to try to avoid them or to "circle the wagons" of our churches against having any contact with worldly people.

Jesus came to the world as the Light of the world, and He sends us in precisely the same way (Matt. 5.13-16). God brings grace to the world every day, even to those who deny and despise Him (Matt. 5.43-48). We must do the same. We do not hide the Light of Jesus under the bushel of fear or indifference. Rather, calling on the Lord to give us love for our neighbors, we work to show Jesus to them and to tell them the Good News about His love.

We must be careful, of course, to keep ourselves untainted by worldly ways or aspirations. This we do, as Paul has been saying throughout this epistle, by keep our eye on Jesus, looking and clinging to Him to bring His grace and truth *to* the world through us, His chosen vessels (2 Cor. 4.15).

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a

people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation” (1 Pet. 2.9-12).

This message from Peter is not to our unsaved neighbors, or to Disney, or Bud Light, or our local courthouse that won't put out a nativity or post the Law of God in their hallway. Nor is it to Planned Parenthood or any other place we might be thinking of boycotting.

It is directed straight at us. Those who bear the Name of Christ. God's people. Church people. We are so confused about whose behavior we should be monitoring. First and foremost, it is not the world. It is, however, us.

The Law was given to God's people.
We are the ones we should be monitoring.
We are the ones who should be keeping the Law.
If we are keen for a nativity at Christmas, put one up in your own yard.
If we want the Law of God nailed up somewhere prominent, put it on your own house.
Write it on your own heart, live it in your own life.

The “beloved” that Peter was pleading with to abstain from fleshly lusts were the Christians. The people he was telling to do good works and obey the Law were God's people. Those he was encouraging to be good so that others would glorify God, yup, Christians. We are the ones called out of darkness into the marvelous light of our Savior. We are the ones who have obtained mercy and forgiveness for our sins. We are the ones commanded to love and live by the Law of God.

We are called to boycott; but the focus is the sin in our own lives, and in the lives of fellow believers. Cancel that. First. Then boycott whatever else you may choose. “Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you” (Jms. 4.7, 8). A promise given to us. Not to our unbelieving neighbors. But to us. Yes, God expects a lot; but He gives us everything we need, so that we can do it (Lk. 11.13).

We are the ones called to live according to God's Law.
We are the ones who must trust and obey.
“Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good;
Blessed is the man who trusts in Him!
Oh, fear the LORD, you His saints!” (Ps. 34.8, 9).

Us. Not them.

For reflection

1. Can you recite the Ten Commandments from memory?
2. According to Jesus, Matthew 22.34-40, what is the primary purpose of the Law of God?
3. What can you do to bring more meditation on God's Law into your walk with the Lord?

Immoral unbelievers cannot harm the church, but immoral believers corrupt it from within, which is why they must be avoided and expelled. Origen (185-254), Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians 193

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Pray Psalm 71.14-18.

Pray about the day ahead, that the Light of Jesus will shine through you to everyone in your Personal Mission Field.

Sing Psalm 71.14-18.

(Solid Rock: *My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less*)

But as for me my voice I raise to sing in hope and constant praise!

With saving grace my voice will swell Your never-ending grace to tell.

Refrain v. 3

A Rock of habitation be; command Your Word to rescue me;
my Rock and Fortress ever be!

O LORD, I praise Your righteousness Who me from youth have taught and blessed.

Forsake me not when I am old, 'til I Your mercies all have told!

Refrain

5 The Company We Must Not Keep

Pray Psalm 38.9-12.

Lord, all my desire *is* before You;
And my sighing is not hidden from You.
My heart pants, my strength fails me;
As for the light of my eyes, it also has gone from me.
My loved ones and my friends stand aloof from my plague,
And my relatives stand afar off.
Those also who seek my life lay snares *for me*;
Those who seek my hurt speak of destruction,
And plan deception all the day long.

Sing Psalm 38.9-12.

(Leoni: *The God of Abraham Praise*)

You know all my desire, my sighs You know full well.
My strength fails and light's holy fire my eyes dispel.
My friends and loved ones fail; the wicked do me wrong.
My life they seek, my soul assail the whole day long.

Read 1 Corinthians 5.1-11; meditate on verse 11.

Preparation

1. What did Paul write to the Corinthians?
2. What was his intention in this?

Meditation

Our psalm for today gives us some sense of how God works in believers who are living in sin. To be succinct, He can make our lives miserable, lonely, and sorrowful.

Which is exactly what Paul was hoping would happen in the man for whose excommunication he was calling. Those who call themselves believers but continue to live in sin must be sent away from the Body of Christ until the Lord works conviction of sin in them. Paul is clear, but not exhaustive, concerning the kind of people he has in mind: those who are sexually immoral, as defined by God's Law; those who covet and lust and are therefore never content with what they have; idolaters of various sorts, who make of things their desire and happiness and god; and revilers, drunkards, and extortioners—those who oppress, abuse, or offend against others.

Remember, these are believers Paul calls us to separate from—"not even to eat with such a person." That would include not allowing them to take the Lord's Supper. People who live this way, or who in any way knowingly continue in sin, and call themselves Christians are deceiving themselves. But we must not be deceived into thinking that it's OK to continue in sin and still insist you are a believer and remain in good standing with your local fellowship.

Not in Paul's book, friends. That might be what we do these days, but if so, we go beyond what is written into thinking we know better than God how to build His Church. The sooner we face up to this, the sooner we can move on beyond it to get back on the Lord's agenda rather than ours.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Paul was also warning the people not to be enablers of the guilty party.

If we are still willing to grab a quick lunch or fraternize in any way, we are keeping this person from coming face to face with the convicting power of the Holy Spirit.

If we do not remove ourselves from their fellowship, they are having their cake and eating it too. They have lost nothing—they still have their friends who apparently are not the least bit disgusted by their behavior.

And truly, if we think we are showing them “love” by approving of their sin we are grievously mistaken. Enabling sin and delaying repentance is neither loving nor tolerant, but is assuredly hateful and wrong.

“Deliver those who are drawn toward death,
And hold back those stumbling to the slaughter.
If you say, ‘Surely we did not know this,’
Does not He who weighs the hearts consider it?
He who keeps your soul, does He not know it?
And will He not render to each man according to his deeds?” (Prov. 24.11, 12).

We are told, Do not keep company with a Christian who is:

1. Sexually immoral in any way, shape, or form.
 2. Covetous and greedy of other’s belongings, human or otherwise.
 3. An idolater who worships anything other than God.
 4. A reviler—a verbal abuser.
 5. A drunkard—who overdoes in any way to lose self-control.
 6. An extortioner—who obtains benefit through coercion.
- (1 Cor. 5.11)

And, of course, we should not be *doing* any of those things either.

God gave us His Law as a blessing, because He knows how things run best, and this is it.

Keep the Law, and don’t hang out with anyone in the church that doesn’t keep it.

“He who justifies the wicked, and he who condemns the just,
both of them alike are an abomination to the LORD” (Prov. 17.15).

We have important work to do, and we dare not allow ourselves to become ensnared in sin, or condone others in theirs. Because as Jesus called Paul, He is also calling us, to those in our Personal Mission Field, be they believers or not: “to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me” (Acts 26.18).

This is the company that we must keep—Jesus—so we can do the work that He has called us to do.

For reflection

1. Why is it so important that we be careful about the company we keep as Christians?
2. Can we help believers who are mired in sin by continuing to consort with them? Explain.
3. What can you do to make sure you don’t become trapped in sinful ways?

Christians are to avoid familiar converse with all who disgrace the Christian name. Such are only fit companions for their brethren in sin, and to such company they should be left, whenever it is possible to do so. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), Commentary on 1 Corinthians 5.9-13

Righteous Judgment: 1 Corinthians 5

Pray Psalm 38.17-22.

Wait on the Lord in silence, asking Him to show you any lingering sins. Confess them at once, repent, and set a new course to be more like Jesus. Don't let unconfessed sin cut off your relationship with the Lord (Ps. 66.18).

Sing Psalm 38.17-22.

(Leoni: *The God of Abraham Praise*)

My sins I now confess; my anxious soul relieve!
Though foes are strong, LORD, heal and bless all who believe!
Forsake me not, O LORD! Repay my foes with wrath.
Stand by me with Your saving Word and guard my path!

6 Whom to Judge

Pray Psalm 40.4, 5.

Blessed is that man who makes the LORD his trust,
And does not respect the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies.
Many, O LORD my God, are Your wonderful works
Which You have done;
And Your thoughts toward us
Cannot be recounted to You in order;
If I would declare and speak of them,
They are more than can be numbered.

Sing Psalm 40.4, 5.

(Dix: *For the Beauty of the Earth*)

Blessed are all who trust in You, turning both from lies and pride.
Countless wonders, LORD, You do, and Your thoughts with us abide.
LORD, Your worth who can declare? None with You can e'er compare.

Read 1 Corinthians 5.1-13; meditate on verse 12, 13.

Prepare

1. Whom are we supposed to judge?
2. What must we do with evil in our midst?

Meditation

It's always easier to pronounce judgment on "them" rather than "us" or "me". But we are not called to judge those who are "outside" the church, Paul says. God judges them (v. 13), and even now He is pouring out His wrath against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of people who suppress His truth in one way or another (Rom. 1.18-32). If those outside the Body of Christ need judging, we can trust the Lord to handle it. That does not preclude our calling the world to repentance, only condemning it.

But we must lovingly judge with righteous judgment ourselves and those who are our brethren in the Lord, not to condemn, but to correct. It's always best to begin with ourselves of course, listening for the Spirit to judge, convict, and redirect us (Ps. 139.23, 24; Jn. 16.8-11). But we do not help our brethren increase in Christlikeness by "blinking" at their sin—observing it and passing on without saying anything. Love for God requires that we honor Him by helping our brother repent; love for our brother seeks not to condemn but only to restore to the path of righteousness (Heb. 12.3-11).

In verse 13 Paul quotes Deuteronomy 17.12, a text showing that capital punishment is how the Israelites were to "put away" an unrepentant sinner. The Church does not have that duty in its remit; the sword for wickedness belongs to the State (Rom. 13.1-4). But excommunication, which involves turning one over to the devil for the destruction of his fleshly ways (v. 5), can seem like a death sentence. And indeed, it is, but one that holds the prospect of repentance, revival, and renewal as its desired outcome.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162.

"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.
Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart,
and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matt. 11.28-30).

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not

perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved” (Jn. 3.16, 17).

God has lifted the dire burden of judging the world off our shoulders. Whew! Even Jesus was not sent to condemn the world, but to save it. What a relief! We should feel so free, so unburdened, so rested! Nobody needs or wants us to do this. We can let it go.

The only people who will miss us playing this role are the comedians who love to make fun of our over-zealous super-righteousness. You know, like the inimitable “church lady” of Saturday Night Live fame.

Before God gave the Law to Moses, He said to him: “You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to Myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine” (Ex. 19.4, 5). Then “God spoke all these words, saying: ‘I AM the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.’” Then He gave them the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20. 1-17).

The Law was given to us to keep.

And we are, in fact, our “brother’s keeper” (Gen. 4.9) and are to care as deeply and tenderly for their souls as we care for our own. The judgment we are to render to our family in Christ is to be an act of love, not vindictiveness. A means of sending them out to bring them in, as God did with His people: “Then He brought us out from there, that He might bring us in, to give us the land of which He swore to our fathers” (Deut. 6.23).

No one ever exposes their loved ones intentionally to anything that would cause them harm. We just don’t. Why are we so uncaring about sin and its deathly pervasiveness and finality? For most assuredly, “The wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6.23).

Let us take the utmost care to keep ourselves and God’s people clean from sin. Because “Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish” (Eph. 5.25-27).

If it’s important to Him, it should be important to us.

For reflection

1. What would you recommend to new believers as practice for continually judging themselves?
2. How should a local church exercise judgment over its members?
3. Why do we need the Law of God to keep us from falling into sins?

Paul uses an expression taken from the Old Testament, partly because he is hinting that the Corinthians will be great gainers in being freed from a kind of plague and partly to show that this kind of thing is no novelty but goes right back to the beginning. Even Moses the lawgiver thought that people like this should be cut off, but he did it with greater severity than is shown here. Moses would have had the man stoned, but Paul thinks only of trying to lead him to repentance. John Chrysostom (344-407), Homilies on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians 16.3

Pray Psalm 40.1-3, 6-10.

Call on the Lord to open your eyes and ears to hear His Word and Spirit. Listen for any word of conviction, and confess your sins accordingly. Ask God to give you discernment from His Word, so that you follow in His way and freely proclaim His truth.

Sing Psalm 40.1-3, 6-10.

(Dix: *For the Beauty of the Earth*)

I waited patiently for God; He inclined and heard my cry,
lifted me up above the sod, set me on a Rock on high!
New songs in my mouth He gave; may He through me many save.

Offrings You do not require—open now my ears, O LORD!
What from me do You desire? Firm delight to do Your Word.
Take my life in ev'ry part; write Your Law upon my heart.

LORD, Your truth will I proclaim to Your people gathered 'round,
nor will I my lips restrain—let Your precious ways resound!
Of Your saving grace and Word I would speak, most loving LORD.

7 Keep the Feast

Pray Psalm 17.15.

As for me, I will see Your face in righteousness;
I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness.

Sing Psalm 17.15.

(Park Street: *All You That Fear Jehovah's Name*)

But as for me, LORD, save and bless!
Let me behold Your righteousness.
Your face in glory I would see,
and thus forever blessed be,
and thus forever blessed be.

Review 1 Corinthians 5.1-13; meditate on verses 7, 8.

Preparation

1. What did Paul instruct the Corinthians to do?
2. What did he call them to keep?

Meditation

Smack in the middle of this difficult passage Paul wrote, “Therefore, let us keep the feast...” (v. 8). What feast did He have in mind? He mentioned Christ as the Passover Lamb Who was sacrificed for our sins (v. 7). We understand the Passover to have been a type of Christ, pointing forward to His coming and work. Once the Passover lamb was sacrificed, the people feasted on it. We also are to feast on Jesus. But what does that mean?

There is perhaps here a reference to the Lord’s Supper. But I do not believe that is the primary focus. The focus is on our feasting on Jesus, feeding on Him so that His perfections saturate our soul and His life becomes our life. We feed on Jesus by feeding on His Word (Jer. 15.16; Jn. 6.63); but reading and studying the Bible will be of no use to us if we harbor sin in our lives, whether individually or corporately.

Thus, to gain the benefit of the feast Jesus offers us, and to savor and delight in it as He intends, we must be cleansed of all old leaven, everything that is contrary to the way of Jesus, and be renewed by His Spirit and Word so that, as we feast on Him, we may gain His strength to be like Him more and more.

Too many of us, I fear, are still snacking on the junk food of our old lives. We have not yet learned how to feed on the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth which Jesus serves us in Himself through His Word.

A day is coming when those who feast on Jesus now will feast on Him forever in a perpetual marriage supper. But we must prepare for that great feast by daily feasting on our Lord. Put out all the old leaven in your life, come to the Word of God seeking Jesus, and feast on Him so that you may become more like Him. Or, as Paul wrote, “Let us keep the feast.”

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Pick up these toys before you start another game.
Clean up the kitchen before you begin cooking.
Straighten up your desk before you start a new project.
Rake up the leaves before you sow new grass seed.
Purge out the old leaven of sin, malice and wickedness before you can become a clean, unleavened lump.

But duly purged, you can keep the feast with gusto!

God told His people: “When I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt. So this day shall be to you a memorial; and you shall keep it as a feast to the LORD throughout your generations. You shall keep it as a feast by an everlasting ordinance” (Ex. 12.13, 14).

Then Jesus stepped into history and became the eternal Passover Lamb. Sacrificed for us so that we can “keep the feast” (1 Cor. 5.8); and the plague of death will not strike us.

“Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should soon depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end” (Jn. 13.1).

And that “them” includes us, through His amazing love.

Then He says to us, “If you love Me, keep My commandments” (Jn. 14.15).
And, “You are My friends if you do whatever I command you” (Jn. 15.14).
And, “These things I command you, that you love one another” (Jn. 15.17).
And, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.”
And, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”
Because, “On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets” (Matt. 22.37-40).

We love Him because He first loved us (1 Jn. 4.19); and it is imperative that we do all we can to prove it. He has clearly told us how—repentance and turning away from our old leavened lumpy selves being a definite first step. Then doing the things He has planned for us to do (Eph. 2.10), in tandem with keeping God’s Laws. And of course, Keeping the feast.

Just make sure you wash your face and hands before partaking! (Ps. 24.3-6)

For reflection

1. Would you describe your time in the Word of God as a “feast”? Why or why not?
2. In what specific ways is the Word helping you to grow?
3. Whom will you encourage today to “keep the feast” of Jesus and His Word?

Our Paschal victim, that spotless lamb in whom there was found no guile, the pure unleavened bread without the leaven of malice, has been offered up in sacrifice. And this is Christ, who must be eaten by us, not only by way of the sacrament, but also by way of imitation, so that taught by him and assuming his form we may become like him and may be (as far as is possible and grace permits) so pure and simple, in the sincerity and purity of justice, as to have no admixture of the opposite. John Colet (1467-1519), *Exposition of 1 Corinthians 5*

Pray Psalm 17.1-5.

Call on the Lord to search and judge you, and to cleanse you of all sin. Pray that He will feed you on His

Work so that you walk the paths of righteousness always.

Sing Psalm 17.1-5.

(Park Street: *All You That Fear Jehovah's Name*)

Hear a just cause, O God the LORD!

Gladly receive my plaintive word.

I cry with lips of purity:

Look on my case with equity!

Look on my case with equity!

Let judgment from Your throne proceed;

You have discerned my every need.

Let naught of sin in me be found,

and from my tongue let truth resound!

And from my tongue let truth resound!

As for the deeds of sinful men,

I will not walk those paths again.

My feet hold firm from first to last:

Help me to walk Your righteous path,

help me to walk Your righteous path!

Righteous Judgment: 1 Corinthians 5

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

1. What was the problem Paul addressed in this chapter? How had the Corinthians dealt with it?
2. How was Paul using the idea of leaven and loaf (lump)?
3. Is it true that Christians must never judge others? Explain.
4. What is the role of church discipline, including excommunication, in the life of a Christian community? What is it for, and what does it seek to accomplish?
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from this part of our study of 1 and 2 Corinthians?

For prayer:

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