

(1 Corinthians) Overview to Chapter 5

by Brian Brodersen

Paul addresses the issue of sexual immorality in the Corinthian church and emphasizes the importance of church discipline to protect the body of Christ and bring restoration to those who have sinned.

Duration: 51:46

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 5:1

Topics: "Moral Accountability", "Christian Witness"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher addresses the issue of sexual immorality within the congregation. He emphasizes that this problem should not be overlooked or condoned, but rather dealt with. The preacher also highlights the importance of Christianity contending against a relativistic philosophy that is becoming increasingly accepted in society. The sermon emphasizes the need for Christians to have a positive impact on others and to show them the reality of Christ and the love of God.

Transcript

As we come now to chapter five, we move on to the second subject that Paul is going to address. As I pointed out to you in the beginning of our study of this epistle, this epistle is primarily a corrective epistle. We studied Romans together.

Romans is primarily a doctrinal epistle. It lays out very clearly for us the essential doctrines of the Christian faith. And then the latter part of that epistle is instructive and teaches us how to apply God's truth.

But this first epistle to the Corinthians is primarily a corrective epistle. There were many, many problems in this church, in the city of Corinth, and Paul is dealing with these things one by one. Chapters one through four, as we've been studying over the past several weeks, we're really dealing with one subject primarily.

And that was the subject of human wisdom being exalted over and above the revelation of God. And throughout those four chapters, Paul gives a lengthy rebuke to the Corinthians for exalting human wisdom. Above God's revelation and that exaltation of human wisdom led subsequently to pride and various divisions within the church.

So now as we come to chapter five, Paul is moving on to the next issue that he wants to address with them. And he's going to cover this in various ways all the way through the seventh chapter. And the particular subject that he's going to bring up here will be the issue of sexual immorality.

And so he begins and he says, it is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you. And such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles, Gentiles would be synonymous with the unbelievers. And this was the particular sin that a man has his father's wife.

So there was a moral problem. That had developed in this church, once human wisdom replaces biblical authority. Moral disaster is sure to follow, and that's what we find taking place here.

This particular epistle is so applicable to the current situation. I think in some ways it is one of the most relevant of the epistles to the present situation. If you look back to the time of the Reformation, you find that during the time of the Reformation, the book of Romans and the book of Galatians, they were the key epistles to address the main issues of that day.

And it was through a rediscovering of the doctrine of salvation by grace, through faith alone, that this great move of God began. So those epistles had a tremendous impact back at the time of the Reformation. But yet we've moved far from that time and we're living in a different era with different problems.

And although those things certainly have much relevance to the situation today as well, I think this epistle to the Corinthians is in some ways the most relevant epistle in the New Testament to the modern situation within the church. Of course, sexual immorality is a major issue of discussion in the church today, and some have concluded in some sense that there is no such thing as sexual immorality, that it's simply these things were written at a time when people had views of sexuality that were not sophisticated enough. And we've, of course, come far beyond that in our modern world.

And we know now much more than they ever knew. And so a lot of what the Bible would refer to as sexual immorality, some in the church today would say that this is not immorality at all. So it comes back again to the matter of authority.

If we believe that the Bible is the inspired word of God and that it is the absolute authority for faith and practice, then we have to believe that what it has to say about sexual issues are as relevant and applicable today as they were at the time that it was written. I happen to believe that. And I think many of you believe that as well.

But that, of course, is what the Bible teaches. Nowhere does the Bible indicate that these ideas were simply a byproduct of that present cultural situation. The Bible indicates that this is the permanent condition of man, the sinful condition, and that these areas of sexual aberration have been seen in man's history from the very beginning and will be part of man's history, too.

The very end. And so here Paul brings up the subject of sexual immorality, and as I said, he's going to carry it on through the sixth and even into the seventh chapter to some degree. So we'll be talking about this at length over the next several weeks.

Now, here's something that I find is quite interesting and again, relevant to today's situation. Within the church, not only was there sexual immorality that was being practiced, but it was something that even the unbelievers themselves recognized as going beyond normal sexual behavior. And isn't that what we see today also? We see in some senses the church is condoning things that even unbelievers recognize are wrong.

You can go out and take a survey on the streets and you can begin to ask people about subjects like adultery or premarital sex or homosexual relations and things like that, and you will find a fair number of

people who are not Bible believing people who will tell you that those kinds of things are wrong. And yet you can find bishops in the church standing up in support of these things. So you see the connection, you see the similarity between what was going on in Corinth and what is going on in the current situation.

Now, the particular problem, again, was that a man had developed a relationship with his father's wife. Some commentators believe that this was actually an incestuous relationship. Others believe that it was probably a man being involved with his stepmother.

Either way you look at it, it was something that even the unbelievers themselves saw as improper. Now, listen to what Paul says to them. He says, and you, the unbelievers are appalled by this, but you are puffed up and have not rather mourned that he who has done this deed might be taken away from you.

Now, look for a moment over in verse six, he says, your glorying is not good. So here's the amazing thing back in the first century, and here's the thing that ties it so much to the current situation. Not only were they allowing sexual immorality, but they were proud of it.

They were tolerant of immorality and they were proud of their tolerance. They were glorying in it. They felt that this was something to be congratulated for, that they had been so open minded that they felt that people who lived immorally could also be part of the fellowship.

And there shouldn't be any kind of judgment or any kind of negative thing said to them at all. So this church 2000 years ago was very similar to many of the churches around us today. They were proud of their tolerance of things that God was plainly and clearly condemning in his word.

Now, I want to take a few moments this morning and talk about this subject of tolerance. Because that, of course, is something that we're hearing so much about today. We're hearing about the need to be tolerant.

And the only thing really today in some circles that is not going to be tolerated is intolerance. The only way today in some circles to be wrong is to claim to be right. If you claim to be right, then you are wrong.

And that is the greatest of all sins in the thinking of some people. But the amazing thing is, all of this isn't really all that new. We see it right here in First Corinthians.

That was their attitude. But I'd like to read to you from a sermon preached over 60 years ago by a man named Gresham Machen. He was a great theologian and defender of the Christian faith.

Over 60 years ago, he said these things that are so relevant to the current situation. Let me read to you what he says and bear with me. It's a bit long, but I think it will be very helpful.

He said the redemptive religion known as Christianity is contending. In our own church, he was a Presbyterian and in all the larger churches of the world against a totally alien type of religion. As always, the enemy conceals his most dangerous assaults under pious phrases and half truths.

The chivalrous of the adversary have sometimes a very deceptive sound. Let us propagate Christianity, the adversary says, but let us not always be engaged in arguing in defense of it. Let us make our preaching positive and not negative.

Let us avoid controversy. Let us hold to a person and not to a dogma. Let us think small doctrinal differences and seek the unity of the Church of Christ.

Let us drop doctrinal assertions and interpret Christ for ourselves. Let us look for our knowledge of Christ, not in ancient books, the Bible, but to the living Christ in our hearts. Let us not impose Western creeds on the Eastern mind.

Let us be tolerant of opposing views. Such are some of the chivalrous. Of that agnostic modernism, which is the deadliest enemy of the Christian religion today, they deceive some of God's people some of the time.

They are heard sometimes from the lips of good Christian people who have not the slightest inkling of what they mean. But their true meaning to thinking men is becoming increasingly clear. Increasingly, it is becoming necessary for a man to decide whether he is going to stand or not to stand for the Lord Jesus Christ.

And he is presented to us as he is presented to us in the word of God. If you decide to stand for Christ, you will not have an easy life. A man may believe what he pleases, provided he does not believe anything strongly enough to risk his life on it and fight for it.

Tolerance 60 years ago is the great word. Tolerance is the great word. Men even ask for tolerance when they look to God in prayer.

But how can any Christian possibly pray such a prayer is that what a terrible prayer it is? How full of disloyalty to the Lord Jesus Christ. There is a sense, of course, in which tolerance is a virtue. If by it you mean tolerance on the part of the state, that forbearance of majorities toward minorities, the the resolute rejection of any measure of physical compulsion and propagating either what is true or what is false.

Then, of course, the Christian ought to favor tolerance with all his might and main and not to lament the widespread growth of intolerance. Or if you mean by tolerance, forbearance toward personal attacks upon yourself or courtesy and patience and fairness in dealing with all errors of whatever kind. Then again, tolerance is a virtue.

But to pray for tolerance apart from such qualifications, in particular, to pray for tolerance without careful definition. Of that of which you are to be tolerant is just to pray for the breakdown of the Christian religion, for the Christian religion is intolerant to the core. There lies the whole offense of the cross and also the whole power of it.

Always the gospel would have been received with favor by the world if it had been presented merely as one way of salvation. The offense came because it was presented as the only way and because it made relentless war upon all other ways. God save us then from this tolerance of which we hear so much.

I was amazed as I read that because it could have been written tomorrow. But again, we see that things really don't change much at all and we are faced with the same types of issues today. And yet I think at the time that these statements were made, this thinking was sort of consigned to more of the academic world and it was more or less consigned to people who sat around and debated these things.

It hadn't trickled down to the level of the common man. But now we're finding it is rapidly becoming the only acceptable way to view any aspect of life, to have to view it through this relativistic type of a philosophy. So we are contending with the same things that Christians have been contending with throughout the ages.

So here back in our text, in chapter five, we find that there is a problem of sexual immorality in the congregation, but it is not to be simply overlooked, nor is it to be condoned, but it is to be dealt with. And that's what the apostle is going to proceed to exhort them to do. So he says in verse three, for I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged as though I were present him who has so done this deed in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

When you are gathered together along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord. So this is what Paul, the apostle, says to do. When you are confronted with this kind of situation in the church, a situation dealing with whatever form of sexual immorality it might be, he says you are to exercise church discipline.

There is a proper way to deal with it, and the person who's involved has to be dealt with for the sake of the body in general, but also for the sake of the individual. So church leadership is called upon to exercise church discipline. Now, what happens when you're in a situation where the vast majority of church leadership sees no problem with what the Bible would refer to as sexual immorality? Well, then I think the individual believer has an obligation to separate themselves from that institution, whatever it might be.

But when we're talking about on a congregational level, or we're talking about maybe a denominational situation in the early days, these things needed to be dealt with. And in some cases, because they were never dealt with, they were swept under the carpet. Now they're being condoned.

Now they're being propagated. But the responsibility of church leadership is to deal with these things. Now, this is what the apostle says to do.

He says to deliver one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh. What does he mean by that and how is that practically accomplished? Well, what the apostle is referring to here is taking the individual and setting them outside of the fellowship. You see, as a Christian, there is not only an individual relationship with God, but there's a corporate relationship with God as well.

We're all part of the body of Christ and being part of the body of Christ. There is for us an aspect of protection. Because we are part of the body of Christ, the Bible talks in several places about God's protection upon us, about there being a hedge about us and things of that nature.

And being part of the church itself gives you a protection to some degree from the devices of Satan. So Paul is saying that this particular individual is to be set outside of the fellowship for the destruction of his flesh. Now, what he's talking about is setting a person outside of the church and allowing sin to take its toll upon them, allowing the consequences of their sin to come upon them in full impact, getting them to see the seriousness of their position.

You see, when a person is suddenly set apart and said, you're not privileged to be among us any longer, that's a very serious matter. And the idea behind it is to get them to realize the seriousness of what they're doing and to come to their senses and to repent of their sin. Church discipline is always to be exercised with the motive of restoration.

That's always to be the motivation behind church discipline. It's always to seek the restoration of the individual and to bring to their attention the seriousness of their offense is the first step in restoration. See, suddenly they come to realize I'm jeopardizing my my life, I'm jeopardizing my my position with God.

And by the fact that the church is now saying I'm no longer welcome, that is to be a wake up call to them to get them to come to their senses and realize that there are going to be long term ramifications to their behavior. So we never exercise church discipline with the sense of just completely ostracizing someone and rejoicing in the fact that they're now out from among us and we can't wait for the judgment of God to demolish them. But no, our attitude is always to be one of wanting to see ultimately their restoration.

So Paul is saying set them outside of the fellowship for the destruction of the flesh. In other words, you say in essence to them, if you want to live for the devil, then we'll give you the privilege of doing so and you can reap the consequences of that. And so the destruction of the flesh is to allow that consequence of sin to take its toll upon them so that they will come to their senses and come back in repentance to the Lord.

That's why Paul is urging them that they do this so that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. You see, Paul recognizes unless there's a turning from the sin, they're jeopardizing their soul. So discipline them in order that they might come to their senses, repent and have security for their soul on the day of judgment.

So he says now your glorying is not good. Their tolerance, their boasting, they were they were very proud of the fact that they could allow such a one in their midst. Your glorying is not good.

Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump, therefore, purge out the old leaven that you may be a new lump. Since you are truly unleavened. So another thing the apostle points out to them is that the toleration of sin in the midst of the fellowship is going to ultimately contaminate the body.

And that's true, just as it's true with leaven, a little leaven leavens the whole lump. It doesn't take but a pinch of leaven inserted into the batch of dough to affect the entire batch. And so it doesn't take but a little bit of sin tolerated within the church before pretty soon there's a lax attitude towards sin.

And then finally, there's not a problem with it at all. That's the way sin operates. It comes in like that and then it begins to work its way through the entire body.

So to give you an example of how it might happen, let's say there's someone who is notorious for living in some sort of sin, but they're never disciplined. So another person in the congregation looks on and says, well, this person's living that way and nothing's happened to them. Maybe it's a person who holds the office of a deacon in the church or something like that.

It hasn't been uncommon that a person who holds a position in the church, holds that position because they maybe hold an important position in society. Maybe they make a large contribution to the church. Therefore, they have a lot more freedom to live the way they want.

Nobody's going to say anything because after all, if they leave the church, then that means the money goes and we don't want that to happen. This happens all the time, doesn't it? So here's somebody in a position and they're allowed to live this way. Somebody else says, well, if they can do it, I can do it also.

And pretty soon that type of thing begins to spread through the church where there's no church discipline. It's not going to be long before the entire body is affected in a negative way. So church leaders have the responsibility of disciplining.

I've been pastoring for about 17 years now and over the years, we have had to exercise church discipline on occasions. We've had to ask people to leave the church. It's never a pleasant thing to do.

It's one of the most unpleasant aspects of the ministry. But yet we have a responsibility to the flock. And when we see someone who is living in open sin, we have the responsibility to confront them on that, to address that.

And if they're unwilling to repent of that, we have then the responsibility to ask them to no longer join us until they get this sorted out. And I can say that over the years, we've seen God do wonderful things through the exercise of church discipline. We've seen people, once they're set outside the congregation, realize the seriousness of their offense and thoroughly repent and come back and be restored fully to fellowship.

But unfortunately, we've seen people also who have become embittered and angry that discipline was exercised and go out and never come back at all. Another thing on church discipline, it's important that it's done properly. And I've heard of situations over the years where church discipline has been exercised, but I think in some ways in an improper manner.

In some cases, a person maybe is brought before the whole congregation and all of their sins are told in detail and then they're kicked out. And I know people have done that based upon what they thought the scripture was teaching. There's actually a statement by Paul in his epistle to Timothy to those who sin to rebuke before all that others may fear.

But people fail to look at the context. The context is church leaders, church leaders who sin there to be rebuked before all. But sometimes, you know, a person in the congregation has been treated in that manner.

And this is, you know, had such a negative effect on them that they've gone out and haven't been able to just get over the trauma of that. So I think it always has to be done in in the proper spirit. Paul in writing to the Galatians, I think he laid out for us the proper attitude when we're addressing when we're addressing any kind of inconsistency or sin in the life of another Christian.

He said, if any man sees a brother that is overtaken in a fault, then you who are spiritual go to that person in the spirit of meekness, considering yourself, lest you also be tempted. I think that always has to be the underlying factor that we go recognizing I have the same propensity. I could also fall into sin.

I'm not immune. If I for one moment think that I'm above any of those things, just simply as a person, I could never do that, then I'm actually probably on my way to doing that very thing. Paul later on will say to these same people, if any man thinks he stands, let him take heed lest he fall.

So whenever I'm addressing someone who is caught up in any sort of sin, I must do so always remembering that I could be in the same situation. And how would I want to be dealt with? Well, I would want to be dealt with mercifully and gently. But yet at the same time, there must be firmness and there must be a definite sentence that is passed.

But it's the attitude that is important that we have that attitude of gentleness and the sense of recognizing it could happen to us. And again, if we have true love for the person and the ultimate goal of restoration, then I think we're going to exercise church discipline in a proper manner. Paul says, for indeed, Christ, our Passover was sacrificed for us.

Therefore, let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. So he's he's using this analogy of the Passover and the

feast of unleavened bread. He's using all of this to speak to them about the need for purity.

Within the body of Christ, next week, we're going to take an in-depth look at the whole issue of Christ being our Passover for us. So we'll leave a lengthy exposition of that till next time. He says in verse nine.

I wrote to you in my epistle. Not to keep company with sexually immoral people. Now, this is a point that we probably ought to touch on for just a moment.

We have two epistles from Paul to the church in Corinth. But apparently there was another epistle that we don't have access to. Paul alludes to it several times in this particular epistle.

So he did write to them on another occasion and addressed some of these same issues, but we don't have access to that. That's not a problem. Of course, we have what we need.

And it could be that the apostles wrote other letters that we did not have finally passed down to us. Of course, if they were ever discovered, we could be certain that they're going to be completely in harmony with what is presently written. There are other pieces of literature that claim to be apostolic and authoritative and so forth.

But yet when you compare them with the New Testament documents, you find that they're contrary to the clear teaching in the New Testament. So we reject them, of course, as being spurious and not actual documents. So, yes, Paul wrote another epistle.

We don't have it. It doesn't really matter. He just addressed some of these things there, but he's obviously going over them again.

So he says, this is what I wrote, not to keep company with sexually immoral people. Yet I certainly did not mean with the sexually immoral people of this world or with the covetous or extortioners or idolaters. Since then, you would need to go out of the world.

So he's clarifying something for them. Because apparently when Paul wrote this, they thought he meant they couldn't have any affiliation with anyone who was in any of these categories. And they were beginning to realize what he already knew.

You'd have to leave the world if you couldn't have any association with with any people like this, because these are the things that people do. It's just part of life outside of Christ. So he says, I wasn't talking to you about separating necessarily from those people.

That's not what I had in mind. Now, we as Christian people. Of course, we need to be wise.

In choosing our friends, we need to be wise in the choice of people that we closely affiliate ourselves with. If we closely affiliate ourselves with the enemies of God, then that is obviously going to have a negative impact on us. But yet at the same time.

We want to help people come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, and if we entirely separate ourselves from them, we won't be able to do that either, will we? That was one of the great problems with the monastic movement when they developed monasteries and people who wanted to be spiritual moved off into the desert or up into the mountains or moved away from society. When they moved away from society, they were no longer able to have an impact on society. And that, of course, is what God wants us to do.

Jesus set the example when he came. Jesus didn't go hide away somewhere in some secret place and then call some people to him and just have his own little private convention. Jesus went out into the world and he touched people's lives.

Now, Jesus had the advantage of not having a sin nature. So he didn't have any of that, you know, pulling him in that direction. We have a sin nature.

We've all probably lived in sin to some degree. And so there's always the danger of being influenced in the wrong way and being pulled back into that. So we have to be wise in our dealings out in this world.

We have to recognize our strengths and our weaknesses and we have to operate on that basis. If I came out of a background where I had a real problem with alcohol, if that was the maybe the destructive sin in my life and now I've become a convert, it probably would be very unwise to think that God has given me a ministry in the pubs because, you see, I'm setting myself up for trouble by subjecting myself to that. Now, God might give somebody ministry in the pubs, but it's going to be someone who doesn't have that that inclination toward that and is not going to be in danger of falling into that.

So you see, this is where wisdom comes in. We we need to be around non-Christian people. We need to be around sexually immoral people and covetous people and idolaters and things like that.

We need to be around them so that we might demonstrate the love of Christ to them. But we have to be careful. We have to be wise in our dealings and we have to make sure that they do not begin to pull us in their direction.

So Paul says, I wasn't talking to you about separating yourself from them, because if that's what I was referring to, you just have to leave the world. This is what the world is made up of. But Jesus said, I've left you in the world.

Have you ever wondered why Jesus left us in the world? Why hasn't he just taken us to heaven? Why, when a person becomes a Christian, why aren't they immediately taken to heaven? That would be nice. But the Lord has left us here with a purpose in mind, and the purpose is that we would be able to affect the lives of other people for him, that we would be able to show them the reality of Christ and the love of God and be an instrument that he could use to bring them into this great salvation. So the Lord has left us here and he wants us to have an impact on people that don't know him.

But we need to be wise in our efforts to do so. Paul says this, he says, but now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother who is sexually immoral or covetous or an idolater or a reviler or a drunkard or an extortioner. Not even to eat with such a person, this is a hard rule that the apostle is laying down, he said, I wasn't talking to you about non-Christian people, I'm talking to you about Christian people who are living in open disobedience to God.

They're the ones that I'm telling you not to keep company with. You see, it goes back to what he was talking about earlier, discipline. You see, as long as the person living in open and willful rebellion.

As long as they feel acceptance by the body of Christ, the seriousness of their sin is never impressed upon them. So Paul says, remember, we want to see this person restored. The first step to restoration is recognition of the seriousness of their offense.

Stay away from them. Now, again, let's clarify something here. He's not.

I don't think at all he's talking about the person who is caught up in something like this and we recognize it and then we go to them, we have we ask them out for lunch that we might hopefully minister the truth to them. He's not preventing us from doing something like that. What he's preventing us from doing is condoning their behavior and acting as though nothing is the matter and accepting them, inviting them along and saying, oh, you know, nothing has changed.

That's what he's talking about. So he's not saying we can't go out with such an individual in hopes of bringing them to their senses and helping them to come back to the Lord. He's not saying that we have to cut off all communication with that person entirely.

But if we come to a place with that person where it's obvious that they are not open to correction, they're rebellious toward God's authority and we realize that they're just using us to, you know, maintain their own position. That's the kind of thing that the apostle is dealing with here. But listen to the list that he gives here, not only the sexually immoral, but the covetous, the idolaters, the slanderers, the drunkards and.

The extortionists, the swindlers, so what he's talking about is anyone who claims to be a Christian who lives in open defiance to the clear teaching of scripture, we are not to have fellowship with them. He said, no, not even to eat with such a person. Now, in that culture, eating with a person was a little more significant than it is in our modern Western culture.

We eat with people all the time. We don't even know them. We don't think much about it.

But in that culture, when a person ate with another person, it was signifying an intimate relationship. So that's what Paul is saying. We're not to have any intimate relationships with them because the impression that they will receive is that we condone their behavior.

And to condone their behavior is to be contrary to God. There are many people in the Christian church today and people in leadership as well who are condoning sinful behavior. And as I said earlier, even in some cases denying that the behavior is sinful, but I'm reminded always of the words of the prophet to the king of Judah, Jehoshaphat.

Jehoshaphat went out to battle, allied with Ahab. If you don't know who Jehoshaphat was, I'm sure you know who Ahab was. He was one of the most wicked kings in the history of Israel.

He was married to that woman, Jezebel, extremely wicked man, brought idolatry into Israel and so forth. And Jehoshaphat allied himself with Ahab because of a marriage. His son was married to the daughter of Ahab, so they became friends.

And on an occasion, Ahab asked for Jehoshaphat to go into battle with him and Jehoshaphat went into battle with him. Jehoshaphat almost lost his life in the battle. Ahab did lose his life.

But when Jehoshaphat was returning from the battle, the prophet of God met him and he asked him this question. He said, why do you help the wicked? And love those who hate the Lord. And I would like to pose that question to many a clergyman today, why do you help the wicked and love those who hate the Lord? I have talked to men in ministry, pastors, clergymen, and as I've talked to them, I have found that they have such a hostility toward men of God and such a generous attitude toward the enemies of God.

I marvel at such a thing. I remember talking to a pastor one time and he was going out of his way to defend Carl Jung, going out of his way to defend him and saying, you know, he was a victim of his age

and he wasn't rejecting Christianity. He was just rejecting the Christianity of his age.

My question was, didn't Carl Jung have a Bible to read? Couldn't he have found out what the real Christianity was about if he wanted to? Well, of course he could have, but he didn't want to at all. But at the same time that this person was praising Carl Jung, he was he was heaping judgment after judgment upon those he considered to be the fundamentalist. You know, these preachers who are coming out and bashing psychology and philosophy and things like that.

And as I was talking to him, I thought of this verse that you're helping the wicked. You love those who hate the Lord. Men who were openly rebellious to God.

He looks at them and says, these are the people that I'm aligning myself with. And he's just one in many. There are many like that today.

The Christian life always has been and always will be a fight. It's it's never been anything but that. And only for dreamers is it anything other than that.

Oh, it would be nice every week to get up and just give some nice little inspirational talk. Everybody feel good, it would it would be, you know, be much easier. To do something like that, but it's not possible to do that if you're going to be a Christian, if you're going to hold fast to the word of God.

Jesus himself said, I did not come to bring peace. I came to bring a sword. I came to divide this world into two categories, those who will follow me and those who reject me.

And that's the way it is today. And, you know, again, I would love to just be inspirational. But yet, if we're going to be faithful to the Bible, we have to stand firm.

And many times we're going to be going. In the completely opposite direction of where the rest of the world is going. And tragically, where much of the church is going as well.

But Jesus told us it would be that way. He said. Straight is the gate and narrow is the way that leads to life and few people find it.

But wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction and multitudes are on it. And so we will be. Labeled as intolerant and we will be called bigots and all of these kinds of things.

But we have to be willing to take that kind of heat. Now, let's be honest, some people who are Christians bring unnecessary wrath upon themselves because they do not approach any of these sensitive matters in a loving way. And that's something that I want to I want to warn all of us about.

It goes back to what we were talking about earlier with that that statement in Galatians, the spirit of meekness. We need to stand firm on the truth, we need to speak the truth boldly. But I'm reminded of what Paul said to the Ephesians, speak the truth and love.

We have to be loving, we have to have a genuine concern for people, we're going to have to tell people they're wrong about a lot of things. And of course, the first thing they're going to ask is, who are you to tell me I'm wrong? Well, I'm nobody. But I'm simply repeating what God has to say.

So God, God's the one who says this is wrong, if you have a problem, you have to take it up with God. But we want to we want to make sure when we have to address these things that we have the right attitude in

doing it, that we have the right spirit. That we have as the underlying.

Foundation for all that we do, the love of Christ motivating us. Jesus himself, he dealt with very sinful people, but there was something about the way he dealt with them that actually attracted them to him. Because although they sensed the reality of their sin when they were around him, they also sensed that there was mercy available to them.

And I think that's where a lot of times Christians have made a big mistake. Oh, we help people since the reality of their sin, but we don't give them any indication that there's any mercy. Available, and I think personally, the best way to keep that balance is to just always remember who we are and what we are.

That we are nothing ourselves, but sinners. Saved by God's grace, the only thing that stands between me and hell is the grace of God. It's nothing in me, it's nothing that I did.

God didn't pick me and say, oh, you're better than other people, so I want you. We know that that is not the case, is it? Everyone who is saved is saved in spite of themselves. We're saved out of our sin.

And I think it's important that we always remember that. I think sometimes Christians forget that. And so they point that that big finger and they stand in condemnation.

And therefore, the person senses their guilt. But at the same time, it sparks a rebellion in them because they sense no compassion or mercy or love. What some Christians have done as a reaction to this condemning approach is gone to the complete other extreme and said, well, we just will never say anything's wrong.

See, that's not the solution either. To tell somebody that their lifestyle is OK when it's not and it's going to send them to hell is deceit, to say the least. But again, it comes down to attitude.

It comes down to the spirit in which I address another person and the way in which I talk to them. And I must remember that they are people for whom Christ died. He loves them and he demonstrated it by going to the cross.

He loves them as much as he loves me and he wants to use me to share that love with them. Now. In closing, Paul asked them this question.

He says, for what have I to do with judging those who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside? But those who are outside, outside of the church, God judges them. Therefore, put away from among yourselves the evil person, Paul says to these church leaders, you have a responsibility to exercise discipline. In the church.

Don't bother yourself with what's going on outside, God will take care of that, but we have to. Deal with the things within the church. Because it's only a church that's pure that can expect to have God's blessing or God's power.

When you look at the early church, you find that the early church was a church that was pure in many ways. And it was pure because of this kind of instruction and the following through with the instruction. Because they exercised discipline, the purity of the church was maintained and the power of the church was maintained as well.

The church seems so powerless in modern society. No doubt something contributing to that powerlessness is the impurity. Now, in closing it, we have to bring it all back to our own lives, don't we? Am I, am I leaven in the lump? Is there sin in my own life? Is there impurity in me that's affecting other people? And I want God to examine me and to ask Him if there is any wicked way in me to point it out that it could be dealt with by His grace.

So I encourage you to do that as we go our way. We have a responsibility to one another. We also have that individual responsibility before God to make sure that we are right with Him.

God knows the heart, He tests the mind, He sees what no one else sees. And we can be going through the motions and acting spiritual and have a smile on our face and really just be fooling everyone. But we're not fooling God at all because He knows the heart.

And so let's ask God together to search our hearts and to cleanse us and to help us to be right with Him.

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