

Church Live Re-Visited: Session Five - Part 3

by Ron Bailey

The sermon emphasizes the importance of treating church issues as individuals, approaching church discipline with love and compassion, and maintaining the integrity and purity of the church.

Duration: 31:44

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 5:2

Topics: "Church Discipline", "Restoration Ministry"

Description

This sermon delves into the case history of a man in the Corinthian church who was involved in a sinful relationship, emphasizing the importance of addressing issues in the church with love and order, not just following a blueprint but considering individuals. It explores the process of church discipline, highlighting the role of love, repentance, and restoration in handling internal matters within the church community.

Transcript

I want to move on now to what I'm calling this kind of case history. This was a real man, of course, we're talking about here. And it's important when we do have issues in the church, whatever they are, that we never treat them as cases.

They're always individuals. They're always people who are being involved in one way or another. So you don't just kind of work your way through some kind of blueprint.

There's always a person at the end of this. Well, what are we picking up from this here anyway? Well, apparently, in 1 Corinthians, 1 Corinthians chapter 5, this, the sin of this man who has, it says, his father's wife, that doesn't necessarily mean his mother, of course. It might have been a stepmother.

It might even have been a divorced wife of his mother, of his father. But maybe our question is, how could this possibly happen? How could someone who was part of the church ever think of developing this kind of relationship? Well, they didn't have 1 Corinthians, of course, to read. They didn't have the Bible the way that we have.

And sometimes people get hold of one truth and push it to such an extreme that it actually creates an untruth. And it is true that we are free in Christ. And it is true that we're not under the law.

And it is true that other people are not to judge us, and that we are to allow our lives to be under God's judgment. All those things are true. But if you push that to the extremity, and the cross is not working in the

life of the individual, you will end up with the possibility of someone who, I don't know about this man.

I don't know whether he was misguided. I don't know whether he was what some would have called a brave spirit. You know, he's someone who doesn't, he doesn't kind of always walk to the sound of everyone beating the drum.

He does his own thing. And some people sometimes admire this kind of cavalier, independent streak. Now the point is that the Corinthians loved the independent streak.

And it may be that this person was almost just not willing to toe some party line, not willing to tie himself down to what he thought were precious little oddities that some people have. I don't know. It's sin, whatever it was.

Verse 2, you see, says, And you are not puffed up. That's kind of one of the reasons it makes me wonder whether there were some people who thought there was a certain admirable independence in the way that this individual was behaving. And you're puffed up and you've not mourned that he who had done this deed might be taken away from among you.

You can see the reference in verse 1 there again to Gentiles. It's not so much a name amongst the Gentiles. Where shall we go on to? Let's see how this process works out.

Look what Paul says here now. Remember Paul was the apostle of the church at Corinth. Now an apostle and a church is a unique relationship.

Paul actually says to the Corinthians that if I'm not an apostle to anybody else, at least I'm an apostle to you. So an apostle does have a special relationship with a church. And he had a special relationship with them.

But there are aspects of this, I think, that we can see, principles at work that don't need an apostle. Let's see what he says. Verse 3, I, that's emphasized, I, truly, as being absent in the body, present in the spirit, I have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that has so done this deed.

And this now is Paul's judgment and this is Paul's sentence, in a sense. This is the process that's got to work its way through. Let's see what he says.

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, remember Matthew 18, the two or three are gathered together in my name. So Paul is setting up here a duly convened meeting, a meeting in which people will be God conscious, where they will be conscious that they are gathering under the authority of Jesus Christ, that they are submitted to him. Remember he goes on later on in the Corinthian letter to say that no one can actually call Jesus Lord except by the Holy Spirit.

And he says this is one of the ways that you can kind of, John says this is one of the ways that you can kind of see whether someone is in the truth or not the truth. Sorry, that's Paul as well. So this is what he goes on to say.

He says, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, these are the same verbs that he used in Matthew 18, the two or three are gathered together in my name, and my spirit, together with, that word means, the power, the dunamis of the Lord Jesus Christ. I really want to make the point here, and I hope I don't kind of overstate it, but this is not, this is not the kind of, this is not a business

meeting. It's not the kind of meeting where you're following a pattern of laws, from a law book or something like this.

This is a meeting which is gathered consciously under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, and where the power of Jesus Christ is present in the meeting. They are conscious of the presence of Jesus Christ. And consequently, what is going to come out of this situation will be, I'm going to call it a prophetic event.

And what I mean by that is that a prophetic word has power in it. It has power in it to effect something. It's not just a sort of mechanical or intellectual decision.

It's not just that people are saying, yes, well this has happened and this has happened, therefore we must do this and this and this. This is dynamic. This is a living situation.

There's a meeting here that Paul is setting out in his mind, as he's talking to these Corinthians. There's a meeting in which the whole church will be gathered together and they will seek the mind of God. They will be consciously under the authority of Jesus Christ.

They will be gathered together in that exact same sense and they will be conscious of the dunamis. Dunamis really means the inward inherent power of Jesus Christ. In other words, this is a church which is, this is a meeting which is going to be God conscious in what they do.

Can you see what I'm trying to say here? This isn't, they're not just going through some mechanical process that's been enshrined somewhere in their church minutes. That if someone sends you this and this and this and this. This is a meeting of people with the head of the church.

This is a meeting in which the head of the church is the chairman. It's the head of the church who is leading the course of action. So they're waiting upon him.

Now Paul actually, as part of this church, is an apostle too. He isn't going to be there in body, but he's there in spirit and he's made his judgment and this is what they're to do. Conscious that they are operating now because of their own right relationship to Jesus Christ the Lord, because Paul is there in spirit as the apostle, because they're gathered together, two or three, in this specific way.

Not just two or three, but everyone gathered together. And finally, that they are God conscious. And this is what they're going to do with this fight.

They're going to, they're not going to pronounce something. They're actually going to deliver somebody to Satan. They're not going to make a statement.

They're not going to pass a minute that will go in the minute. They're actually going to do something which will effectively put this man back into Satan's territory. This man has been in the covenant community of the church.

And in the covenant community of the church, while he's there, he has shared the protection of that covenant, the protection of that covenant, the blessings of that covenant. If he refuses, if he persists in this behaviour, this is the only way, what you do is you put him outside the protective care of the covenant community. And they actually deliver him to Satan.

This is not like 99% of excommunications that take place in churches all over the world. Where what they do is they're fed up with somebody because he won't do this or the other and they'll have a meeting

together and they gang up on somebody and they decide that this person will be excluded. This is not that kind of meeting.

This is a God-conscious meeting. And in the power of the Spirit, they bring forth what I'm calling a prophetic word. They speak a word which actually does something.

God's words, you know, are creative words. Human words can be creative to a lesser degree. But when God says something, it changes things.

And these people were going to speak the word of God. They had the power to speak the word of God. They were duly convened.

They were under God's authority. Jesus Christ was consciously in their midst. They would agree absolutely.

They were going to bring forth this word of judgment that would effectively, really effectively, put this person outside the church and deliver him to Satan. This isn't people playing church. This isn't a game.

This is people who are living in conscious contact with God. And this is how they have to conduct their church discipline. To deliver such a one to Satan.

And then it says this. It's for the destruction of the flesh that the Spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. This is interesting kind of language, isn't it? I presume this man is recognised as a believer.

We'll see that later on. And I don't know whether he was a believer. But I think we have to presume that he was at this point.

Because what Paul is saying here is that it will be necessary for... You know that the devil is often is the person that is God's tester. My old Bible college principal used to say that he was God's tester and boiler. That was his job.

He was allowed to put things under pressure. He was allowed to put things... There's always a leash on Satan. There's always a limit to what he can do.

Always. And what was happening here is that this man is going to be put into the devil's territory where he will become subject to powers which actually will be used by God in his discipline. If need be, they'll actually, ultimately, they'll destroy his body.

But his spirit will be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Let me read on a bit. I know this is kind of breathtaking stuff.

It explains what he means here about purging this person out. When he says in verse 9, I wrote to you an epistle not to company with sexually immoral persons. Yet, verse 10, not altogether with the sexually immoral persons of this world, or with the covetous, or extortionists, or with idolaters, for then you would need to go out of the world.

But I have written to you not to keep company with any man that is called a brother, be sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a, what does the New King James say for a railer? A reviler. Or a drunkard, or an extortioner, with such a one, know not to eat. And then in verse 12 he says this, For what do I have to judge them who are without? Do you not judge those who are within? My title for this kind of

session tonight will really be Love and Order, not Law and Order, but Love and Order.

But my subtitle is Judging Those Who Are Inside. We have nothing to do but to judge those who are outside. The fornicators, the sexually immoral, the wicked people of the world, the Church has no authority to judge them in any way at all.

God will judge them. But the Church does have a responsibility to judge its own. And later on when we get into chapter 6, we'll see this work again.

You'll see the famous phrase that Paul says, Don't you know that we shall judge angels? He says. So this is a kind of a practice run here, when you're kind of judging, as necessary, events like this that take place in the Church. One of these I'll say in chapter 6 is just how wrong it is to take internal matters that have to do with the saints outside for others to deal with and they ought to be dealt with on the inside.

So can you see what's happening here with this man? What Paul is doing is, his judgment is to actually put this man outside so that he will come under different kinds of judgment. Inside they're not inflicting penances like they do in the Catholic Church. They're not saying you've got to say a hundred Hail Marys or run up and down this mountain in your bare feet or do this or give that or the other.

It's not like the discipline is that he's actually put outside the Church and he finds himself in a hostile world again. The Scripture says all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purposes. But if we persistently disobey God, maybe God will put us outside that circle of protection of the Church and we'll become subject to other powers as well.

That's what's happening here. And Paul says categorically now that he isn't judging, he's not talking about other people in the way they live your life. For example, your milkman may be a practicing witch.

But that doesn't mean you're not to have your milk from him. He's outside. There's nothing to fear.

It may be that you've got a colleague at work and he is... the kind of dilemma that one of our brothers here has found himself in, in working with a man who has become transvestite or kind of changed sexualities. Now, is the Christian brother not to have to eat a meal with him? By no means. Let the man eat a meal with him.

That man is outside the Church. But if this person is called a brother, then brotherly restraint, brotherly discipline begins to act. And when this person is in the Church, then this is the way the Church has to operate things.

I want to...time has gone, so I want to... we need really more of that. But I want to read you the sequel of this, because we do have a pretty full case history of this particular man. And I'm just so thrilled that God has seen fit to do this for us, so that we know the end of this story.

It's in 2 Corinthians. Chapter 2. Some people think there may be another letter in between 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians. Chapter 2. I'll read from the beginning.

But I determined this with myself, that I would not come to you again in heaviness, but if I make you sorry, who is he that makes me glad but the same who is made sorry by me? And I wrote this saying to you, lest when I came I should have sorrow from them of whom I ought to rejoice, having confidence in you all that my joy is the joy of all of you. For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many

tears, not that you should be grieved but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you. I want to draw your attention to verse 4. The motivating power of everything that Paul has directed in 1 Corinthians chapter 5 is love.

It's not impatience. It's not that he's got to get rid of his tether and he's not going to put up with this man any longer. It's love.

This is why I call this section Love and Order. So he says I wrote to you with many tears. There's a famous story about a man whose name was Robert Murray McShane.

He was a Scotsman who died when he was only 29 but a very godly, gracious man. One of his closest friends were the Bonar brothers, Horatio Bonar and Andrew Bonar. On one occasion Horatio Bonar went to Murray McShane and they were talking about their different Scottish parishes that they were responsible for and they were just chatting.

Murray McShane asked Horatio Bonar what the meeting had been like on the Sunday and Horatio Bonar said it went well and he said I preached on the verse in Psalms which says the wicked shall be turned into hell. There was a pause and Murray McShane said did you preach it with tears? You see, Paul wrote 1 Corinthians 5 with tears. The action that he is specifying is action that comes from a broken heart.

He isn't a hard man. He isn't someone who is hitting out in reaction against something. He is a man who is motivated by love in what he does.

And then in verse 5 he says this but if any have caused grief he has not grieved me but in part that I may not overcharge you all. But he says this in verse 6 sufficient to such a man is this punishment which was inflicted of the men. In other words Paul seems now to be saying that's enough.

That's enough. Whatever they have done the consequence of this man it seems as though it has had its desired effect. Now the desired effect was that he would come under external disciplines and that consequently his spirit would be saved.

It looks as though this man has come to repentance. I think that's the most likely scenario from these verses. Sufficient to such a man is this punishment which was inflicted of the men.

And then Paul says this in verse 7 so that contrary wise and then he gives a little kind of process of restoration. It really is very wonderful. He says so that contrary wise you ought rather to forgive him.

That's the word to be gracious to. That you should be gracious to him. This is as much direction to the Corinthian church as 1 Corinthians chapter 5 is.

If they had done 1 Corinthians chapter 5 in the way that it was told them to do they should do this as well. Now that the discipline has had its effect and the man is now effectively he's repentant now he says you must do this. You must be gracious to him.

You must comfort him. Our English word in the Bible here, comfort, is the word parakalia which is the word which is used in the paraclete but it literally means someone who's called alongside to help or to strengthen. I think the best all round word for it to translate it is probably encourage.

So it says you ought to be gracious to him. You ought to encourage him. And it says this wherefore I beseech you that you would confirm your love towards him.

You notice that this process began with Paul's love and ends up now with the Christian Church's love. The whole process began because Paul loved and now he's actually saying now bring this process to an end by demonstrating your love to him. Confirm your love to him.

Be gracious to him. Encourage him. Confirm your love to him.

And then he says this and this is another passage of Scripture that is easily detached from where it should be. For to this end also I wrote that I might know the truth of you whether you be obedient in all things. To whom you forgive anything I forgive also.

For if I forgave anything to whom I forgave it for your sakes forgave it I in the person of Christ. Actually that's in the presence of Christ. So this is this consciousness of God's presence.

They're not going through mechanical processes. This is in verse 11. Lest Satan should get an advantage on us for we are not ignorant of his devices.

Now I don't think I can count the number of times I've heard people pray that we're not ignorant of Satan's devices and that mischievously at times I sometimes think well maybe I should go to them after the meeting and say what is Satan's devices that we're not ignorant of? Because if you look at here the device is that this man should be swallowed up with over much grief that this man will not be gathered back into the embrace of the church and Paul says we're not ignorant of Satan's devices and because of that this is how you need to behave towards this man. You are to be kind to him, you are to be gracious to him, you are to encourage him, you are to get alongside him and I tell you, you are to confirm him, you are to endorse, you are to demonstrate your love to him because we're not ignorant of Satan's devices. Let me tell you very quickly a little story, a true story.

Many years ago I was part of a church in a certain part of the country and we'd been meeting again for quite a few years and then it was discovered that there was a man in the church who had been part of the church from its beginnings and who had been really very active in Sunday school work, choir work and different things that for most of his adult life he had been a practicing homosexual.

He had a wife and three lovely children and this came to light and I was part of the oversight in the church and we tried to address the situation, we talked to him about it and although he said that he had now stopped it and he was using male prostitutes and all kinds of things and there was something in his attitude which was still belligerent, he was still he was not kind of receiving it, he was fighting it still and we felt very very uneasy and we didn't know what to do about it for a long time and we prayed and in the end we gathered the church together and we didn't give any of the details but we just kind of gave what the charges had been and this thing had been proven in different ways as well as from the profession and we said to the church that we felt that it was necessary to

bring this man and discipline we would not cut him off from the meetings we actually decided what would be the right discipline for this man we said he would be allowed and welcomed and encouraged to come to the meetings but that he must not make any contribution to the meetings other than to respond to something which God was saying to him so he because he would have preached or he would have given testimonies he would have started choruses, he had a very sweet voice and this would have been the pattern so what we did is we said we will not receive any contribution from you but we will allow you to come as long as you're not practicing this we will allow you to continue to come to the meetings so that the meeting can contribute to you so that God can speak to you and he did this for some

months and there didn't seem to be much change for a long long time, every time we got together with him the only thing was we actually said to them to the folks that we discouraged them from having private fellowship with him so that he was shut up actually to two or three brothers who would kind of spend time with him and kind of monitor how he was doing and this went on for some months and as I said there were times when it didn't look as though it was improving much at all and we talked to him and we prayed with him and we prayed for him and then he broke and he wept and he was absolutely broken hearted and disgusted with himself and it was to us it was a genuine repentance in which he became really God conscious and when we were convinced that his repentance was genuine we gathered

all the church together and we took him in the midst we kind of took him at the front and we said that we really believe that God had done the work in this man and that he was right with God and we encouraged all the church and we said now you are to go out of your way to invite him to your house and his family and you're to go out of your way to confirm your love to him and you're to go out of your way to encourage him and to understand that from this time on he is as much part of this church as any one of us and to demonstrate that we're going to do something and what we did is there and then we broke bread and he broke bread for us he prayed for the bread he prayed for the cup and he took the bread and the cup from every one of us and every single one of us in the church just wept for

each other it was a glory restoration I'm not saying that we follow every single precept in here but it's like this story it's a story with a good ending it's I'm not trying to set down laws, rules, regulations I'm not trying to set down a programmed text so you do this and this and this I'm just simply saying I think that God has given us in a wonderful way an extraordinary record of the way in which these kind of things are to be handled and discipline is not not an optional extra in a true covenant community but an essential part of the way in which the covenant works I'm going to stop, let's pray I want to ask this Lord, I want to ask that you'll somehow really reveal it to the heart of each one of us that we are no longer islands that we are no longer just individuals that the way

that we live our life no longer just affects us but that you have bound us together in a bundle of life you baptised us by one spirit into one body you made it Lord so that what benefits the one benefits the other and what damages the one damages the other into this amazing covenant community I pray Lord that with that crushing us that you will somehow bring an awe Lord upon us bring something of a wonder of this miracle that you want to work in the earth here on earth the works of God can be accomplished men and women can be lovingly disciplined lovingly restored that your work can go on we pray Lord that you will help us not to compromise not to take the easiest option, not to take the line of least resistance but to take the hard choices when we have to make them in a spirit of

dependence upon you that we may see Lord whatever you want us to do for the sake of these Lord who have become a strange sheep honor the Lord

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