

# The Love Behind Church Discipline

by Tim Conway

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*Tim Conway's sermon discusses the critical role of earnest love in addressing sin within the church community through the lens of 1 Peter 4.*

**Duration:** 57:21

**Scripture:** Matthew 18:15, 1 Peter 4:8

**Topics:** "Church Discipline", "Christian Love"

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## Description

This sermon delves into the importance of love covering a multitude of sins within the church community. It emphasizes the need for earnest, intense love that seeks the good of others, minimizes faults, and fosters unity. The sermon highlights the delicate balance between covering sins to promote peace and dealing with sin when it endangers the church's relationship with God, causes division, or pollutes with destructive error. It stresses the role of love in guiding how to handle sin within the church, balancing forgiveness and accountability.

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## Transcript

1 Peter chapter 4, I am in no way wanting to take Brother David's thunder from his preaching through 1 Peter. It will be a while before he gets this far. You probably will forget by then what I say today, but you will forget that I did this message probably.

Hopefully we never forget the truths of God's Word. Being brought, like Peter says, into remembrance of these things over and over. And David will come along and bring us into remembrance of them again months from now.

1 Peter 4, since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking. For whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin. So as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh.

No longer for human passions, but for the will of God. There is a motivation on all life. In times past, our former manner of life, you know what guided us? Our passions.

What we wanted. Lust. We wanted to fulfill our desires.

It's kind of a world view. How do you view everything? We used to view everything by the pleasure it gave us. By the satisfaction it gave us.

By how it made us look. How it made us feel. No longer for human passions, but for the will of God.

The same thing that guided our Lord Jesus Christ is now supposed to guide us. The will of the Father. That's how we evaluate things.

No longer how is that going to make me look? How is that going to make me feel? But what does God think about that? Is He pleased with it or is He not? For the time that has passed suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do. Living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry. With respect to this, they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery.

And they malign you. In other words, you get saved. You no longer run with the pack.

And now you're the oddball. And they don't like it. But they will give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.

For this is why the Gospel was preached even to those who are dead. You want to take that as dead in trespasses, not dead physically. The Bible teaches us nothing about teaching the Gospel, preaching the Gospel to those who have already died.

This isn't second chance theology. Though judged in the flesh the way people are, they might live in the Spirit the way God does. And there you see the spirituality of what He's talking about.

The end of all things is at hand. Therefore, there's a way to live. How should we live? Be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers.

Above all, aren't those interesting words? Above all. Peter doesn't just think everything is on the same playing field. That everything is basically equal.

That one thing just isn't important to another thing in the Christian life. He actually believes that there are some things that are more important. Above all.

Keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. Now let's just think about this verse. This is where I want us to focus.

Above all. Keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. More than all the other things Peter has just said.

Above all. He wants us to give ourselves to earnest love. Intense love.

Now, love covers a multitude of sins. There is a question about whose sins get covered. You don't have to look far to find Catholic commentators who believe the sin that gets covered is yours.

That when you love others, your sin gets covered. As though somehow you're atoning for your misdeeds by your love. That would not be the way you want to interpret this.

The key to understanding whose sins Peter has in mind here, and who's doing the covering, I mean the first part of the verse goes with the second part of the verse. This issue has to do with our loving others earnestly, intently, fervently. It's not the idea that if we love others, God in turn is going to pardon your sin.

What he's saying is that Christians loving each other, when Christians love each other, one of the things that is expressed in that love is how we react to the sins of others. How we navigate those sins. How we talk about those sins.

How we regard those sins. One another. The one another is really key to this verse.

It has to do with our interaction in the church one to the other. And by the way, if you reflect, didn't Jesus say something about our love towards one another back in John 13? Anybody remember what he said? He said that this watching world is going to know that we're His disciples when we love one another. That's the issue.

Now, be careful that you recognize the one another here. You want to keep that. He's talking about the way Christians react with Christians.

And I'm not saying, Look, I'm not saying that we as Christians can never overlook the sins of lost people. If you're going to be kind and compassionate to people, you're not going to just pounce on every little wrong that people do. But I will say this, that if you think very carefully about Ephesians 5, we are called to be light, and we are called to expose the deeds of darkness in this world.

So, we need to feel that tension, by the way. I just bring that up as far as the way we interact with the lost. But notice this.

Notice verse 8. Above all, keep loving one another earnestly. Why? Well, Peter is going to give us a reason. The reason Peter is so interested that we have earnest love among the brethren is found in this, what love does.

You see the sense there. You see there's a reason. He says, now this is interesting.

You have to feel this for what it is. Look, he comes to you and he says, Above everything else, grace, community, church, give yourself to intently and fervently loving one another. Okay.

Then he says, I'm going to give you a reason why. Since love covers a multitude of sins. In other words, if love is active, if love is operative, if love is actually happening in the church beyond just lip service, what that love is going to do is it's going to be expressed by this very thing.

You see what he's saying? Above all, let this be true among you. Why? Because there is a certain precious quality about this love. There is a certain precious manifestation of this love that is so desirable.

That's why above all, give yourself to this earnest love. Because what loving one another at that earnest, fervent level does is it has everything to do with how we relate to one another when we sin. It's precisely what he's saying.

One of the most precious things about love in Peter's thinking is this. Do you think that way? You see, this verse helps us really recognize one of the great attributes of love as it's manifest in the church. We can think about a lot of ways.

You know, Jesus girded Himself with that towel and He washed one another's feet. And He said, I'm leaving you an example. But I'll tell you this, one of the greatest ways you can gird yourself with the towel and wash one another's feet, according to the Apostle Peter, has to do with how we deal with one another when it comes to sin.

You clearly see that from the text. How can we know true love? There's the answer. How can we know it? Now, it manifests itself other ways.

I'm not saying that's the only way that it manifests itself. But, in Peter's estimation, that is one of the great qualities of love. Think about this.

Not just loving your wife. Not just loving people indiscriminately in the world or loving your children. It's the one another.

It's how we interact in the church. One of the great qualities of love in the church has precisely to do with this. How we view one another in light of our faults, in light of our falls, in light of our sins.

That's what we see here. Now, cover. You see the word.

Cover. Love covers a multitude of sins. Let's think about this word, cover.

It literally means to remove from view. To conceal. To hide.

To keep secret. It's basically to put down the knowledge of something. Let me give you a verse.

Luke 8.16, which don't turn there, but just listen to it. Because this word cover is found there. Now, when it's used in this verse, you will pick up it's used in a negative way.

Peter's using it in a positive way. But still, this is a very telling verse. Because just listen to it.

No one, after lighting a lamp, covers it with a jar or puts it under a bed, but puts it on a stand, so that those who enter may see the light. Now that's very helpful. Nobody covers, after lighting a lamp, you've got a lamp, the lamp is giving light, nobody covers it.

Now, if you think about it, what does Jesus have in mind when He's talking about this lamp? Brethren, you are the light of the world. Christ is the light of the world. He tells us we are the light of the world.

We're salt and light. We have been endowed with a truth. We have a commission.

You are not to take this and hide it. You are not to take what you've been taught by Christ and to hide it. You're not to cover it.

You're not to put it under a bushel basket or hide it under a bed. Rather, what are you supposed to do? You're supposed to put it on a stand so that it becomes as visible as possible. Now that's using cover in a negative sense.

That is actually blotting out the light of something that you want to have shine. Peter is using it in the opposite sense. He's using it in a negative sense, but nevertheless, the word means precisely the same thing.

And if you think about just how Jesus uses it, love does not take the sins of other Christians and put it on the lamp stand. Sin is put under the bed. It's put under the jar or the bushel basket.

It's hidden. That's the issue. Now, notice.

Notice carefully. Love covers a multitude of sins. It doesn't just say errors only or weaknesses, but sins.

And it doesn't just say one or two. It's actually speaking on a level of multitude. Look, does this mean that we just blindly walk around in the church and act like there's no sin? Does that mean that when a brother or sister sins, we just ignore everyone? You know, I can remember one time at work, some conversation came up among us engineers and the chief engineer was in his office and something was being brought up and he came out and he just covered his ears.

I mean, he just blah, blah, blah. He said, I don't want to hear that. I don't want to hear that.

Is that how we're supposed to be? We go into denial. You know, don't tell me. I don't want to know.

I don't want to hear. I'm going to shut my eyes. I'm going to shut my ears.

Is that what Peter is teaching? All we have to do is compare Scripture to Scripture to know that is not what he means. He doesn't mean that we deny that sin is in the church. He doesn't mean that we don't call sin, sin.

He doesn't mean that we don't take recognition that it's here. He doesn't mean that it's less evil because we're a Christian or less detestable to God. He's not implying any of that.

All you have to do is compare Scripture, other portions of Scripture, to know that that is certainly not what he means. For one, sin is still sin. Even if sin is found in God's people, you need to recognize Jesus Christ died on Calvary's cross to pay for it.

The wrath of God He atoned for up there. That sin is just... what is sin? We can think of sin as perhaps transgression of the law. Sin is lack of conformity to what God has expressed in His Word, to His holy law.

It is lack of conformity to the person of Christ. Brethren, you better believe that every lack of conformity to Jesus Christ is very much on God's radar and He very much means to purge it out of us. He recognizes that which is detestable to Him that's still in us.

Sin is still sin and it's called out as such. You don't find Paul coming to the Corinthian church with all that was wrong there and say, well, you know, I'm going to heed my brother Peter's words and love covers a multitude of sin, so I'm just not going to see, I'm not going to hear Chloe's people come to me, I'm not going to regard that there's division and quarreling and sexual sin and all the rest there. I'm going to be blind to it.

No, no, no, no. That doesn't happen. That doesn't happen.

God does not approve of it. God hates it. And we should not approve of it.

Second, Peter says love covers a multitude of sin. He doesn't say that it covers all sin. It definitely does not.

A third consideration. Peter himself on different occasions had his own sin called out. He never tells us that Jesus did wrong or Paul did wrong.

Jesus called him out. And the Apostle Paul called him out. I mean, what an illustration that is in Galatians 2. One apostle calls out another and of all the apostles that are going to be called out for their sin, Peter, he knows from his own experience that it's appropriate to have your sins called out in certain circumstances.

The fourth thing to think about is there are specific commands in our New Testaments that tell us we need to deal with sin and call it out. And perhaps you can think of some of those. Matthew 18 would be a place that indicates that to us.

And fifth, I want you to think about this. We must remember what is motivating the covering of sins. What is it? It's love.

If love motivates us to cover sin, if love is truly the guiding factor, then love at times is going to require us to call the sin out. Because by not doing it, it's harming. Here's the thing.

There comes a point when to not call out sin harms God's glory. There are times that it brings reproach. You remember how David's sin brought a reproach upon God? Sin can be a reproach upon Christ.

Sin can harm the whole church. Sin can harm an individual. So if we're going to let love be the guiding motive, that in itself would tell us we don't cover all sin.

Not if it's actually harming them or the church or God's glory. So, what does it look like? Covering sin. What does that look like in the church? Well, this is one thing.

Love doesn't always look for sin. Love doesn't come along with this critical attitude where it's constantly assuming the worst about people. Constantly! You know, you get that in the church.

There are certain people, and you know what, if we're honest, we can all put ourselves in that category, especially when it comes to certain people. You know, some people are critical and suspicious at large. But any one of us at a different time, we can find ourselves becoming suspicious of certain individuals when actually there's not any viable evidence that we should be that way.

So it's not always looking. That covering sin, the idea of covering sin. Brethren, it's minimizing it where it can be minimized.

I'm not talking about covering sin in a way that somehow denies truth. But you know, brethren, the reality is this. We tend to have a knack for pumping up other people's sin and minimizing our own.

Love covering a multitude of sins is going to find expression when we're really trying to deal with other people in their sin the same way we want to be dealt with ourselves when we sin, and maybe even more than that, the way we deal with our own selves when we sin. You know, it takes a high place of spiritual maturity for us to actually get to the place where we deal with ourselves equal or harder with our own sin than we deal with others. That is a place of amazing spiritual maturity when we can get there.

Because by nature, that is not who we are. Love covering a multitude of sins. It's precisely where love is lacking that we constantly walk around with suspicion and distrust.

You think about this. I mean, you think about... I've seen an example of this in my own life and my own family. But you think about a wife, a mother, who she dearly loves her husband, dearly loves her children.

You know what? A woman who dearly loves like that, she above everybody else is acutely aware of the faults and failings and falls and sin of her husband and children. But she is also going to be the slowest that wants those things to be made public. She will seek to put the best spin, not lie or not against truth, but she will seek to hide, she will seek to cover over, she will seek to emphasize the excellencies that are found in her husband, her children.

That's love. That's what love does. When she drops on her knees and prays, she's very aware of those failings and is the first to cry out and want to see those things healed and helped.

And God come. That's what we're talking. That's what love does.

You see, a woman like that is not constantly trying to read the worst motive possible into those actions. Because love doesn't do that. Love wants to think the best.

It wants to assume the best. Brethren, we are, every one of us, come from the same stock. Children of Adam.

We all come from an Adamic stock. And we are all very adept at putting the most negative spin on people's motives. Oh, well, you know why they did that.

See, we try to put the pieces together. And the truth is that sometimes we're right, but if we're going to be honest, most of the time we're wrong when we put the most negative spin on. Peter says love covers a multitude of sins.

You see, the thing is this. Love is genuinely interested in the good of somebody else. You know one of the reasons we like to tail bear and we like to put the most negative spin on things, it's got to do with pride.

Pushing down, making other people seem less. It makes ourselves feel like we're pumping ourselves up here. But the thing about love is, when you genuinely have a person's interest in view, then whether you bring that sin out into the light or whether you try to cover it, it all hinges on what you feel is going to be best.

That's what's regulating. That's what's motivating. It's not you just being cynical.

It's not just you being, you know, loving to hear the juicy tale about somebody else's wrong. I mean, that is such a horrible attitude to have in the church. People just get excited.

They rejoice over other people's falls and failures. So often the reason is because it just helps put them in a better light. If other people can be dragged through the dirt, then love is able to rise above being offended.

See, that's another aspect of other people's sins. A lot of times those sins are against me. And now it's not just how it makes them look or how it makes me look.

It's they've wronged me. And I feel it. And I've got some grievance towards them.

And I've got some bitterness in my soul. And so I want them to pay. And one of the ways I want them to pay is I'm going to drag what they did out into the open.

But here's the thing. Love covering a multitude of sins, love can be wronged, and it's not thinking about me and how their wrong affected me. You see, I can go back to that wife.

That wife who gets wronged by her husband or gets wronged by her children. But see, love still is thinking not so much about how I've been offended, how that made me hurt, how that made me sorrow, how that made me grieve, how that made me bitter, how that just wasn't true, and how I've been insulted, and how there's been injustice. You see, love still in that moment says, I love them and I want their greatest good.

And it's thinking about that. Even at a time when an offense has been given, still thinking about the greatest good of others. That's the idea.

Love thickens our skin so that every little offense, we don't have to bring out into the open. We don't have to deal with. We don't have to go and say, pull aside the brother.

You offended me. Love tends to put away hypersensitivity. And it can help us focus.

Look, I'm not saying there isn't a time to pull a brother aside or a sister aside and talk to them. That's not what I'm getting at. I'm just saying people who are proud get offended easy.

And that's love of self, not love of others. Brethren, the reality is that when offenses come, when sins come, we actually have to be doing a sort of spiritual mathematics. We have to calculate.

We have to size things up. We have to be careful that we don't let our own sense of being offended rule the day. But we're actually able to step back and ask out of love, does covering this help my brother or sister more? And you know what Peter, by telling us that love covers a multitude of sins, he's got in mind that there's a multitude of sins that take place in the church that should be covered.

That don't need to be brought out into the open. That's what he's saying to us. And brethren, if we're all honest with our own failures and our own faults, when's the last time you lived a perfect day, by the way? And if we just start thinking about how would we like to be dealt with? Love does not just quickly jump on the bandwagon to assume the worst.

It's thinking about others. Instead of being offended by the sins of others, God's love is concerned with the welfare of that person. The love Peter's talking about doesn't take pleasure in exposing the weaknesses in our brother's character.

Look, the truth is sin is ugly. Scott talked about it the first hour. There's no spin you can put on sin to make it beautiful.

It's not. It's ugly. And there are many sins that come out of God's people that are ugly and they're evil.

But you know the thing we need to think about, brethren, is God is at work in my brother and sister. God has forgiven that sin. God doesn't deal with them about every single sin.

Isn't that amazing in your own life? You think about the falls and failures you have. And I can't tell you how many Christians have fallen in their Christian life and got up and they've kind of winced and they've drawn back because they've expected God to put the belt to them. And God lavished them with His arms and pulled them in and hugged them and kissed them.

Christian, you ever been there? That's how we want to be dealt with. And love is going to seek to make that very much a way that we're going to seek to deal with others. Loving disposition leads us to pass by the faults of others, to forgive offenses against ourselves without making a big deal out of them, to excuse, to lessen the blemishes of others.

As is consistent with truth. But brethren, I'll tell you a whole lot about what happens when we think about the sins of others is we assume motives all the time. All the time.

And you have to remember, love believes all things. Look, you have to take that in context. Scripture doesn't tell us to believe a false gospel.

It doesn't call us to believe everything. Believe all things is... Brethren, that needs to be the flavor of our lives. Obviously, when the evidence indicates I can't believe something, you don't want to be a fool and believe what you should not believe.

What the evidence clearly tells us. But brethren, we are so quick to believe things before we have the evidence. And love is going to seek to really think when we hear something or when we view something or something happens to us.

Examine the evidence. I mean, what I'm saying is do the moral calculations in your head. What do I really know about this situation? If I actually tried to put the best spin on this, what could this be actually putting the best spin on this? Tremendous way to encourage unity, peace, and love in the church.

Brethren, to our shame, we have to admit there tends to be a natural propensity, a proneness, a quickness in all of us by nature, by that old Adamic nature. I know we're new creations in Christ, but we have to cleanse ourselves of these impurities and many of these impurities that come from our past. It's right here, brethren.

We are very prone and very quick to minimize our own sin and maximize others. It's just a reality. There's a proneness in every one of us to receive reports, negative reports, to propagate them, to speak about them.

We don't naturally have an over-willingness to have our own reputation attacked, blasted. Brethren, I pray that God would put a healthy shame in us if we have a tendency towards this and resist every opportunity to indulge in it. Brethren, it takes thought.

Love always does. Love takes effort. It takes thought.

Nobody thoughtlessly... Love your wife as Christ loved the church. You see, He doesn't want us to be thoughtless. He wants us to think about how Christ loved the church.

Love is always like that. You need to be thinking if you're going to love. The thoughtless person is not going to be a person that is going to excel in this kind of love.

We're going to avoid this, clearly, Peter says, by the law of Christ. The law of love. When we're wronged, Peter wants us to do the proper calculations, the proper assessments.

How so? Love. Does love demand? When I do the calculations, is this a sin I should let go? Or is there something about this sin, this offense, that love demands that I should confront my brother? Be careful here. Brethren, be careful.

You know what we can do? We can be offended, and the real reason we don't deal with it is we're cowards. We can chalk it up to, oh, love covers a multitude of sins, and then you go out the door and you've got a grudge there. Brethren, I'll tell you, if you lay it down, I am no longer going to treat that brother or sister the same after what they did to me.

You've got a problem. And if you haven't dealt... Look, I would say this, you don't have to deal with Matthew 18 all the time. A brother sins against you, you can be thick-skinned.

You can cover it over. And if you can do that and go on your way loving that brother or sister just as much as you did before or even more, that's good. But don't in the name of love covering a multitude of sins walk away when the truth is you're holding a grudge and you've got bitterness in your heart.

We need to be honest. Because that isn't love. And that only creates disunity in the church.

That's all that is. Harboring bitterness. Love in the church would have us to be slow to accuse, slow to assume the worst, slow to be offended, quick to admit our own faults, quick to repent on our own, quick to forgive others.

That's the issue. Yes, brethren, we want a holy church. So we need to deal with sin.

But we want that holiness always side by side with love. You just consider God's love for you. And you consider how heavily laden you yourself are with faults, how often you stand in need of forgiveness, how often you are blameworthy, how often you fall short of the glory of God, how often you offend others, how often you are not kind to others.

Brethren, have you ever thought really about those words at the beginning of Romans 2? Basically, what Paul is saying right there is you who judge others, you basically just convicted yourself. Every single time any one of us in this room has pointed the finger at somebody else and their faults and their sins, you've been guilty of the same thing. Not typically good when the convicts are standing out there and they're lined up and they're pointing fingers at each other when they're standing before the judge.

Just take heed, brethren. Take heed. This is all the opposite of love when you drag poor brother so-and-so or sister so-and-so's sin out.

And we can bring up things with people that other people would have never even suspected. You just smeared somebody's reputation. You smeared their name.

And you know what? Even if it's true, it doesn't mean you needed to do that. Brethren, do you recognize there are lots of things that are true that don't need to be said. Truth does not dictate that we bring everything out into the open.

Do you see it here? You have a mission as a Christian. A mission of love. You have a mission as a Christian to be a coverer of sins.

And so I would say this, apply yourself to it. Really give yourself. Like I say, it takes effort.

You need to pray this in. You need to ask God to forgive you where you've fallen short of this. And you need to ask God to give you the grace to be precisely what we have here.

A coverer of sin. Here's the thing. It's like this.

It's almost like if you have information about somebody else that's negative, it's like God has put a responsibility into your hands. Like you have this information. And He's saying to you, you have a responsibility to guard that information and to be responsible and let love dictate what you do with it.

Because every one of us, you get in a church like this, you're going to find out things that are wrong. You're going to find out sin. God's thrown a lot of saved people with a lot of faults still, and flesh.

He throws us together in a church. And if you're here any amount of time, people get to know you. The good and the bad.

And so we all are basically being given this deposit of information about one another. And you see what Peter's saying? Protect it. Guard it.

Let love dictate how you use it. Never think you're going to make yourself great by tearing down other people. Love one another fervently.

So it's a great part of our Christian duty to cover the sins of others. But brethren, think with me here. There are times when we must not cover sin.

And to do so would be wrong. Because certain sins, like I say, they're not honoring to God, they're not safe to the church, and they're not safe for the individual. When sin endangers... I'm just going to give you some examples.

When you don't want to cover sin. One, when sin endangers the entire church's relationship to God. And I might say to the holy God.

You say, what do you mean by that? I mean, Achan's sin brought down the whole camp. You say, really? Does that happen in the church? I'll tell you this, I think one of the most telling of the seven letters written to the churches in Asia Minor is that letter to Thyatira. You know what he says to them? You, as a church, have tolerated this sin, this unqualified teacher, and this bad teaching in your church.

And he calls the whole church to task. Do you know when you go over to 1 Corinthians 5, and they are allowing the sexual immorality that they were allowing in the church, he finds fault with the whole church. And he calls them out as being arrogant.

And I'll tell you this, we can grieve the Holy Spirit of God, and we can quench that Spirit. If we allow sin in this church that allows the Spirit of God to be quenched with the operation of a whole church, don't believe that because somebody else is sinning and you know about it, you're aware of it, and you cover it over, when it ought not to be covered over. Don't for a second think that Christ Himself excuses you.

He that is Lord of the church and walks in the midst of those candlesticks, He looked at the whole church, and He said, you as a whole are tolerating this sin in your midst. And He faulted them as a whole church for it. When they allowed the sin that was allowed at Corinth, the inspired author Paul faulted the whole church.

We have a responsibility there. Next, when sin causes us to lose a brother. You say, what do you mean? Well, Matthew 18 says this, if my brother sins against me, you go to him.

Does that mean you have to go to him about every sin? Look, Scripture says this, Proverbs, the prudent ignores an insult. Does it mean every time you're insulted, you have to deal with it? No, it does not. Is Jesus Christ teaching that every single time somebody deals with you in any way that's less than perfect, you need to go to them? That is not what He's saying.

That is not. Brethren, you know what Paul said to the church at Corinth? You guys are suing one another. He said you'd be better off if you were just wronged.

I know you could say, well, is that necessarily saying that they shouldn't deal with people that sin against them? I'm just saying this, Paul is saying you're better off... He's saying just accepting being wronged at times is a better way to go. I know it may be compared over against what? I think of this, Jesus Christ said to His own disciples, gentlemen, I'm going to Jerusalem and I am going to die. They turn to each other and they start arguing about who's going to be the greatest.

And I would ask you this, is that an insult against our Lord Jesus Christ? Massively so. He who is greatest of all is going to do one of the greatest demonstrations of His greatness. And these guys are arguing about who's going to be greatest.

And He does not turn to them and say, you know what, you guys are an offense to me. Do you know what love does right then? He turns to them. He's been insulted.

They basically just blew right past the fact He's saying I'm going to die. And He says, gentlemen, I want to teach you about humility. Rather than condemning them, He teaches them.

That's the kind of thing that I find in Scripture. You think about Joseph. You know when Joseph found that his wife was with child? Isn't it interesting? Scripture actually says this about him.

It says that Mary's husband Joseph, being a just man, he was unwilling to put her to shame and he resolved to divorce her quietly. In other words, the very justness of the man he was going to cover over. He was still going to divorce her.

You know, a woman that was unfaithful should have been stoned. He covers this over. I'm saying this, just because you're sinned against doesn't mean you have to bring it out into the open.

It does not. It doesn't mean you have to deal with it. God gave us a thick skin to have to deal with less and less.

But you see the reality of Matthew 18 is you go to the brother and it talks about if your brother hears you, you've gained your brother. And I would say this, if your brother or sister has done something to you that has caused you to lose them, you've fallen out of fellowship with them because of that, then you go to them. Don't let the unity of the church, don't let the harmony be affected.

If what somebody has done to you, you can't put it away and forgive it and be done with it, then you make sure you go. When sin causes us to lose a brother, when sin pollutes the church with destructive error, look, the reality is when error comes into the church, we need to deal with it. Paul has some of the strongest words you can imagine towards those who introduced error into the church.

We want to deal with that kind of sin immediately. I would say this, when sin divides, you have this reality in Romans, I appeal to you brothers to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught. Divisive people.

Divisiveness is something that needs to be brought to the surface. Divisive people in the church destroy the unity of the church. They pit people against each other.

People that are obviously doing that, it needs to be called out. Brethren, unrepentant sin. One of the things is, you think about the whole flow of Matthew 18.

If you go to your brother and they don't respond, you bring more. If they don't respond, you take it to the church. You see, unrepentant sin should not be tolerated in the church.

That can't be allowed. That is going to grieve the Spirit. We want to encourage that good soil of constant repentance.

If we see people becoming stiff, becoming hardened, becoming calloused by sin, and there's a lack of repentance, we need to deal with it. We need to deal with it for their sake. We need to deal with it for the sake of the church.

And that brings me to this. We need to deal with sin when sin leavens the whole lump. And you know that argument comes from 1 Corinthians 5. That is the reason that Paul tells those people to deal with that specific man that was in the sin in that church, because he did not want that unholiness having effect on the whole.

Brethren, if it is known amongst us that there is sin in our midst and it is not being dealt with, you know what it does? It sends a signal that that's tolerated. We don't want to do that. It lowers the bar.

We don't want to do that. I want you to know this. Sins are brought to the elders' ears fairly regularly.

You get a church of this size, there's some sort of sin that seems to be going on all the time. And certain people are made aware of it. And they may try to deal with it to some degree.

And for whatever reasons, it gets reported to us elders. And we sit in elders' meetings. And we discuss certain things.

And there's always a wrestling with how should we proceed forward. How do we deal with this? Let me tell you this, brethren. There is no perfect science.

You can say, well, doesn't it deal with false doctrine over there? Yes. Doesn't it deal with division over there? Yes. Doesn't it deal with sexual immorality over there? Yes.

But let me tell you something. It is never a perfect science. None of the examples in Scripture ever seem to precisely deal with the situation that we are confronted with.

Brethren, Scripture is that way because God doesn't want us to simply live by a set of rules. He wants us to live walking with Him. He wants us to live searching Scripture, taking the principles, taking the passages, seeking wisdom from Him, and seek to apply those.

No perfect science. The truth is, we've got to be led of the Spirit. Now, right here at the end, I want to take you to 1 Corinthians 5. I want you to see something.

1 Corinthians 5. Let me tell you about the situation. Paul received a report. Sexual immorality among the Corinthian church.

It's a pretty severe kind. And he says, he accuses the church as a whole for being arrogant because they have not properly dealt with this sin. Let us not be arrogant this way.

They should have been mourning. And he says this, let him who has done this be removed from among you. Now, I would just point this out.

He doesn't say send the elders and see if they're repentant. Look, I'm not saying anything like that necessarily happened or didn't happen. How the elders of the church at Corinth were involved with this man, I don't know.

Every appearance is that nobody in the church was dealing with this the way it needed to be dealt with because that's why you're getting the accusation made against the whole church the way they are. They basically looked over this. They looked past this.

But here's the thing. He doesn't say, okay, you all have been wrong in dealing with this. Why haven't you enacted Matthew 18? Because there are different ways of dealing with sin.

And he doesn't say go see if he's repentant. Go see if he'll move out from living with his stepmother. There's an immediacy here.

Do this. Now, I believe that if you search the second letter, I believe to the best of my understanding that it is very likely that there is a man in that second letter that is restored from some sort of situation. Although it doesn't specifically say it's this man, perhaps it is.

But here's the thing, you go down through this account and you go down to verse 11. I'm writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality. Guilty for how long? Guilty when? Guilty how far back? You notice that Paul doesn't necessarily say.

As elders, even as Christians, we want all these details. Lord, give us all the facts. Give us more than this.

They're just told to put him out. Here's what I would say to you. These are the kind of things that in reality we get faced with as elders.

What if a man's committing grievous sins like you see here and is confronted about his sins and he says he repents? Case closed? Actually, he doesn't say that you should find out if the man repents because evidently by his life, there was not at that moment in time necessarily significant evidence of any repentance. What if this man had said they have their meeting, they're getting ready to put him out of the church and he showed up and he said, hey guys, I repent. What do you think? Should they still have put him out? We're simply not told.

But if you're letting love dictate, because that's really where we have to come back to, we have to ask a lot of questions. We have to ask about what's being communicated to the church about how we maintain a standard of holiness. What's being said to the watching community about the way our church handles holiness? How are we portraying God by the way we deal with this? Yes, we want to portray Him on the side of being gracious and kind, but we also want to portray Him on the side that He hates sin and He wants a pure church and He wants sin dealt with.

What if a man committed sins of this type of nature that we're being told to disassociate from people and in the past we have dealt with that person and they have apologized and they have said they repent and we then gave them opportunity to prove that and they haven't. And we've gone back to them again a second time, a third time, a fourth time and they keep saying they're sorry every time we go back, but the fact is there's not any change. You see, these things are not always so easy.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/Vyq6ZOsFVaw.mp4>

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