

WHEN TOLERANCE IS A BAD THING

1 Corinthians 5

We live in times when tolerance is considered to be a virtue.

It has its value. But it also has its weakness.

God never encourages us to tolerate sin.

He is concerned when His people tolerate sin.

That's the problem in Corinth.

What do you remember about the church at Corinth?

What was it like?

The church that had everything --EXCEPT LOVE

What happens when a church has everything except love?

We've been looking at the most significant problem of the church without love.

What was the problem?

Divisions and personality cults.

They had two major misconceptions.

What were they?

False concept of our message

Our message is not a human message.

No man could have thought it up.

Therefore, no man should be exalted for the message.

God gave the message. Therefore, He alone deserves the credit and the glory for it --NOT MAN

False concept of our ministry

Those who bring the message are servants.

We cooperate with God but we don't get the credit.

God produces the only results that are worth bragging about --NOT MAN

Therefore, God alone deserves praise.

Now Paul looks at some other problems in the church. All are symptoms of the lack of love that characterized the church.

5 Indifference to sin in their midst
Lack of concern for the brother involved

6 Legal feuds
Cheating one another

7 False attitudes about marriage
Self-centered relationships
Legalism

8-10 Fights over rights

They accepted attitudes which the world teaches:

"To each his own!" "I have my rights!"

"Live and let live!" "You have to look out for #1!"

"Don't make waves!"

Paul's responses in these situations are not what the world likes to hear.

To the person who understands life from the human perspective --and not from God's perspective-- they will seem a little "off the wall."

Their pride and lack of love were demonstrated in different ways.

In the divisions

In different areas of discipline:
discipline

Fornication \

Lawsuits / Collective discipline

Misuse of the body > Personal

After dealing directly with the main problem, which concerned divisions in the church, Paul treats three cases where the church has failed to exercise its proper role in discipline.

CONCERNING DISCIPLINE IN THE CHURCH

5:1-6:20

Concerning Fornication 5:1-13

How to live a moral life in an immoral world.

First problem concerns known fornication in the church. They have remained silent and failed to discipline the person involved.

Circumstances described 5:1-2

Paul describes the condition and condemns the church for their inaction.

Fornication committed 5:1

"It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has ^ahis father's wife."

One of their group is going to bed with his father's wife. (apparently his stepmother)

Even the pagans didn't do that.

It was a scandal in the whole neighborhood.

God's plan for His people is that we be holy.

In the midst of a sex-saturated society, we are to stand out as different.

Our society focuses on sex and pleasure:

homosexuality, pornography, incest, child abuse, abortion, etc.

God's people are to be different.

We are not called to make the world act like Christians, without the power.

But we ought to act like it.

This guy was leading the other way!

Inaction resulted 5:2

Their response:

"You have become arrogant, and have not mourned instead, in order that the one who had done this deed might be removed from your midst."

This was Paul's main concern—He wasn't nearly as concerned about the sin itself as about their reaction to it.

They haven't done anything about it
They didn't care enough about the offender to try to correct him (cp. Heb. 12)

In fact, they were proud of it (cp. 4:18-19)

Pride—probably due to their "open-mindedness." They are proud of their tolerance.

Paul says they should be ashamed of their lack of love and concern.

Because of their pride they don't see the reality

Their pride has blinded them to the truth.

They should have mourned because of the sad situation

Notice this is not a call for vindictiveness.

We're not "out to get him."

(Wiersbe) "Church discipline is not a group of 'pious policemen' out to catch a criminal. Rather, it is a group of brokenhearted brothers and sisters seeking to restore an erring member of the family."

They should have taken corrective disciplinary action (cp. Heb. 12)

Command Stated 5:3-5

Because they have failed to act, he condemns the man and commands that when they gather together they do the same.

Contrasts himself with them—with their lack of action

He has already judged 5:3

"For I, on my part, though absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged him who has so committed this, as though I were present."

He urges them to get together and do something
 5:4 *"In the name of our Lord Jesus, when you are assembled, and I with you in spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus, ⁵ (I have decided) to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."*

Discipline which should be imposed 5:5 ^

Deliver him to Satan for the destruction of the flesh.

Views:

- Pray that Satan would afflict him
- Pray for his death
- Excommunication from church -> turning him back to Satan's realm.

The command to deliver him to Satan involves separation from the church, handing him over to the realm of Satan, the world.

The church gathered together provides a shelter, a protection from the attacks of Satan.

The separation should cause him to hurt, to feel the loss, so desperately that it brings him to his senses and he wants to come back so badly that he will get things straightened out.

However, due to the conditions in chapter 1-4 he might well have said, "Who cares?" No one cares about anyone else around here anyhow! This is just a bunch of proud, cliquish, bigots running around doing whatever they feel like doing. Who needs them?"

In one sense that isn't their problem. Paul tells them to act anyway.

In another sense, they will have to clean up their own act before it will really work.

Finally, Paul knows that the two solutions go together.

They will never care enough about this brother to do what they should, until they have solved the first problem—the lack of love for one another.

Command Illustrated 5:6-8

“Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump (of dough)? ⁷ Clean out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, just as you are (in fact) unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed.

⁸Let us therefore celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”

Just leave a little bit of leaven and it will soon permeate the whole lump.

"A rotten apple spoils the whole bunch."

The principle involved in the discipline is illustrated by the purging of leaven.

The leaven is to be purged out—completely removed (Ex. 13:3-7)

Passover—Departure from Egypt—Redemption by blood

Feast of Unleavened Bread—separation from dependence on the old life—>separation and purification.

As in the feast of unleavened bread, there should be a complete break from the old way of life.

We ought to separate ourselves from any vestige of leaven.

The Passover, Christ, has already been offered

–>Our redemption is paid by blood.

Now it's time to celebrate the feast of unleavened bread. – to separate ourselves from the old lifestyle.

3 elements of the contrast (NOT just 2!)

1) Without the old leaven – the old life of sin

That which the natural man produces

2) Without the leaven of malice and wickedness

^
Pure motives

^
pure actions (a consistent lifestyle)

3) But rather with sincerity and with truth

This is not to be done maliciously – it's not to judge cruelly or to get back at him.

– that would just be more of the same (lack of love)

It's to be done with pure motives – in sincerity and truth, – out of genuine love and concern for him

Command Clarified 5:9-13

“wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; ¹⁰ I (did) not at all (mean) with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters; for then you would have to go out of the world. ¹¹ But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he should be an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler – not even to eat with such a one. ¹² For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within (the church)? ¹³ But those who are outside, God judges. Remove the wicked man from among yourselves.

Paul clarifies the principle of separation explaining that he means they should stay away from those

who profess faith in Christ who are guilty of fornication, not the unsaved.

He recognizes that they can't lead the unsaved to Christ unless they speak to them.

Don't keep company with fornicators 5:9

Only refers to brethren (or nominal Christians) ("a man that is called a brother")

–NOT to the unsaved.

Here he takes it further than just fornication

It includes a covetous person–the materialist who always wants more

It includes the "reviler"–the person who speaks with evil intent

–the gossip, the critic, the one who tears others down all the time, the slanderer (libel)

Not unbelievers who do it, but believers (Nominal Christians)

If we would start to do this consistently, those who live this way would either leave, or they would repent.

We are not to "get mixed up with, to associate intimately with them."

We are not even to eat, i.e., have fellowship with such people!

The church is to purify and correct itself, but not to try to "Christianize" unbelievers by forcing biblical standards on them. Our concern is to clean up our own house–not Satan's!

3 Important Perspectives in this Instruction

Focus on the Sinner

He 's a professing believer 1, 11-13

He's living worse than the pagans
around him. 1

He's getting away with it; no one's
stopping him.

He's affecting others by his sin;
encouraging them to become contami-
nated 6

*Eccl. 8:11 "Because the sentence against an evil deed is not
executed quickly, therefore the hearts of the sons of men among
them are given fully to do evil."*

Focus on the Church's Response to the Sinner

They don't care enough about him to do
anything to stop him 2 (cp. Heb. 12)

They have become proud of their
tolerance 2

They have separated themselves from
the world who needs the gospel, and
identified with a "Christian" who
laughs at it (at least in practice!)

Focus on the Proper Response to the Sinner

Lack of discipline = lack of love (cp. Heb
12:6-11)

They are to cut him off from fellowship
with the body 2, 5, 7-8, 9, 11, 13

Their purpose should be to restore him,
NOT to destroy him 5, 8

*How are we reacting when faced with such
circumstances?*

*Do we care enough about those we see go astray
that we will take a risk to correct them?*

True church discipline is never easy.

Properly applied **it always "hurts us worse than it
hurts them!"** It's painful.

But it's the only way to demonstrate true Christian
love for one another.