

## *I Corinthians 5:1-8*

### *Sexual immorality*

- Thus far in Paul's letter he has been concerned about the Corinthians practice of passing judgment on others. Paul has been clear in admonishing them to not be judgmental in areas of ministry style, emphasis, role, motives, etc.
- But does this mean that Christians are not to ever judge one another? Not at all. As we will see in the next several chapters. The Church at Corinth was being judgmental in areas of life where it should have been affirming. And it was affirming in areas of life where it should have been judging.
- For a detailed treatment of this subject go to [Apttp teach.org](http://Apttp teach.org) and see theology files "802, #803"

### **A. The teaching of Jesus in Matthew 18**

NOTE: This is normally the responsibility of the elders in a fellowship. I Cor.6:1-6; 2:15; 5:3,12; I Tim.1:20

#### a. Step #1 Personal reproof in private

“<sup>15</sup> And if your brother sins, **go and reprove him in private**; if he listens to you, you have won your brother.

#### b. Step #2 Include one or two more in bringing private reproof

“<sup>15</sup> And if your brother sins, **go and reprove him in private**; if he listens to you, you have won your brother.

#### c. Step #3 Expose the issue to the entire church

<sup>17</sup> And if he refuses to listen to them, **tell it to the church**;

#### d. Step #4 Let the person be regarded as an unbeliever

“and if he refuses to listen even to the church, **let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax-gatherer.**”

### **B. I Corinthians 5:1-8**

#### **1. Sexual immorality is serious.**

“<sup>1</sup> 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 his father's wife.”

The language used in this verse suggests that the person in question was married to his father's wife. This was considered incest and a dishonor to his father.

“A man is not to marry his father's wife; he must not dishonor his father's bed.” **Deut.22:30**

#### **2. The church has an obligation to remove certain Christians from fellowship in the church.**

“<sup>2</sup> And 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.”

It is not only the immoral person but the church (leaders) that are in need of correction.

#### **3. The objective of the discipline is repentance.**

“<sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> In the name of our Lord Jesus, when you are assembled, and I with you in spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus, <sup>5</sup> {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.”

Open, unrepentant sexual immorality is but one reason for drastic church discipline. Here are some others.

#### **Divisiveness.** Titus 3:9-11

“But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law, because these are unprofitable and useless. Warn a **divisive person** once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him. You may be sure that such a man is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.”

#### **Freeloading.** II Thessalonians 3

“<sup>11</sup> For we hear that some among you are **leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies.** . . . <sup>14</sup> And if anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that man and do not associate with him, so that he may be put to shame. <sup>15</sup> And {yet} do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.”

#### **Gross disrespect.** I Timothy 1

“<sup>19</sup> keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith. <sup>20</sup> Among these are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have delivered over to Satan, so **that they may be taught not to blaspheme.**”

#### **Teaching false doctrine.** II John

“<sup>9</sup> Anyone who **goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ**, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son <sup>10</sup> If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into {your} house, and do not give him a greeting; <sup>11</sup> for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds.”

#### **Any number of serious sins.** I Corinthians 5:11

“But actually, I wrote to you no to associate with any so-called brother if he should be **an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler** (abuse, reproach, insult), **or a drunkard, or a swindler** - not even to eat with such a one.”

#### **4. The spiritual well being of the Christian community is also at stake.**

“<sup>6</sup> Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump {of dough}? <sup>7</sup> 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. <sup>8</sup> Let 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.”

If the church is to maintain authentic worship and community in the Spirit, it must strive to rid itself of overt spiritual disrespect among its members.

#### **5. The point of this text.**

**Overt sexual immorality is not to be tolerated in that it is destructive to the sinner and also to the church that refuses to maintain discipline.**

#### **C. Some general observations.**

- Public exposure of sin is to be avoided if possible and then only as a last resource in bringing a person to repentance. Note the way Joseph tried to protect Mary in Matt.1:19
- Shame is God's tool before repentance and Satan's tool after repentance. II Cor.2:6-11
- Create an environment where it is safe to fully repent with the expectation of restoration.
- Be eager to forgive and restore penitent Christians while pressing for full repentance. Lk.15
- Be patient and humble realizing that we are all sinners and find holiness to be a challenge. Gal.6:1-3
- In I Tim.5:1 Paul tells Timothy to not rebuke an older man harshly but treat him like your father. Later in verse 19-20 Paul tells Timothy to be careful not to quickly accuse an elder but when the evidence is public knowledge that an elder is living in sin, he should be publicly rebuked. I suspect that this is because his sin is common knowledge and yet he is doing nothing about it. I doubt that Paul is advocating that all elders be publicly rebuked every time a past offense is discovered. Paul was wise in being general about the public confession of his own failures. If he were specific, he perhaps would have been put out of the ministry in the mind of some idealists.
- When a sinner repents, the church should rejoice and celebrate with and for the penitent sinner just as the Prodigal's Father celebrated the return of his son in Luke 15. The failure to fully recognize and affirm a penitent sinner leaves Satan an opening to use shame to keep the penitent sinner in a state of condemnation with little confidence.