

The Difficult Path to Church Purity

by Tim Conway

The sermon emphasizes the importance of church purity and the need for church discipline to remove sin from among us.

Duration: 1:14:14

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 5:2

Topics: "Church Discipline", "Spiritual Purity"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of church purity and dealing with sin within the church community. It delves into the need to remove individuals involved in serious sin to maintain the purity of the church, drawing parallels to the Old Testament practices of removing leaven during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The sermon highlights the role of Satan in the destruction of the flesh for the potential salvation of the spirit, stressing the sanctifying work that can come through discipline. The ultimate focus is on feasting on Christ and celebrating the festival of unleavened bread by purging sin from our lives and the church.

Transcript

Pastorally, I am not at all committed to using this pulpit as a means for focusing on Christmas-oriented themes. And so if you're visiting with us today and maybe on a day somewhat hallowed by the world as Christmas Eve, you might expect something different from this. I recognize that it's often an anticipation of something to do with the incarnation.

Well, if you're really looking for a Christmas connection, not that I prepared this message in any way to try to make that connection, but I want you to think about the incarnation and what it was actually meant to produce. This is the salvation. What is salvation? What does that mean for a people to truly be saved? And in light of some of the things that are happening in our own church and that were discussed among us on Wednesday, I have purposed today, of all things, to deal with a portion of Scripture found in Paul's letter to the Corinthians.

The first letter. Chapter 5. So if you would turn in your Bibles. 1 Corinthians.

I actually want to bring a message from the entirety of 1 Corinthians 5. There's sexual immorality in this church. It's defiling the church. And Paul, under the inspiration of God, wants it cleansed out.

So let's read this together. It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans. For a man has his father's wife.

And you are arrogant. Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you. For though absent in body, I am present in spirit.

And as if present, I have already pronounced judgment on the one who did such a thing. When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my Spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord. Your boasting is not good.

Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump. As you really are unleavened, for Christ our Passover Lamb has been sacrificed. Let us therefore celebrate the festival." Ah, now that... We're in a season where the celebrating of festivals, the celebrating of holidays, Paul wants us to celebrate, and he wants us to celebrate a specific festival.

We'll look at that more. Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people.

Not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world. Or the greedy and swindlers or idolaters. Since then, you would need to go out of the world.

But now, I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler. Not even to eat with such a one. For whatever I had to do with judging outsiders, is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? God judges those outside.

Purge the evil person from among you. Let's pray again. Father, I pray.

I pray that this portion of Scripture would have its right effect on the people of God. I pray this in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Now, it's true, we dealt with somebody this past Wednesday according to these verses. But we also had a second matter that we dealt with on Wednesday. You're saying, what applies where? Well, I'm saying this, that where there is sin and where there is false doctrine, that God wants us to deal with it seriously.

And even aside from those two issues we dealt with, there is something about the life and the health of the church in this that I want to have impact us. I've entitled my sermon The Difficult Path to Church Purity. The difficult path.

It's not an easy one. It's not easy if you're in the church, in a church that takes the passages in Scripture that deal with not associating, even with a brother who won't work, not associating with those who propagate divisive doctrine or put obstacles in the way of people. It's difficult when you deal with sin in the church.

It's difficult to do Matthew 18 processes where if somebody sins against me rather than going and gossiping or spilling my guts to somebody else, I actually go to the person and seek to resolve and be a peacemaker. These things are difficult. It's difficult to confront people about sin.

It's difficult in the leadership to confront. Just like just recently happened. You have an elder in the church who takes it upon himself to deal with sin, and what inevitably happens is the people who are in sin turn and point the fingers at those who are trying to confront them about the sin.

That happens and makes it very difficult. It is a difficult path. And you know what? It's not uncommon to find people in the church who are not aware of God's methods that He has designed for keeping the church pure.

So the first time somebody experiences a person getting put out of the church and handed over to Satan, the whole thing can catch people off guard. What's this? We're delivering somebody over to Satan? Really? Really? What's that all about? Brethren, I might have been inclined to sing several more songs this morning, but you know what? That song was selected. And I thought those words, it specifically talks about sin.

Not being able to dwell in the presence of God. Sin cannot dwell in God's presence. And you know, brethren, it's interesting that most of the time, almost all of the time, when you actually have a church that wants to take sin serious when it shows up in the church, almost all the time, there's somebody or bodies, plural, who wants to object.

And I thought, I don't think the problem primarily stems from the fact that they don't have a Bible and can't actually read Matthew 18 or what it says in 2 Thessalonians 3 or 1 Corinthians 5 or any of the various passages, Titus 3, Romans 16. Brethren, I'm concerned that maybe the bigger problem is that we forget who God is. God.

Sin. Do you know that even the least degree of sin, it's repulsive, it's hateful to God. Have you ever read what Habakkuk says? It says that God is of purer eyes than to be able to behold evil.

He can't not look upon iniquity. He can't. You know, oftentimes we go to Scripture.

You know, as a New Calvinist, you like to run over to, oftentimes you hear the young Calvinists, they like to run over to Psalm 5 and say, it blows them away. Scripture actually says that God hates those who are evildoers. But you know what it says right before that in v. 4? It says, evil may not dwell with Him.

Exactly what the song just said. Brethren, what we need to ask ourselves is this, do we have the right perception? With the entire intensity of God's infinite being, He loathes sin. He hates it.

He detests it. It insults Him. Scripture says that sin falls short of the glory of God.

It's an attack on His glory. And you know this, the fire of God's wrath burns eternally even right now against many of our family members and people who have lived in this city. Why? Against them and their sin and hell forever.

And the thing is, God's wrath even burns against His own Son when sin is laid on Him and He becomes sin for us. It's not minimized because it's laid on the Son of God. God crushes His own Son if He finds sin there.

And God calls this hateful thing leaven. Leaven. Why? I mean, what's leaven? It's a fermenting agent that causes bread to rise.

I actually made some sourdough bread over this last year. What you do is you leave the dough out long enough. It basically begins to ferment.

Some kind of decomposition, some kind of corruption sets in that when you actually go to cook it, it creates a rising. But it's that which, though it be ever so small in quantity, if you have a piece of bread that actually has the act of leaven in it, and you touch it, even if it's a great, big, massive dough that's unleavened, you touch that against there, you begin to mix it in a little bit, what's eventually going to happen is it's a corruption that spreads. It spreads towards further corruption.

And once started, it doesn't stop. It just goes. It poisons the whole.

Leaven's very character is to spread. No matter how much dough you have, once it's introduced, there it is. And it will eventually work its way through the whole.

A little leaven leavens the whole lump. And so it is with sin. Take some.

Throw it among the angels. Just a little sin. Just let pride crop up in one angel.

And what happens? A third of them are gone. Take just a little leaven. Throw it there into mankind.

Just one woman. One sin. You know what's happened.

The whole human race is leavened by her fall. Throw a little bit in the church. What happens? Does God rise up and say, oh, don't worry.

You're all saved. The Spirit of God is operating in here. You're impervious to this.

Is that what He says? That's not what He says. He says, get that corruption out of the church. Be that even a lazy brother who won't work, don't associate with them.

If that's bad doctrine, don't associate with them. If that's sin, like this evil person, get that evil person out of My church. It's His church.

Remember that. Lest the whole lump become corrupt. Now, let's look at the action that's called for here.

Look at v. 2. First, the action. Let him who has done this be removed from among you. Notice v. 5. You are to deliver.

So v. 2, remove. V. 5, deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh. Now, we'll look at that a little more in a few minutes.

V. 11, I'm writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, swindler. Not even to eat with such a one. So, don't associate, don't eat with them.

V. 13, purge the evil person from among you. Remove, deliver, don't associate, don't eat with, purge. What I want you to notice is this, I think some churches are totally off base and totally miss the point of this passage when they simply say they have exercised church discipline and removed somebody from the church membership and that individual is still allowed to freely interact with the church.

That's not the point of the text, folks. This is not about removing somebody from church membership. These verses are about purging someone from among us so thoroughly that not a single one of us continues to associate with or have contact with that individual.

Not even to eat with them. That's what's happening. It's about handing over this person out of this realm and over into the realm of the devil.

That's what we're dealing with here. Notice v. 4 and 5. When you're assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus. You say, when does that happen? Well, that happens right now.

We are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus. That happens when, you remember, don't forsake the assembling together of yourself. When God's people assemble, we are assembling in His name.

And my Spirit is present. What is that? Don't get all mystical. Paul basically wants his Spirit, his thinking about all of this to be present with them when they meet together.

He wants them to think like he thinks. He wants them to have the same attitude. He wants them to put into practice the very thing that he's calling for here.

But notice this, with the power. They not only gather in the name, they gather with the power. Jesus said, Lo, I will be with you to the end of the age.

He comes with His power. He comes with His help. He comes with His authority.

And you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh. Folks, this is real. The church really does have, by Christ's authority and power, we have the authority to actually, when we assemble together in the name of the Lord Jesus, to truly deliver somebody over to Satan.

We have that authority. Now, I want to deal with vocabulary for a second. Sometimes people are confused about vocabulary.

Sometimes we talk about church discipline, and then later, something comes up about not even associating. The person is not to call our members to come over to your house, to fellowship with you, to eat with you. And people are like, that catches them off guard.

Well, where'd that come from? Okay, when we talk about the action carried out here in 1 Corinthians 5, it's often called church discipline. This process is often called that. Now, that concept is probably more far-reaching than just the action here.

It would describe other actions that the church takes with regards to sin too. But when you hear that term, that term can very easily be used to describe this. Another term that is often used is excommunication.

Brethren, church discipline, excommunication, neither are found in our Bibles. But they're both commonly used terms to describe the action that occurs in 1 Corinthians 5. Now, perhaps some are uncomfortable with the term excommunication. Because maybe in some people's minds it's connected with the Catholic church.

Even though I would say I came from a Catholic family. It's a term that doesn't bother me. In fact, I like the term because it carries the meaning of the action.

Ex means to expel. Communion. Excommunicate.

It means to expel from communication. To expel from communion. To expel from fellowship, which is exactly what the action is.

If you don't like the connections in your mind that it has with Catholicism, you don't have to use it. But just recognize that it is often used, and I think just if you break down the component parts of the word, it describes exactly what is happening. We are putting somebody out of fellowship.

We are expelling them from fellowship with the church. And so, there's our terminology. So, next, what sort of persons bring this action upon themselves? And I want to phrase it like that.

Because you do recognize that when people face the discipline of the church, it's because of their conduct. I just had dinner with another pastor here in town on Tuesday evening. And we both were remarking how it's amazing that when discipline is carried out in the church, oftentimes, the church leadership is accused.

As though the leadership is the one that's done wrong. Brethren, when people face the discipline of the church, they have brought it upon themselves. It's an action that's being carried out against them because of sin on their part.

So, what sort of person? Well, notice the first thing. Look at v. 11. The sort of person that brings this action upon himself is the sort described in v. 11.

And I refer to v. 11, not to v. 1, because in v. 1, this is an exceptional example. A man, an incestuous man, actually has his father's wife. And that's the kind of sin that isn't even wrong among the pagans.

But listen, Paul is not just dealing with sins of that extremity and that heinousness. Notice v. 11. The first thing I would call your attention to is this.

Do not associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he's guilty of all these things. Anyone who bears the name of brother. The New King James says anyone named a brother.

The King James, anyone that is called a brother. Now, I pointed this out on Wednesday and I want to point it out again. This is actually a passive participle.

What does that mean? Well, it's not so much an active participle. In other words, it's not so much what the person calls himself. It's what the person is being called here.

If somebody comes through that door, is it somebody that we're going to call brother or sister? Is it somebody who's called that? Now, a lot of that may have to do with what an individual calls himself, but I just want you to recognize what Paul is saying is somebody who is called by others, brother, sister, if they're guilty of all these things. Now, guilty. The ESV says it bears the name of brother if they're called brother or sister if he is guilty.

The ESV does not do a good job with this. The term guilty is not in the original. Why is that important? Because if I just say, hey, anybody that's been guilty of the sin of sexual immorality ever, even one time, you see, it's not the idea of just whether you can peg somebody with a one-time guilt.

Guilty, it's not there in the original. And I don't like it because I think it communicates the wrong thing. Paul is certainly not advocating that only sinless people can be members of the Christian community.

And that if you're ever guilty of any one of these sins just one time, you're out. I think the letter of 1 Corinthians itself bears witness to the fact that Paul did not take that position. Why? I mean, just think about these people.

Division. They had lawsuits. Misuse and pride of spiritual gifts.

They had ongoing pagan worship that in chapters 8 and 10, he's still having to weed through. He has to deal with overall sexual implications in chapter 6. You had women not wearing their head coverings. You had problems with the Lord's Supper and the rich not waiting for the poor.

You had erroneous doctrine concerning the resurrection. You had situations like this that were permeating the church, but Paul doesn't say, well, that's it. You're all guilty of pride.

You're all out. I mean, you basically do this and you don't have a church left. But listen, at the same time, Paul is certainly concerned with something here.

That these people stop these things. Listen, I'll tell you this, all these sins I just described, Paul does not say that it's hopeful for them if they continue in them. In fact, when you get to 2 Corinthians 7, he is commending them for having responded the way they responded.

Listen, you never want to use the Corinthians as an example to condone your sin. Because by the second letter, they had with violence repented and Paul commended them for that. Don't use David to condone your sin.

He fell one time and there was such repentance as you find in Psalm 51. Listen, just go right before this chapter. Go back up to 1 Corinthians 4, verses 16 and 17.

Look what Paul is saying to them. I urge you then, be imitators of Me. That is why I sent you Timothy.

My beloved and faithful child in the Lord. Notice this, to remind you of My ways in Christ as I teach them everywhere in every church. Do you recognize this? Paul was given to the Corinthians and to us as the model of a sinner who is saved, who is striving to know nothing against himself and imitate his Master.

He's an example given to us of Christ-likeness. And those who belong to Christ are to be just like Paul, having put away their former manner of life, but those who come into the church and yet persist in their former manner of life by their very actions, they show that they are opting out of the Christian community and the church is responsible for distancing itself from people. Why? For its own sake.

For our own purity's sake. Now, the verb Paul uses in v. 11, it doesn't have anything to do with guilty. It's the term that in the first person is I Am.

I Am. God says, I Am that I Am. It's got to do with your being.

Now this here is in the third person. It's not I Am. It's They Are.

It's to be something. It's the way somebody is. That's critical.

You see, that's what we want to ask ourselves. Now, is this a one-time fall like David's? Or a one-time denial of the Lord like Peter's? Or even finding a bunch of problems in a brand new church full of first generation Christians? We expect that people are being sanctified. We expect there to be a process in that.

But the question is this, what are you? Are you a Christian who really is struggling and fighting and weeping and mourning and making progress degree by degree, becoming more and more like the glory of the Lord? Or are you one of these people who says, well, I struggle with Internet pornography, and what you really mean is once in a while you break free from it for three days or for seven days, but then you go back to it. You see, that's what you are in that case. That identifies you.

That's your character. Are you an angry person? Are you a covetous person? Are you a drunk? Are you sexually immoral? Does that describe your life? Is that who you are? Brethren, notice something else about v. 11. I said this already, the man in v. 1 committed a sort of sin that's not even tolerated among the pagans.

But Paul is not saying that we have to measure people's sin and ask ourselves, well, is their sin accepted by the pagan world or not? When you get to v. 11, you see that is not the criteria for measuring. In fact, we might even recognize that some of the sins in v. 11 we probably need to take more seriously if we're really going to do justice to this passage. Look at it.

The ESV says greedy. Probably most other translations, covetous. Do you recognize that? If somebody is in our midst who is greedy and covetous, and they live for themselves and they're not sharing and they're not giving, we should put them out of the church.

You know, it was very interesting to me in thinking about this. I've been reading the two-volume biography of Adoniram Judson. The one that was written by Francis Wayland who personally knew Judson.

He went into Burma and he began to preach the Gospel. And about the time they had 18 converts in that small little fledgling church, the following incident took place. He says, "...in respect to Ma Beke..." Now, Ma isn't like mom.

It's M-A-H. It's more like Mrs. "...in respect to Ma Beke..." Notice this. "...she has given way to her violent temper and involved her husband in debt." That seems like such a small thing.

But see, he saw that as covetousness. Working itself out to put her own husband into debt. Needing things that they could not afford.

Along with her violent temper. And listen to this, "...and though she now professes to repent and desire baptism, and though we have some hope that she is not destitute of grace, we feel obliged at present to put her away from us as a wicked person." Now, that may shock you. But you see, I think that is right in line with Paul's thinking.

And you know what historically you find? Especially Baptists. If you look at Baptist churches prior to the 20th century, kind of prior to the Civil War, they typically on average put 2% of their churches out. And I specifically call out the Baptists.

You know why? Because Baptists especially are given to a regenerate church membership. They want to see people live like they're new creations. You start bringing people in from the parish or baptize,

sprinkling water on our unsaved children, well, obviously this whole thing is going to break down.

But historically, especially the Baptists have been committed to people living like they're born again in the church. And I want you to notice something else here. Notice v. 2. And you are arrogant.

Brethren, notice v. 6. Your boasting is not good. And notice those two words. Arrogance and boasting.

Because I want you to remember what sort of arrogance and boasting this is. This isn't just somebody after the service goes out here in the parking lot and they're able to throw a football further than somebody else and they boast about it. This arrogance and this boasting is the kind of arrogance and the kind of boasting that will not discipline somebody out of a church when they need to be disciplined out of a church.

And we need to catch hold of these two statements. Paul is responding to an attitude that was held to by the Corinthian church that was behind why they had not already put this man out. Now think about this.

What are the reasons? Think with me. What are the reasons that churches don't practice this? I mean, in the churches around us. Or even in individuals in our own church who get angry when sin or false doctrine is dealt with.

Let's think about why. Well, sometimes it's because the angry person is guilty of the very same things. Do you know? Let me just tell you this.

The individual that we put out of the church on Wednesday, one of the reasons he flip-flopped in where he was is because he told James and myself that after confessing these sins that he's been involved with, he actually spoke to some in the church who sought to put him at ease by telling him, I do the same thing. And I'm a Christian. And he was actually influenced by that.

I told him, you don't want to measure yourself by other people. That is really dangerous. You know what? Sometimes people don't want to do it because they're guilty of the same things.

Sometimes putting somebody out of the church condemns somebody else still sitting in the church because their life is a testimony of the same. Sometimes it's because people carry around the attitude of, well, who am I to judge? You know, judge not lest ye be judged. That permeates the world's thinking and it comes into the church.

Well, who am I to judge? Who am I to cast the first stone? My life isn't perfect, so who am I to do this? But you just need to recognize, Paul is calling imperfect people to carry this out. And you know the Corinthians at this point are imperfect, and yet he's calling very imperfect people to carry forth with this action. Sometimes it's because people feel that this is cruel.

Sometimes it's because people just despise authority. Some people just hate the thought that the church actually has the authority to say that if you're going to live that way, you cannot fellowship with us. Some people just don't like that.

Sometimes it's because I feel the way to this. Sometimes the reason we don't like to exercise this is because we love that person and we want them involved in our lives and we have a friendship with them. And it's going to be broken by this action.

Sometimes it's family members. I understand that. But that isn't reason for us to not carry through with this.

Some have a false humility. It's the same false humility that is behind not disciplining your children. It's the same false humility behind being averse to capital punishment.

It's basically that false humility that runs around never wanting people to suffer consequences for their sin. And I call it false humility because it's not humility that tolerates sin in the church. Paul says it's arrogance that is tolerant.

Do you all see that? In v. 2, notice what Paul says. "...Ought you not rather to mourn?" Can I tell you something, brethren? It's broken-hearted humility that puts people out of the church. But I don't doubt that there are some leaders in some churches that are just blatantly heavy-handed and when somebody opposes them like diatribes, they use texts like this for their own agenda.

I don't doubt that. But brethren, sometimes the way people react, well, I know you don't know how the leaders of churches that practice church discipline wrestle and struggle and pray and weep. True humility doesn't say, well, God, let me tell You how we're going to deal with sin in the church.

That's not true humility, folks. And that's what a lot of churches do. True humility listens to God, listens to His Son, listens to His Apostles, and surrenders.

It's pride to tell God, well, we're just too loving and merciful to do what You've told us to do in Your Word. And if you think, well, who are we to judge? Well, you need to read v. 12. Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? Put away this idea that we have no right to judge one another.

We are commanded to judge one another. Not unrighteously, but with righteous judgment. We are to evaluate one another's lives.

Brethren, do you not recognize we are running in a race together? John talked about running this race in the first hour. We run this race, but not as islands unto ourselves. We run this race with a group of people.

And it's love that as I'm running the race, my eyes are not just on that finish line selfishly concerned about only me making it. Paul could look at the churches and say, on that day, you are going to be my crown. Brethren, when we get there, and we helped one another, and when we were discouraged, and when we were bored down with weights, and we bore one another's burdens, and when we began to go cold, and we stirred up one another to love and good works, and when we were feeling like we didn't want to go to that prayer meeting, and all of us lifted up our voices together in song that night, and it filled one another with the praise of God and with power of the Spirit to go out and face this world again.

Brethren, we are in this together. We are running a race together. That's why God put His people in churches.

He didn't say go as far away from each other as possible, but rather come together. And we have a responsibility to judge one another and judge the condition of one another, and to look around and to look at the state of one another, and to encourage one another and rebuke one another, and deal with one another when our brothers sin against us or we see sin in their life. And remember, brethren, what is even the case when you put somebody out of the church? Is it not love that does that? It's love for the church and love for the church's purity.

And it's love for the individual. Because some way or another, there is a way that even Satan can save some of our fallen brothers. And that's what the text teaches.

You're not being loving when you resist bad doctrine, people who promote it. Brethren, I'm talking in the church, on the Internet, or wherever. And for you to associate with it, it's to be blind.

Because you know what? I believe that we have young people that tolerate association with bad stuff on the Internet. And you think yourself impervious to it, but you're not impervious. You're no more impervious than the race of mankind was to one woman's sin or to the angels' were over one devil's sin.

It permeates. And a little leaven leavens the whole lump. And you can sit there on the Internet and think, oh, well, I'm impervious to this.

I'm wise enough to avoid this. Have you never read the pastoral epistles? Avoid these foolish controversies. Avoid them.

Why? Because they tend to bad things. They tend to slander and evil suspicions and divisions and dissension. That's what they aim to, brethren.

And you young people, you know what? There's a place to cut off that hand and gouge out that eye. Don't go on Facebook and look at that stuff. Brethren, I'm talking about that which is poison.

There's lots of good stuff out there. And there's good stuff among us. But brethren, we are running a race.

And the thing is, when you get on the Internet and you engage in controversy that only leads to negative things, you know what you do? You infect the whole. Because a little corruption allowed in the church begins to permeate and it spreads. That's the reality that we find.

And it's arrogance that allows this. It's arrogance that is tolerant. We are a people called to judge.

Now here's another thing. The speed of this disciplinary action. Notice v. 2 and 3. "...Let him who has done this be removed." Period.

Get him out. Really? Now, think about this. Paul is far away.

Who is somebody in San Antonio to make a judgment about somebody else in another place? Who is Paul, who is probably way over at Ephesus or something, to make a judgment about somebody in Corinth? Well, a report came to him. Did he say, oh, we need to hear the other side of the story first? He said, I believe what Chloe's people came to me and said. This is a report.

There's no ax to grind here. People get uncomfortable with the speed of this. And sometimes people say, wait, wait, wait, what about Matthew 18? Well, yeah, there's a slower process in Matthew 18, but remember, Matthew 18 isn't like 1 Corinthians 5. In Matthew 18, it's your brother sins against you.

It's private. It's personal. We're talking about flagrant public sins here.

This is different. This is different. When sin is private, we should seek to keep love covers a multitude.

Even in the process of dealing with sin, the elders don't come up and announce every sin we're dealing with in the church. We seek to cover it as much as it should be covered. I'm not saying we're always perfect in exactly the way we do this, but you want to keep personal private sins low key.

Just between the two. And if it gets resolved at that level, it's great and nobody else ever needs to know. But if not, you bring one or two others with you and you seek to do it on that level.

And if they don't hear then, you bring it before the church. And then you put the person out like this. But it's a slower process because it's much more private and it's personal.

This is not that way. This is flagrant. Public.

And hear what Paul says. I have already pronounced judgment. It's like what? You're far away.

You haven't talked to the man yourself. You haven't talked with him face to face. You're not telling the elders to send a group over to speak with him and find out if he's repentant.

What's with all that? How can he know if the guy's repentant? What about that? Why skip over the question of repentance? Why not give the man a second chance? And certainly, listen, brethren, it's not because Paul is uninterested in repentance or second chances. Surely, Paul is open to the possibility of this man eventually being allowed back into fellowship if he's found to be repentant. Over in 2 Corinthians 2.7, it seems like something is being spoken about where somebody's being restored.

It doesn't say distinctly it's this man. Some have thought so. Some have thought not.

But the fact is, 2 Corinthians 2 bears witness of somebody being restored. Certainly, Paul is open to the possibility of somebody being restored into our fellowship if they're found to be repentant. But the point is, get this, this man's sin is publicly known and that sin makes a public statement about Christ.

And it makes a public statement about the church. Therefore, the church should respond with an equally public statement before the world. This conduct is not acceptable.

Christians do not do this. We need to make such statements. You see, Adoniram Judson was on that same page even though the woman was saying, well, I'm repentant and I want to be baptized.

Even at that point, they said, this is public enough. This is an indication of her anger and of her covetousness. And so publicly, they made a declaration to the world that this is what Christ came to do.

Our Passover lamb is sacrificed that we might actually be unleavened. That is what we really are. And we are that because of our Passover lamb being sacrificed, Christ went to that cross.

He bore our sins in His body on that tree, brethren, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. And we are making a statement before the world and we make a statement before the churches. And we make a statement before each other.

And there is a place, brethren, that we make statements about sin so that people fear, even in our own church. We should not take this lightly. Let's not deal with sin lightly.

Now notice Satan's part in this. Verses 4 and 5. When you're assembled... I just point that word assembled. When you are assembled as a church, we do not officially make these declarations in an elders' meeting.

Some churches do that. Some reformed Baptist churches do that. The elders make these decisions behind closed doors.

Now, we may talk about them behind closed doors. In fact, we most certainly will before we bring them before the church. But the action needs to take place when we're assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus.

But notice this. Verse 5, You are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord. What does that mean? This isn't the only place we see this kind of language.

Now, don't turn there. Just listen to this. Paul speaking to Timothy in the first letter to Timothy.

By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith, among whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme. Now, the verb to hand over to Satan, it's the same verb used in the Greek Old Testament when God handed Job over to Satan. Same Greek verb.

To hand over. Now, you may not realize this, but Christians live in the protection of the gathered community of believers. There is protection here.

We have the Spirit of God dwelling among us in an unusual way. Do you remember Jesus said where two or three gather together in My name, there am I in the midst of you. And even that had to do with Matthew 18 and disciplinary action.

But it's interesting where two or three gather together. There is a sense, brethren, that Christ is here. Christ is among us in a way that He is in other places.

And it's protective. And the power of the Lord Jesus Christ is being channeled by way of our spiritual gifts. We pray for one another.

This is a loving environment where we're watching out for one another. We seek to minister to one another. That's what's happening within the context of the church.

When you turn somebody or hand somebody or deliver somebody over to Satan, what you are doing is you are putting them out of this realm. And you are turning them back into Satan's sphere. Why? It says for the destruction of the flesh.

Now you know what happened when God handed Job over. Brethren, what we're being taught here is that Satan is one of God's instruments for sanctification. His soul may be saved in the end.

You can be certain Satan doesn't want to save anybody. But Satan is destroying. He's destructive.

And there is a certain aspect to which that destruction may lead somebody to being saved in the end. You let Satan at them. Just think about Job.

How did Job end? I mean, how did the letter end? Chapter after chapter after chapter. He is going through his misery. And Satan has at him.

And he deprives him of all these things and kills his children and all his wealth is gone. And then he's let at him as far as his own physical health. And he's there in this pile of ashes and scraping.

But brethren, after Satan has his full opportunity, how is Job left in the end? I repent in dust and ashes. Or think about Paul. A messenger of Satan is allowed to have at him.

But you know why? That he might not be lifted up. He might not be conceited. And he says, you know what? I'm grateful for this because what this does when you allow Satan to have at me is it allows me to see my own weakness.

And in my weakness, the power of Christ comes through. And if that's a reality, then I'll rejoice in that. It's a sanctifying... And brethren, that's always our hope.

When we put somebody out of the church, it's almost hard to pray for, isn't it? But you want Satan to basically wreck them to the point that they have no hope anywhere and they're left clinging to Christ. That's the hope. That's how Satan saves the soul.

And I hope you just see in that, brethren, the devil doesn't rule. Jesus rules. He's that rider on the white horse.

He uses even the devil to accomplish salvation. Can you imagine the frustration of the devil over that? To even find that verse in the Bible? You'd think he'd be thinking, okay, how can I destroy and not do that? How can I wreck people's lives? I guess the sad fact is that this is probably the exception. The truth is, the world is in his power and he wrecks so many men's lives and watches them go off into a Christless eternity of destruction.

And that is always his hope in the end. But finally, brethren, just one thing before we end. An argument by analogy.

And what Paul is doing is he's arguing for this cleansing, this purification in the church. And you know where he goes? He goes to the feast of unleavened bread and he goes to the Passover. And we don't want to leave this until we look at those, specifically those three verses.

6, 7, and 8. This is glorious. Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? You see, a little leaven leavens the whole lump.

Now, let's grasp this. Old Testament. One of the primary festivals when all the men had to go to Jerusalem three times a year.

One of them. Passover. Passover.

What they did was they found this lamb without blemish and they sacrificed it and they ate it themselves. And it was followed by seven days of the feast of unleavened bread. No leaven could be found in their houses.

And what Paul does is he reaches back there into the Old Testament and he brings this out. And he uses it as a metaphor. And the first thing that he says there is just like they were to get all the leaven out so that any dough that was in their house was unleavened bread.

He sees the dough that they ate from during that week. He sees that as the church. The leaven, it's not just sin.

When he says get the leaven out, purge out the leaven, he doesn't mean just the sin. He means the man who's doing the sin. The leaven is someone in the church who's doing these things.

The lump is the rest of the church. So you see this. You see his analogy.

You see how he's unraveling this thing. The incestuous man. You see it there? Verse 7, "...cleanse out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump." Oh, that's what we want.

The new lump. And notice what he says next. As you really are unleavened, that's real.

That's what the church is for real once this man's out. That's what the rest of it is. You really are unleavened.

The old leaven is to be gotten rid of. Notice this. You really are unleavened.

Notice the for. For Christ. Don't miss that for.

That conjunction, because it's tying it back. He's saying you as a church really are unleavened. That's what really describes who you are.

And how did it happen? For. Because of. Christ.

Christ. You see, now he goes to the Passover that happened at the beginning of the week. How do you become unleavened? You are unleavened because Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed.

The sacrifice of God's Passover Lamb is what truly makes us unleavened. He bore our sins in His own body on that tree, brethren, that we might die to sin. We die to sin.

That we might live to righteousness. That's why He died. Go to the manger.

Everybody wants to talk about the manger. But you think about this. Why did the Man from Heaven come to this earth? Why did He need to come? He came to die.

And why did He come to die? To be our salvation. And to save us from sin. And to save us from sin.

That we might die to sin. That's why He came. We are unleavened bread.

And if there are those among us who are the old leaven, then we need to purge them out for the sake of the purity of the church. Why? Because leaven corrupts the very fabric of the church. It corrupts our purity.

It rots the church. Notice this. Verse 8. Let us, therefore, celebrate the festival.

Festival. Wait, what's that? What festival do we celebrate? Sometimes people talk about the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper isn't being talked about at all here, brethren.

The festival. Think with me. When they celebrated the Passover festival, what did they do? What did they do? They ate the Passover lamb.

How do we celebrate the festival? Remember, festival. You know where that comes from? Feasting. The Passover was a feast.

The primary way that you celebrated it, you put the blood around the doorposts and you ate the lamb. You ate. Brethren, you know what we're called to do? We are called in all of our lives to eat of Christ.

Away with the leaven as we feast. Why? Because the leaven of evil, if it's permitted into the church, it works its way through the whole church and it affects our feasting on Christ. That's what happens.

If sin is tolerated in one, you know what happens when sin is tolerated in one? Well, it easily becomes tolerated in another. That's what happens. It's excused in another.

The whole standard of holiness in the church. It comes crashing down. We permit one sin, some false doctrine in our church knowingly, and who can tell how far that sin is going to corrupt the whole.

The church, therefore, is to be purged of evil as diligently as possible. And this is all done in order to keep us feasting on Christ. Brethren, read this for yourselves.

Look at v. 7. You really are unleavened. For Christ our Passover Lamb has been sacrificed. Let us therefore celebrate the festival, the feasting on Christ, the hope in the blood on the doorposts and lintel.

Celebrate. In all of your life, celebrate that feasting on Christ, but not with the old leaven. Not with that.

Malice, evil, get that all out. Brethren, we are to be feasting on Christ day by day, but not with the old leaven. Do you not recognize Christ? Christ dearly at high expense to Himself purchased our freedom from the leaven.

That's why He saved us. He saved us that sin may no longer have dominion. He saved us to make us good and righteous people.

To be people who do the works and the will of the Father. That's what He saved us to do. You cannot feast on Christ and allow sin at the same time.

Why? Brethren, you know what happens when you allow sin into your life? And if we willingly allow sin into our church? I'll tell you what happens. That peace was bought by the blood. But that peace is felt as Christ communicates assurance to our souls.

Entertain sin in your life and see where your peace goes. Entertain sin in your life and see what happens to your assurance. You know what happens to it.

Christ is not in the habit of speaking sweet words into the ears of those who are tolerating. I'm not saying those who repent of it, but those who tolerate and permit sin. Brethren, do you remember His words saying Christ as He spoke to those seven churches in Asia Minor and those seven epistles and chapters 2 and 3 of Revelation? He finds sin in those churches and He said, I have this against you.

And He would say, repent or else. And when He said you, it wasn't singular. He meant the whole church.

If you've got a Jezebel in your midst, you as a church need to deal with it. If you have this problem or that problem or another problem, He says take care of it or else. You think sin interrupts communion? You think He takes it serious? He is the Christ who walks about in the midst of the candlesticks.

He knows where there's sexual immorality even if it doesn't come to the ears of those in the church who would deal with it and do something about it. But I'll tell you, you are not safe there. It is not a good place.

It is not a comfortable place. And even if things are well with your soul, you know you cannot feast on Christ and enjoy that feast and enjoy that communion and enjoy that with Christ if you're allowing sin or if you know it's in the church and it's not being dealt with. Is God not telling us that if we allow Achan to remain in the camp, the whole camp will become defiled? That's exactly what is happening here, brethren.

You want to come on Wednesday nights and pray. And you want God to bless that. And you want God to hear our prayers and save our children.

I'll tell you what, what He's telling us here is you let leaven into the camp and it infects. And it will infect and it will affect all of us and it will begin to move and permeate in the church. You think it'll begin to affect our prayer meeting? You better believe it will.

You think it will affect the assurance that we have? The power of God from the pulpit? The power of our lives to exercise our spiritual gifts? Brethren, these things corrupt. And if they're not dealt with and put out of the church and attacked and dealt with. And brethren, I recognize it may be the same way now until I die that when we seek to deal with these things, there's going to be kickback in the church and from outside the church, but so be it.

Because this is the path to our feasting on Christ that is unhindered. That's what we want. I fear we will not enjoy the blessings.

I think it's clear. We will not experience the blessings that we might as a church have otherwise experienced if we allow sin among us. Brethren, there needs to be more jealousy for holiness.

Because I can tell you, if the young man that we put out of the church on Wednesday actually did talk to members of this church and they were saying they lived the same way, so basically, be at ease, you need to be put out too. And you may not want to come speak to us, because if that is the habitual conduct of your life, you will be put out. But what I recommend you do is you run to Christ and you confess these things to Him and make it right at that level.

Because whether it's public or not isn't really the issue. Yes, if it's public and we're permitting it, then there's arrogance on our part. But it's no less corrupting to have it in the church even if there's individuals whose standard of holiness is that they can practice sin and still somehow that's legitimate biblical Christianity.

Brethren, keep your consciences tender. Do you recognize that the power of God we want to see unleashed in our feasting on Christ when we come to sing the songs, when we come to pray and lay hold upon our God, when we send out people, men and women, and they go out from this church and they seek to proclaim the Gospel throughout our city and across this state and in other countries, and we desire to see churches planted and see God do this, do you think any of this has to do with the holiness of the church at home? Oh, brethren, the effectual, fervent prayers of a righteous man avail much. It doesn't say that the prayers are effectual and fervent of unrighteous, ungodly, bad, old, leavened people in the church.

That's not the case. Get the old leaven out of the church. And don't expose yourself to that leaven on the internet.

Purge it out. Get it out of your life. Don't let it on your TV.

Don't let it on your cell phone. Purge it out. You are not impervious to its corruption.

You are not. And if you think you are, you are the arrogant ones. Just like these Corinthians.

And your arrogance, brethren, I'll tell you where arrogance leads. It leads to destruction and it leads to a fall. May God purify this church.

Purity, brethren. We don't need more size. We need holiness.

We need more purity. We need more Christ-likeness. We need more of the fear of God in our midst.

That's health. That's good. Father, may You give us this.

Please help us. Have mercy upon us, Lord. Give us grace to walk upright in this day of wickedness in the midst of this crooked and perverse generation in which we find ourselves.

Oh, and we delight to pray in the name and to be assembled together in the power of our Lord Jesus Christ. I pray, give us grace to feast upon Christ in these coming days. I ask this in His name, Amen.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/NQqyaxQ5eHY.mp4>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/tim-conway/the-difficult-path-to-church-purity/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net