

1 Corinthians 5B (2013)

- Last week we began the second major section of Paul's letter to Corinth
 - This section is Paul's response to a laundry list of issues brought to Paul's attention
 - Each issue reflects spiritual immaturity and ignorance
 - When you combine immaturity and ignorance, you end up in arrogance
 - Hubris we called it last week
 - A church self-satisfied and unconcerned with the consequences of their choices and decisions
 - But there are consequences for sin
 - And those consequences reach beyond ourselves, especially if the sin takes place in a public manner within the church
 - Simply put, as Christians we have been bought with a price, the blood of Christ
 - So we no longer own our own decisions and choices...Christ owns us and directs us and judges us
 - He makes His will known by His word, and He calls us to account within the structure of the church body
 - Ultimately, we will still be called to account when we die
 - So if we're determined to rebel against God's word, against parents, against church leaders or other institutions
 - We may escape the consequences of that rebellion for a time
 - But one day those decisions will come to rest upon us
 - Unless we repent and turn from those ways
- That's what Paul is doing now in his letter: calling the church to repentance so it may receive a better result in the day of the Lord

- The first issue Paul addressed in Chapter 5 last week was the tolerance of sexual immorality in the church
 - Men and women in the church will make immoral choices from time to time
 - And these things should concern us
 - But Paul's biggest concern was the church's tolerance of this behavior
 - The church tolerated, even celebrated, an openly immoral sexual relationship in the church body
- Paul said the right response was to put the man out of fellowship so that the behavior might be corrected
 - The man and woman would be preserving whatever they had left of eternal inheritance
 - While the rest of the church body learned the lesson that sin within the body is not acceptable and must be addressed
- As we pick up again in Chapter 5 and into 6, Paul connects this first issue of tolerating sin to a second problem of judging others appropriately

[1Cor. 5:9](#) I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people;

[1Cor. 5:10](#) 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.

[1Cor. 5:11](#) But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is 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.

[1Cor. 5:12](#) For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church?

[1Cor. 5:13](#) But those who are outside, God judges. REMOVE THE WICKED MAN FROM AMONG YOURSELVES.

- In v.9 Paul refers to an earlier letter written to the church
 - This is how we know that 1 Corinthians is not actually the first letter Paul wrote to the church
 - In that earlier letter, Paul evidently told the church not to associate with immoral people

- The word immoral again finds its root in *porneia* (pornos in this case)
- So it's a reference to sexually immoral people
 - Fornicators, adulterers, & homosexuals
- When the church read Paul's words, they assumed Paul was speaking about unbelievers in the city of Corinth
 - They must have withdrawn themselves from most of Corinthian society, since sexual immorality was rampant in the city
 - Perhaps they shunned neighbors, family and friends
 - Perhaps they were patrons of only certain businesses
- In short, they exercised judgment toward the unbelieving world
 - This is the type of judgment Jesus was speaking of when He said we are not to judge others

[Luke 6:35](#) "But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men.

[Luke 6:36](#) "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

[Luke 6:37](#) "Do not judge, and you will not be judged; and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned.

- Jesus teaches us not to judge others in the context of unbelievers
- Notice He begins in v.35 with the statement love your enemies
- And then says be merciful to those who oppose you
- Then He ends with don't judge those people, the unbeliever who opposes you
 - In fact, if we treat them with kindness it will be repaid to us in like manner
- So Jesus taught do not judge in reference to unbelievers
- He gave this instruction to guard us against assuming an attitude of superiority or pride or arrogance against sinners

- To judge them means to consider ourselves better than them
 - We're holding their sin against them, forgetting that we are no different than they are
 - We are every bit the sinner the rest of the world is
 - Except that we have been forgiven by faith
 - And we received that forgiveness so that we could become an ambassador to the unbeliever
 - Ambassadors can't fulfill their mission if they treat their target audience with contempt
- If we distance ourselves from the sinning world through a judgmental heart, we fail in our role
 - Withholding fellowship and kindness from the unbeliever won't make us more holy
 - We're already washed clean by the blood of Christ
 - And judging them isn't going to lead them into repentance
 - It's the kindness of God that leads men to repentance
- We've been called to bring the world the Gospel message, which is the solution to their sin
 - But when we judge them, we declare they are unfit for our company and our message
 - The truth is exactly the opposite: Jesus delivered the Gospel for the sake of the sinner, not the righteous
 - He came to heal the sick, not the healthy
 - If our judgment drives the believer away, we've withheld the very thing that can address their sin
 - That's why judging unbelievers is a sin, Jesus says
- This was the conclusion the Corinthian church made, and so now Paul corrects that thinking
 - In v.10 he says he never meant for the church to disassociate from immoral people in the world

- Paul lists some examples of immorality he must have listed in his first letter when he originally wrote these commands
- Paul says we aren't to avoid the covetous of the world
 - We don't avoid swindlers
 - We don't stay away from idolaters
- Paul chooses three types of sin typical of the world to make his obvious point
- The only way you and I could avoid contact with people who covet, people who cheat others, people who have idols would be to leave the planet Earth
 - Literally every human being is probably guilty of those things at one time or another
 - And among unbelievers, these behaviors will be common
- So for the church to conclude that Paul wanted them to stay away from unbelievers who exhibit these traits was patently ridiculous
 - And as we explained earlier, it was completely against the mission of the Church
 - We are supposed to spend time with these people to persuade them to the truth of the Gospel
- Paul says in the end, the Lord will be their judge, so we aren't to take that role in the meantime
 - We spend time in the world so that we may influence it
 - And we cannot influence it if we are not engaged in relationships with the world
 - It's literally impossible to limit our relationships to godly people
- The modern practice of boycotting companies because of their policies is a good example of the Church judging the unbelieving world
 - Why should it surprise or bother us when Company X has a policy to support immoral living or to fund immoral practices?
 - Every company is made up of immoral people who practice immorality

- They are lost and dying in their sin, so naturally they act according to that sinful heart
- More importantly, it is literally impossible to do business with only moral companies
 - Did you eat this morning? You ate food grown by immoral farmers
 - Some of those farmers beat their wives
 - Some don't pay their taxes
 - Some commit adultery
 - And that food was transported to your store by truck drivers, among whom some were immoral in various ways
 - And that food was stocked by sinful grocery store employees
 - And the car you drove it home in was built by immoral people and the roads you drove on were built by immoral people
 - And even the fork that carried that food into your mouth was being held by a sinful hand attached to your sinful body
- This is the problem Paul was talking about when he wrote this letter
 - We are not instructed by scripture to avoid immoral people in the world
 - We are not called to boycott this company or that company so we can show them our disfavor at their policies and practices
 - We are not called to judge unbelievers, for there is nothing to be gained in doing so
 - We are called to go to them in a spirit of love with the Gospel so they might receive the same mercy we received
 - And then we are to judge ourselves so that we might please God
- So we are to freely associate with the unbelieving world, however nothing in Paul's statement suggests we are to partake in their sin with them
 - While we must and should spend time with and around unbelievers, we should always be careful to remain unstained by that sin

- We can spend time with someone, even as they might engage in sin, without becoming a party to that sin
- So long as our association with that person is focused on bringing them to a knowledge of the truth
- These moments are not social events; it's about conducting the business of our Father
 - Like an ambassador sent to a foreign country is there on business
 - But to conduct his business, he must participate in dinners with the local rulers and citizens
 - He is socializing but for a purpose
- It's important to remember this balance as we conduct ourselves in our stay on earth, as Peter said
 - If we are not careful, we can fail in our mission in one of two ways
 - Either we can isolate ourselves so much that we have no chance to influence anyone
 - Or we become too close to the sin of the unbelieving world that they corrupt us and undermine our message
 - As Paul says in 2 Corinthians

1Cor. 15:33 Do not be deceived: "Bad company corrupts good morals."

- So Paul directs a change in focus in the church
 - He says the church must associate with the sinners of the world, but we are NOT to associate with immoral, unrepentant believers
 - If someone in the church consistently, unrepentantly engages in immoral behavior, then they are to be judged and set outside fellowship
 - Unlike unbelievers, the church is commanded to judge believers
 - Interestingly, Paul calls those sinning inside the church "so-called" brothers
 - The Greek word is *onomazo*, which means "named"

- By using this word, Paul is calling into question the heart of anyone who claims the name Christian but makes no effort to confirm their life to Christ's commandments
- They are "so-called" Christians because they are making claims to the name, but the evidence is lacking
- Paul isn't declaring that such people are always unbelievers
 - Sometimes they are believers bent on rebellion
 - Other times they are unbelievers pretending to be Christian
 - We can't know their heart truly, so we are left with uncertainty
- In the end, it makes little difference, since Paul says such a person is to be judged according to the standards of the church
 - The church is to pass judgment on any in the church who continue in immorality
 - And that judgment results in taking action against the offender in the church
- Clearly, learning and applying Paul's teaching correctly is so important, otherwise we run the risk of doing more harm than good
 - First, notice that we are judging immorality
 - We are not judging bad behavior in a lesser form
 - This isn't a question of how someone dresses or whether they act rudely at times, etc.
 - Paul is speaking about judgments made against individuals who are morally corrupt, unrepentant and doing damage to the body
 - Going back to something I said last week...we don't want to become busybodies in the church nor do we seek conflict or wish to bring shame
 - Only in the worst situations would this response be required
 - Secondly, notice this is a corporate judgment based on corporate concerns

- Believers are not commanded, nor are we even allowed, to make a judgment about another believer much less assess a penalty
 - Paul is speaking about how the body corporately should respond to the sin of one of its members
 - On an individual basis, our personal response to another person's sin is always the same: forgiveness
 - We forgive each other and show grace to each other because this is the basis for Christian love
 - It may sound strange but it's possible for a congregation to forgive a fellow believer individually even as it acts corporately to put them out of fellowship
 - In the same way that the victim of a crime may forgive her attacker yet still testify against him ensuring he goes to prison
 - There is a difference between our individual responsibilities and our corporate response to sin
- Thirdly, the response of the church must be complete separation
 - Paul emphasizes that the church may not even eat with this person
 - As with the example of leaven
 - We can't let even a little of this person's influence in the church
 - The practical implications of this action are significant
 - The person's family might need to separate from them as well
 - Remember the church family is a strong bond according to Jesus, stronger than even our earthly family bonds
 - Also remember, the point of these steps is to trigger repentance and ultimately restoration to the body
 - Only without the sin
 - Next week we continue on the general topic of judgment as Paul moves into the third topic of concern in this church

- He has heard that individual members of the church who had disputes with one another were taking those disputes to local Greek courts
 - Paul will explain why this is wrong and give them a new way
 - The central problem remains an arrogant, hypocritical and ignorant church body
 - They stand in judgment of the unbelieving world rather than reaching out them
 - Yet they gladly take disputes between themselves to those same pagan unbelievers asking for relief
 - While ignoring their responsibility to execute judgment of one another inside the church
- This then leads Paul into a discussion of eternal judgment and our role in executing that judgment