

## “Care Enough To Confront”

All Cylinders – Part 5

January 30, 2011

Good morning (**Greet Mills & Podcast Listeners**)! Please turn with me in your Bibles to First Corinthians 5. I also invite you to take out the notes that are in your bulletins so that you can follow along as we conclude our “All Cylinders” series. As you’re getting that stuff together I want to show you this ...

### **Illustration: Electrical Tape**

I use the black electrical tape to help me cover up the red light on my dashboard because I don’t want it shining in my face all the time reminding me that something is wrong. It’s not a big deal so I’m content to live with it. I know it sounds ridiculous but it’s very much like what was happening at the church in Corinth.

Would you stand with me and follow along as I read (*Jerry Springer show*) ...

“I can hardly believe the report about the sexual immorality (*porneia – all sexual immorality*) going on among you—something that even pagans don’t do. I am told that a man in your church is living in sin with his stepmother.<sup>2</sup> You are so proud of yourselves, but you should be mourning in sorrow and shame. And you should **remove this man from your fellowship**.<sup>3</sup> Even though I am not with you in person, I am with you in the Spirit. And as though I were there, I have already passed judgment on this man<sup>4</sup> in the name of the Lord Jesus. You must call a meeting of the church. I will be present with you in spirit, and so will the power of our Lord Jesus.<sup>5</sup> Then you must throw this man out and **hand him over to Satan so that his sinful nature will be destroyed and he himself will be saved on the day the Lord returns**.<sup>6</sup> Your boasting about this is terrible. Don’t you realize that this sin is like a little yeast that spreads through the whole batch of dough?<sup>7</sup> Get rid of the old “yeast” by removing this wicked person from among you. Then you will be like a fresh batch of dough made without yeast, which is what you really are. Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed for us.<sup>8</sup> So let us celebrate the festival, not with the old bread of wickedness and evil, but with the new bread of sincerity and truth.<sup>9</sup> When I wrote to you before, I told you not to associate with people who indulge in sexual sin.<sup>10</sup> But I wasn’t talking about unbelievers who indulge in sexual sin, or are greedy, or cheat people, or worship idols. You would have to leave this world to avoid people like that.<sup>11</sup> I meant that you are not to associate with anyone who claims to be a believer yet indulges in sexual sin, or is greedy, or worships idols, or is abusive, or is a drunkard, or cheats people. Don’t even eat with such people.<sup>12</sup> **It isn’t my responsibility to judge outsiders** (*say, not my job!*), but it certainly **is your responsibility to judge those inside the church who are sinning**. (*say, it’s my job!*)<sup>13</sup> God will judge those on the outside; but as the Scriptures say,  
‘You must remove the evil person from among you.’”

**1 Corinthians 5:1-13 (NLT)**

As you’re seated ask your neighbor, “*So who is he going to bring up in front of us today?*” ☺

In this series we’ve been asking: **What does a church that is firing on all cylinders look like?** **What does a person who is firing on all cylinders look like?** Paul is writing to a church that was misfiring badly ... they were covering up the warning signs on the dashboard! They thought they had come so far and were enlightened and had all freedom but they had allowed rampant sin to infiltrate their congregation. They were highly gifted, blessed, successful, and respected—and also highly sinful. While they were followers of Christ they still had a long way to go ... just like you and me.

**Today's Question: How does a community of Christ followers respond when there is arrogant, rampant immorality going on in the family of believers?**

While this particular sin of dating or marrying your stepmom might not be one issue you're struggling with right now (*guess we can all go home ☺*) ... there are all kinds of like sins that we wrestle with. We deceive ourselves into thinking that God is okay with it. We fall prey to tweaking our theology to make it match our morality but the truth is, God has some clear things to say about the purity and integrity of our lives.

There are some of you here this morning and you think God is okay with you living with your significant other; many who log onto pornography on a regular basis and you have no issues with it. Others are currently in an adulterous relationship or headed there and you don't care as long as you don't get caught. You are arrogantly in sin. There are others who are in on it – your friends with these people and you tolerate/condone it ... because you don't **confront** them on it. You don't want to judge them because Jesus said "*do not judge, or you too will be judged.*"

So though we aren't Corinth, we ARE Corinth. **What do we do as we seek to live holy lives in a culture that's consumed with sexual immorality, lust, drunkenness, evil desires and greed?** What do we do with these verses? **Let's unpack this together ...**

One of the things I find interesting is that the culture is looking on in shock as the church allows this kind of behavior. It's not private knowledge but rather public knowledge and it's beyond what even the pagan Roman and Greek cultures would embrace. The testimony of Christ's work in a person's life is being completely perverted and it's spreading through community. So Paul says they should be grieved about this rather than allowing it to continue to damage the family.

Three things about this guy's relationship seem evident ...

1. The sinful activity had been going on for some time and was still going on. It was not a one-time or short-term affair but was continuous and open.
2. Adultery is not charged so the relationship between the son and his stepmother may have caused her to be divorced from the father but at the very least neither of them was legally married.
3. Paul calls for no discipline of the woman, perhaps she was not a follower? (Unequally Yoked)

Then we come to verse 5 ... "*you must throw this man out and hand him over to Satan so that his sinful nature will be destroyed and he himself will be saved on the day the Lord returns.*"

What in the world is this all about?! (**Pause**) Keep in mind that this man has been found by the Lord and the apostle Paul to be guilty of obscene sin that is a total rejection of Christ and the goal of this discipline is not as much punitive as it is redemptive. A disciplined Christian is never to be despised or hated, even when they're not interested in repenting. (**LOVE**)

But discipline sometimes must be severe because the consequences of not disciplining are much worse. Sin is a spiritual malignancy and it won't stay isolated for very long. Unless it's removed it will spread infection until everyone is diseased. (**We know this when it comes to the flu ... but why don't we treat sin the same way?**)

While I'm not completely sure what Paul means by "handing him over to satan", I think he's indicating that satan is a **tool** in the hand of God ... God can use satan and his realm (world system) to discipline an immoral believer ... so that the natural consequences of sin can run their course in the person's life. The person will become so sick of reaping a harvest of unrighteousness that they will turn back to God and humbly submit themselves to His Lordship once again. This is actually the kind thing to do if you love someone and want to see them with you in eternity. You **care enough to confront**.

**Who is this person?** All of us struggle with sin, right? But your heart is tender and you're convicted; you repent over it and you tell others about it in an effort to find help. If you're worried that you're this guy ... don't! It's NOT you!! (**Pause**) This person doesn't care ... they're angry at me today ... they're sinning in secret and are private about their sin; they're justifying their sin ... they're unrepentant and this is why they're in such danger!

Our tolerance of each other's unrepentant sin and our arrogance toward our own unrepentant sin betray our ignorance (lack of understanding) of the gospel of Jesus.

In verse 6 Paul points them back to the picture of judgment that occurred during the exodus of the nation of Israel from captivity in Egypt ... In the midst of the death angel coming through to pass judgment on the Egyptians there was a sacrifice of a lamb that offered grace and forgiveness in their time of need. And Paul takes that imagery and uses it to refer to what Jesus did at the cross of Calvary. There is no reason for us to be judged because of what Christ did in freeing us from a life of sin.

He also mentions the idea of yeast in a batch of dough. In the scriptures, yeast is all about influence. And most often it's a negative thing. Sin's nature is to ferment, corrupt, and spread. Part of what occurred during the Exodus and in the festivals following was the removal of all yeast from an Israelite household as an act of purity and a symbol of cleansing. Paul challenges them to live in that same kind of purity.

**Your personal sin affects other people.** We tend to think of ourselves as individuals and everyone else as a loose community we're a part of. But the fact of the matter is, we're family.

When a husband looks at pornography, does that affect the rest of the family? When a teenager gets hooked on drugs, does it impact the family? When a wife begins to seduce another man, does it have implications in her family? **YES!**

The rest of the world is watching and there is a disconnect between what we say we believe in and the way we live our lives (our level of obedience). This ruins our witness for Christ. We send this message: "**Come to Jesus and live any way you want and He'll save you and let you into heaven when you die. I still get to be god & I get a free pass.**" This kind of tolerance makes God sick!

A church that does not discipline is like a person who has good reason to believe he has cancer but who refuses to go to a doctor—because he either does not want to face the problem or does not want to face the treatment. If he waits too long his whole body will be permeated with the disease and it will be too late for treatment to do any good. No church is healthy enough to resist contamination, including RCC!

So in verses 9-13 Paul says we are to judge (**care enough to confront**) those INSIDE the church & extend grace to those OUTSIDE the church. Often we reverse this! The church is really good at Cultural Condemnation. But we're bad at Personal Repentance. (*apologize to outsiders*)

What we're talking about today is HARD. No one who is aware of their own sinfulness enjoys confronting others. It's no fun and to be completely honest, it very rarely goes well. That's because when a person's heart is hard, they're not very receptive/teachable. They tend to take other scriptures out of context and twist things around to point out your sin. And they will talk badly about you and tell others that you "judged" them.

I know this because I've been there. In my 39 years of walking with Jesus, I've **cared enough to confront** a handful of times ... and I HATE it every time I have to do it. But what I have found is that when I come with **love in my heart, a tear in my eye and in a posture of humility**; eventually it has been redemptive. Sometimes this process has taken years (I'm still waiting in some cases), but most of those who were living in sin eventually come back to say "thank you" for **caring enough to confront**.

If you're more concerned with being liked by people than you are obeying God, then you'll probably never do this. But if the glory of Jesus is more important to you than the opinion of people, then you will do this.

Some of you think that only the pastors and church leaders who are supposed to do this but that's faulty thinking too. If you're in relationship with someone, you have a better opportunity to lovingly confront them than we do. You create a tolerant context when you look the other way.

**How do we apply this text in our lives today?** Three groups of people ...

1. You're NOT in sin but you're tolerant – you never say anything to other Christians who are living in those ways. You don't say anything because you believe it's unkind to judge. Perhaps you've misunderstood Jesus' words – He was talking to prideful religious leaders.

Jesus would support Paul's comments. These verses aren't as much about kicking hypocrites out of the church as they are about kicking the hypocrisy out of ourselves! The kind (**caring**) thing to do is **confront**. (**Pause**) Ultimately we cannot judge someone's heart. We don't get to pass eternal judgment on anybody. But we must CERTAINLY pass judgment on sin. We start with our self! We judge based on principles – not situations.

2. You're not a follower of Christ yet – this sounds harsh, doesn't it? But I'm guessing that we all would have liked to have had a loving father who cared enough to discipline us when we needed it so that we'd end up headed in the right direction in life. That's all this is.
3. Immoral Believer – your **sin** is more satisfying and has more potential than your relationship with Jesus ... you've exchanged the truth of the gospel for the lies of your sin; I'm inviting you to repent, turn from your sinful actions and follow Christ with all you have. Can you see that Jesus was "judged" for you ... so you wouldn't have to be? Don't take that for granted!

**Let's Pray!**

sexual, greed, idolatry, drunkenness, abuse, cheating, etc.

Jesus ... You're our Passover Lamb, You took the judgement for us, thank You! Help us to care enough to confront, help us to come to faith in You, help us to return to You today. Amen.