



# Humble Pursuit of Holiness

## Introduction:

Today's text teaches us that the church is supposed to humbly and collectively pursue holiness and protect its purity, both individually and corporately. We tend to reject this responsibility because of:

- disbelief – we do not believe that sin is that bad, and so we downplay the need for holiness
- disregard – we do not hold seriously, Jesus's agenda to sanctify and purify the church, of which we are a part
- dissatisfaction – we lose our desire for holiness when we stop pursuing it, and we stop pursuing it because we fear rejection from the culture around us

## Today's Scripture Text

### 1 Corinthians 5:1-13

## Sermon Points

As a church body that pursues holiness and protects purity, we have the following:

### #1. A reputation to uphold

- Read 1 Corinthians 5:1-2

Once again, Paul called the Corinthians out on their pride. This time it was because they had tolerated the sexual sin between two congregation members (a man and his stepmother) because they felt it was their prerogative to decide on whether it was morally acceptable or not. Had they been humble, they would have felt deep grief over the sin in their church, and would have dealt with it immediately.

Outside of the church, both Jews and Greeks would have shunned this sort of immorality, and yet in the church, they were allowing it to go on unchecked. Not only was this deeply discouraging to Paul, but it would have been assessed as absolute moral failure and incongruent with what they were preaching – in other words, hypocritical to the outside world. Their prideful tolerance was destroying the reputation of the church and of Christ.

The reputation of the church is our collective responsibility because we are united as a family. Together, we display to the world what God is like in the way in which we love one another and express unity through diversity. When we disregard the sin going on in our midst and in so doing, redefine God's standards of morality, we pridefully place ourselves as the moral authority over the church, and because we are wrong, we allow our church family to plunge into destruction. Our tolerance of sin is prideful, unloving and destructive.

- ♣ Why is it prideful for us to allow sin in the church to go unchecked?
- ♣ Why is our reputation for holiness (or lack thereof) important?



## #2. An obligation to discharge restorative discipline

- Read 1 Corinthians 5:3-5 & Matthew 18:15-17

Commentators are divided as to what exactly Paul meant when he said to hand over the unrepentant believer to Satan for the destruction of his flesh. This is due to translation issues among others. So, for us to deal with it as appropriately as possible, we look to other parts of scripture to help us to interpret it within a biblical framework. What we can with all clarity deduce, is that Paul is certainly talking about disciplining any church member who willfully engages in ongoing sinful behavior and rejects all attempts to lovingly direct him/her to repentance.

Church Discipline –

- sounds like a negative thing to implement, but we all know that good and wise parents must discipline their children to train them into healthy and mature behavior
- is always a *corrective* measure to help redirect rebellious Christians
- almost always results in bringing the rebellious person to the place in which they humbly admit their wrongdoing and foolishness, which of course spares them from further damage and destruction
- ♣ What consequences could have resulted for the man and his stepmother who were engaging in sexual sin, had Paul not called them to account, and what effect do you think the church's tolerance could have had on them as a collective over the following few years?
- ♣ Why is church discipline a good thing in the life of an unrepentant believer?
- ♣ Why is it important for the church to administer discipline as a corrective measure, rather than a punitive measure?
- ♣ Why do you think we cringe at the thought of applying church discipline to someone in our own community?

## #3. A Christ-centered motivation to live for

- Read 1 Corinthians 5:6-8

Paul painted the picture of sin in the church being like leaven. Even the smallest amount of leaven, when added to fresh dough, would work its way through and ferment it all. When sin is left undealt with, it corrupts the whole church, without one even realizing its effects. As believers, who have been washed clean, we collectively need to fight for that purity, and deal with the sin that wishes to destroy it.

## #4. A commission to obey

- Read 1 Corinthians 5:9-13

The church has often mistaken its own command to pursue holiness, with trying to manage how the outside world behaves. Paul, however, calls the church to leave the judging of the world to God, and instead turn their attention inward, and to deal with the sin within its own walls.

The big issue we have in our culture today is that we have associated any form of correction with criticism. We do not tolerate anyone telling us what to do or how to do it. Correction is met with defensiveness.



We have also bought into the cultural lie that tells us that no one has the right to judge us. But this is not the case for the church. As a spiritual family, saved by the gospel, we have the right and responsibility to call one another out on sin, because sin destroys us individually and corporately.

## The Gospel:

- reminds us of the seriousness of sin, and the price that Christ paid it
  - calls us to live in a manner that is worthy of our calling – as sons and daughters of the Most High God
  - calls us to live a life free from sin, both individually and corporately
- ♠ Why is wrong for believers to judge the behavior of the world, while neglecting the sin in the church?
  - ♠ What does it mean to call out a fellow believer on their sin?
  - ♠ How do you think we, as a gospel community, would need to deal with unrepentant sin within our community? What would a loving process towards repentance and restoration look like?
  - ♠ Why are we so afraid to deal with the sin among us?

*Take Home: What is the one big take-away from this week's message that God is asking you to apply to your life?*