

# 1 Corinthians 5-6 • Church Discipline

## Introduction

What if these standards were enacted and enforced in churches today? This is a most difficult issue since nearly every category of sin listed in these chapters is either outright tolerated, or at the least at the center of discussions leaning toward being allowed to enter mainstream Christendom. The real issue, however, is not to hold the world to the higher standard of God's Word and ways, but those claiming to be born again believers who continue to embrace these lifestyles of sin. We know and even expect sinners to engage in such activities, but cannot allow the same for those who are supposed to be pursuing a sanctified life in Christ. The issue is not just limited to the effects on the individual, but how quickly it spreads among the saved as a whole. We are certainly called to tolerate the sin in the unsaved, but to an entirely different standard where the saved are concerned.

<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. <sup>2</sup>You have become arrogant and have not mourned instead, so that the one who had done this deed would be removed from your midst. <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, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

## Read verses 5:1-5

### Q: What boundary of sin has the church in Corinth crossed?

A: It has accepted as normative a sin of immorality that was egregious even by the world's standards.

### Q: How do we know that this believer was not just in an immoral relationship with his step-mother, but with an unbeliever as well?

A: If she had been a believer, Paul would have had the church deal with her too.

### Q: How can Paul take action against something he has not personally witnessed?

A: The only biblical requirement is for the testimony of two or more witnesses.

*"A single witness shall not rise up against a man on account of any iniquity or any sin which he has committed; on the evidence of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed. (Dt. 19:15)*

**Point:** No courtroom judge is ever a firsthand witness to the crime, but must evaluate the credibility of the witnesses and evidence brought before him in the case. Likewise Christian leaders operate in the same manner.

### Q: How did Corinth's reaction betray their spiritual condition?

A: The visible example they set in the presence of this sinner was arrogance—that is, sinful pride, instead of mourning so as to let him know their position on such sin.

### Q: What does the Greek word for "arrogant"—"perypysiomenoi" (Strong's #5448) literally mean?

A: It literally means to be "puffed up". It is the same characteristic the New Testament assigns to sin as leaven, infecting and permeating not just the individual, but the whole church.

### Q: Who is instructed to carry out this action of removing the man from the church?

A: Paul does not instruct leaders alone, but assigns this responsibility to the whole congregation.

### Q: What does it mean "to deliver such a one to Satan"?

A: It is to be removed from church fellowship so as to live in an environment which, because of the nature of their unrepentant sin, has the best chance of inducing them to repent.

### Q: What is the stipulation Paul makes in this regard?

A: "...for the destruction of the flesh". (v.5) He is not being handed over to Satan spiritually, but physically. It is a sort of reversal of Job who was tested by Satan because of Job's righteousness; in this case, it is because of this man's unrighteousness. Whereas Job's faith was tested by physical trials, this measure is taken to address this man's faithlessness.

<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 so 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>Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

<sup>9</sup>I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; <sup>10</sup>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. <sup>11</sup>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. <sup>12</sup>For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within *the church*? <sup>13</sup>But those who are outside, God judges. REMOVE THE WICKED MAN FROM AMONG YOURSELVES.

**Application:** The Church cannot judge the **motives** of the heart, but can and does judge the visible **actions** of believers.

### Read verses 5:6-8

**Q: What is Paul specifically addressing?**

A: The “puffing up” of their arrogance as an issue of sin.

**Q: But whose sin is Paul now addressing?**

A: Paul is explaining the effects of how the man’s sin is not contained to just him alone, but acts as yeast, causing the whole loaf of bread to rise. There is a collective danger to the whole group.

**Q: What is the connection between leaven and Passover?**

A: One of the Passover requirements was to remove from one’s house all leaven. It was a spiritual representation that none of God’s people who have been saved by the blood of the Passover lamb—a representation of Christ, should tolerate even the slightest sin within their household.

**Q: What is the “good” leaven they should instead seek to use instead?**

A: Trick question. It is “*old leaven...of malice and wickedness*” versus “*the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth*”. Leaven is always representative in Scripture of either sin or false teaching. There is no “good” leaven except when it is completely absent.

**Application:** The Church cannot be **open-minded** to sin as it never just affects the **sinner**, but if **tolerated**, will **infect** the whole church.

### Read verses 5:9-13

**Q: What is the distinction Paul makes from the outset?**

A: Basically that the sinful nature of the unsaved is to be expected, but never tolerated among the ranks of the saved.

**Q: What kinds of behavior is to be expected from the world?**

A: They will be “*immoral...covetous...swindlers...idolaters*”. (v.10)

**Q: What is listed in v.11 as identifying the false brethren in Christ?**

1. “**Immoral**” – (Greek “*pornos*”, #4205) Someone who commits fornication, and is often associated in the NT with both male and female prostitutes. This is not immoral behavior of any kind, but specifically addressing all forms of sexual immorality. This is someone who is out of control sexually.
2. “**Covetous**” – (Greek “*pleonektes*”, #4123) Someone who wants more than they have, in particular desiring what others have. Often associated in the NT with someone who defrauds for personal gain. This is someone who is out of control when it comes to earthly things.
3. “**Idolater**” – (Greek “*eidolalates*”, #1496) Someone who serves and worships an idol or something in the place of the One True God. This is someone who has replaced Christ with something else.
4. “**Reviler**” – (Greek “*loidoros*”, #3060) Someone who reviles or rails against others. This is someone who is out of control when it comes to criticism of others or in addressing their perceived shortfalls.
5. “**Drunkard**” – (Greek “*methusos*”, #3183) Someone who is out of control by allowing an addiction to control them.
6. “**Swindler**” – (Greek “*harpax*” #727) – Someone who seizes an advantage over others, often employing extortion. This is someone who exploits members of the Church for personal financial gain as well as to obtain power over others.

**Q: What is Paul’s politically incorrect advice in each case?**

A: “...not even to eat with such a one”. (v.11)

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<sup>1</sup>Does any one of you, when he has a case against his neighbor, dare to go to law before the unrighteous and not before the saints? <sup>2</sup>Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? If the world is judged by you, are you not competent to constitute the smallest law courts? <sup>3</sup>Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more matters of this life? <sup>4</sup>So if you have law courts dealing with matters of this life, do you appoint them as judges who are of no account in the church? <sup>5</sup>I say *this* to your shame. *Is it so, that* there is not among you one wise man who will be able to decide between his brethren, <sup>6</sup>but brother goes to law with brother, and that before unbelievers?

<sup>7</sup>Actually, then, it is already a defeat for you, that you have lawsuits with one another. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be defrauded? <sup>8</sup>On the contrary, you yourselves wrong and defraud. *You do this even to your brethren.*

<sup>9</sup>Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, <sup>10</sup>nor thieves, nor *the* covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. <sup>11</sup>Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

**Application:** God judges those **outside** the Church, the Church judges those **within** the Church.

### Read verses 6:1-6

**Q: What is the difference between what is specified here as the object of Christian judgment vs. what was just discussed?**

A: Previously it was unbiblical behavior within the Church proper, whereas here it is unbiblical behavior displayed in front of the world.

**Q: Is Paul making some kind of case against secular courts of law?**

A: It is not just that believers are not supposed to allow internal Church affairs to be publicly brought before the unsaved, but because such matters are between believers, an unsaved secular judge will never be able to properly adjudicate any spiritual issues involved.

**Q: How should believers settle such issues?**

A: Whereas a secular court is simply judging whether something is “legal” or “illegal” by their standard of worldly law, believers are held to a higher spiritual accountability not just where material things are concerned, but their heart, mind and soul.

**Q: Why does Paul make mention of the future role of judgment in which believers will be involved in eternity “that the saints will judge the world” and “that we will judge angels”?**

A: It’s a way of stating that we are held to a higher standard, a greater spiritual standard.

**Application:** The Church is beholden to a higher **spiritual** standard which must not get involved in lower **worldly** standards.

### Read verses 6:7-8

**Q: How might this sound like a familiar teaching of Christ’s?**

*“You have heard that it was said, ‘AN EYE FOR AN EYE, AND A TOOTH FOR A TOOTH.’ But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat also. Whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you. (Mt. 5:38-42)*

**Application:** When Christians are **wronged**, they use it as an opportunity to instead do good, not just to the **unsaved**, but even when wronged by the **saved**.

### Read verses 6:9-11

**Q: Who is defined as “the unrighteous” which were previously covered in 5:9-13?**

A: “Idolaters”, “covetous”, “drunkards”, “revilers” and “swindlers”.

**Q: What previous category is greatly expanded upon in this list?**

A: Since “immoral” persons actually refers to sexual sin of every kind, there are a number of more specific aspects provided for this category:

1. **“Fornicators”** (Greek “ *pornos* ”, #4205) – A general designation involving all the types of sexual sin; covers anything one might think does not neatly fall into any of the named categories.
2. **“Adulterers”** (Greek “ *moichos* ”, #3432) – Someone who violates their marriage vows; often used in Scripture to illustrate what it means to be unfaithful to Christ.

3. **“Effeminate”** (Greek *“malakos”*, #3120) – The Greek word is associated with the fine texture of soft clothing, and scripturally indicates someone who allows themselves to be sexually abused contrary to nature.
4. **“Homosexuals”** (Greek *“arsenokoites”*, #733) – A man who lies in bed with another male. Not a “lifestyle” as the world defines it, but a sexual act.

**Q: What is the difference between the added category of “thieves” vs. “swindlers”?**

A: The difference in taking by engaging direct force vs. employing deception.

**Point:** *The Church, in the West at least, has problems with every one of these areas of sexual sin. But take note how they are all equally presented and that they must all be addressed; one does not take precedence over any of the others.*

**Q: What may be significant about the “cure” specified in v.11, “washed...sanctified...justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God”?**

A: It is the same “cure” for any and every kind of sin. A special case or exception is not made for sinful lifestyles derived from any category of sexual sin.

**Q: What is at stake”**

A: it is twice stated, *“the kingdom of God”*. (v.9 & 10)

**Q: What is the basic question which is being addressed here?**

A: “Since we are saved, we can still sin and go to heaven, right?”

**Application:** *Members of the Church make a permanent **break** with the old life and prove we are going to **heaven** by our new life in Christ.*

### **Read verses 6:12-14**

**Q: What is the greater issue about things which are lawful vs. things which are profitable?**

A: Such are problems when they begin to regulate our lives, or become the unhealthy focus.

**Point:** *When it comes to the things of this world, “I will not be mastered by anything”.*

**Q: How does this directly relate to the previous discussion of the various categories of sexual immorality?**

A: As new creations in Christ, we gave Him everything, including our physical bodies which are at the center of the issue of sexual immorality.

**Q: How does the inclusion of the stomach and food fit in here?**

A: It shows that any physical lust is included, not just those of a sexual nature.

**Q: What is the basic question which is being addressed here?**

A: “Aren’t we given liberty over both the law and the world?”

**Application:** *Members of the Church **use** but never **abuse** to excess; they do not allow **sin** to enter into and take control of even normally **allowable** things.*

### **Read verses 6:15-17**

**Q: What is the basic question being addressed here?**

A: “Can’t I use my body however I please?”

**Q: What is the answer and why?**

A: Absolutely not because, first of all, it is no longer our body, but Christ’s. And second of all, we become members with those whom we join with physically, making it a spiritual joining as well.

**Application:** *Members of the Church remain both physically and spiritually **faithful** in their **personal** relationships.*

<sup>12</sup>All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything. <sup>13</sup>Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food, but God will do away with both of them. Yet the body is not for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body. <sup>14</sup>Now God has not only raised the Lord, but will also raise us up through His power.

<sup>15</sup>Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take away the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? May it never be! <sup>16</sup>Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a prostitute is one body *with her*? For He says, “THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH.” <sup>17</sup>But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit *with Him*.

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<sup>18</sup>Flee immorality. Every *other* sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. <sup>19</sup>Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? <sup>20</sup>For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

## **Read verses 6:18-20**

**Q: What might be significant about Paul's use of the word "flee"?**

A: The NT often uses it to describe a fearful and hasty literal running away from danger or something frightening or shocking to a person.

**Q: What is specified that a Christian is actually guarding?**

A: Their own body is now "a temple of the Holy Spirit" and therefore we are no longer our own?

**Q: How was this accomplished in each of us?**

A: "For you have been bought with a price". (v.20) We are always mindful of what actually took place at the cross.

**Application:** The conscience and sensibilities of members of the Church are supposed to be **shocked** at immoral behavior—that is, **sexual** misconduct of any kind.

## **Overall Application**

**Q: What is the proper way to handle someone suddenly overtaken by sin?**

Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. (Gal. 6:1)

**Application:** There is always a difference between those who are **backslidden** or temporarily **struggling** vs. those refusing to give up a **lifestyle** of sin.

## **Several Biblical Cases for Disfellowship:**

For further study, there are at least five specified cases wherein removal of someone from the Church may be warranted:

1. A member who will not settle personal difference. (Mt. 18:15-17)
2. A member who is a flagrant sinner. (1 Co. 5:9-11)
3. A member who steadfastly holds to false doctrine. (1 Ti. 1:18-20; 2 Ti. 2:17-18)
4. A member who causes divisions. (Titus 3:10-11)
5. A member who refuses to work for a living. (2 Th. 3:6-12)