

The Case of Shameful Sin in the Church



1 Corinthians 5:1-13 TEXT, EXPOSITION AND PRACTICAL HELPS

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THE MORAL LAXITY IN THE CHURCH, 1 Corinthians 5:1-6:20

A. The Case of Shameful Sin in the Church (Part I): How to Handle a Sinful Brother in the Church, 1 Corinthians 5:1-5

(1 Corinthians 5:1-6:20) **DIVISION OVERVIEW: Church Problems:** 1 Cor. 5 and 1 Cor. 6 deal with four moral problems in the Corinthian church. There was serious complacency and laxity in the church toward morality.

1. The Case of Shameful Sin in the Church (**Part I**): How to Handle a Sinful Brother in the Church, 1 Cor. 5:1-5.
2. The Case of Shameful Sin in the Church (**Part II**): What the Church Must Do to Handle Shameful Sin in Its Midst, 1 Cor. 5:6-13.
3. The Case of Legal Dispute, 1 Cor. 6:1-8.
4. The Case Against Unrighteous Character, 1 Cor. 6:9-11.
5. The Case Against the Indulgence of the Human Body, 1 Cor. 6:12-20.

(1 Corinthians 5:1-5) **Introduction:** many churches have members who become involved in shameful sin. When this happens, what should the church do? Ignore it? Pray about it and hope that God will take care of the matter? Or, take action and do everything possible to restore the brother to Christ?

This passage (1 Corinthians 5:1-5) and the next (1 Corinthians 5:6-13) handle the ever sensitive subject of church discipline, a subject that is critically needed if the church is to keep a strong witness for the Lord.

1. **There was the shameful sin: a case of fornication, of public incest (v.1).**
2. **There was the church's attitude: inflated self-complacency (v.2).**
3. **There was the discipline of the offending brother (v.3-5).**

1. (1 Corinthians 5:1) Sin—Fornication: there was the shameful sin—a case of fornication, of public incest in the church.

Note that there is no word or conjunction connecting this passage with 1 Cor. 4. Paul jumps right in and abruptly begins to handle this shameful problem: **"It is actually reported that there is fornication among you."** Shocking, shameful, despicable, and disgusting is the idea. Imagine! A son is living with his step-mother, his father's wife, and it is public knowledge. Everyone, both in the church and in the community, knows all about it.

1. The word **"have"** indicates some form of permanent relationship. The son had either married her or was living with her.

2. The son was a member of the church. Note that he was a prominent member who was known by everyone; a member who was faithful enough to be known as a member of the church. There is even some indication that he was a leader in the church ([1 Cor. 5:2, 6](#)).

3. The unbelievers of the world (**Gentiles**) do not approve of nor accept incest. They might not live pure and clean lives, but they utterly reject incest as being anywhere close to acceptable behavior. Therefore, the testimony of the church was being tragically ruined.

Thought 1. Think of the incest and the child abuse within families: parent sinning with child and child with child. How many belong to the church? This message is for how many sitting before us week after week?

"And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet" ([Romans 1:27](#)).

"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate [homosexuals], nor abusers of themselves with mankind" ([1 Cor. 6:9](#)).

"Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body" ([1 Cor. 6:18](#)).

"And lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed" ([2 Cor. 12:21](#)).

"Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness....[but] they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" ([Galatians 5:19, 21](#)).

"Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness" ([Ephes. 4:19](#)).

"But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints" ([Ephes. 5:3](#)).

"Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry" ([Col. 3:5](#)).

"For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication" ([1 Thes. 4:3](#)).

"For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ....Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities

about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire" ([Jude 4, 7](#)).

2. ([1 Corinthians 5:2](#)) Church, Problems— Church Discipline: there was the church's attitude—a shameful self-complacency.

Note the phrase "puffed up." The Corinthian church was apparently "**puffed up**" for two reasons.

1. The church thought of itself as a strong and spiritual church, a church greatly blessed by God. This had been the very sin Paul was attacking in the first four chapters. The believers of the church thought they were spiritual; they revelled in their conceit and pride as a so-called strong church, but they were not. They were allowing a shameful sin to exist in their midst. Instead of being puffed up, they should have been mourning. The word "**mourned**" (*epenthēsate*) is the word used for grieving and mourning over the dead. They should have been so grieved that they would be driven to prayer. Their need was not to be glorying in their so-called spirituality and strength as a church; their need was to mourn over the sin in their midst, begging God to help them restore the fallen brother or to remove him and the sin from their fellowship through love and correction.

2. The church was "**puffed up**" because of the man who was guilty of the shameful sin (see [1 Cor. 5:6](#) for discussion).

Thought 1. The church is not to be complacent in dealing with sin and evil. This is the whole thrust of this passage and of all Scripture. No church can erase sin completely from its midst, for there are no perfect people. But clear and unquestionable sin and evil must be dealt with and corrected. A complacent, easygoing attitude toward sin will destroy both lives and churches. Practically every society has rules that govern its members, and the most respected and honored societies deal with the members when its membership rules are continually broken. The church, above all societies, must not be complacent and easygoing in dealing with sin that damages the church and lives and is clearly visible to all. (See [Matthew 18:15-20](#) for the steps to correcting offending brothers. Jesus spelled out exactly what is to be done, and the wisdom of what He taught is clearly seen.)

"Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican" ([Matthew 18:15-17](#)).

"Then said he unto the disciples, It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe unto him, through whom they come! It were better

for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones. Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him" ([Luke 17:1-3](#)).

"Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear" ([1 Tim. 5:20](#)).

"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" ([2 Tim. 4:2](#)).

"This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith" ([Titus 1:13](#)).

"These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee" ([Titus 2:15](#)).

"A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject" ([Titus 3:10](#)).

3. ([1 Corinthians 5:3-5](#)) Church Discipline: the discipline of the offending brother.

Paul was away on a mission tour; therefore, he was not able to personally deal with the offending brother nor the church. However, his spirit overflowed with love for the church; it was as though he was with them "**in spirit**." Therefore, he had already judged the matter. He had made a decision about what needed to be done, and it was too important a matter to leave hanging until he returned.

Three things were to be done.

1. The offending brother was to be disciplined "**in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ**."

Note the word "**our**." Jesus Christ is our Lord, my Lord, the church's Lord, and the Lord of the offending brother.

Paul says.....

- a. it is **your Lord** who is being hurt and cut; His name which you are damaging.
- b. it is for **your Lord** that this discipline must be carried out.
- c. it is **our Lord** who alone can use the discipline to awaken the sinful brother's conscience to repent and to seek reconciliation with God.

2. The offending brother was to be disciplined by the church in a special called gathering. This seems to be what is meant by the words "**when ye are gathered together**."

- a. **Note:** Paul says that he would be meeting with them "**in spirit**." His heart and prayers would be with them as they handled this most difficult matter.
- b. **Note a crucial fact.** The church was instructed to clean itself up before it disciplines the sinning brother. (See outline—[1 Cor. 5:6-13](#) and notes—

[1 Cor. 5:6-13](#). As stated, this is a critical point and must be heeded before discipline is ever carried out.)

3. The offending brother was to be disciplined through the power of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He was to be delivered to Satan.....

- a. for the destruction of the flesh.
- b. that his spirit might be saved in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, what does this mean? There are two major interpretations of the discipline.

1. The discipline means that the man must be excommunicated from the church ([1 Cor. 5:2, 7, 13](#)). The idea is that outside the church, that is, outside in the world, is the domain of Satan; whereas in the church is the domain of God ([John 12:31](#); [John 16:11](#); [Acts 26:18](#); [Ephes. 2:12](#); [Col. 1:13](#); [1 John 5:19](#)). The man is to be sent back to Satan's world to which he belongs. Perhaps such discipline would humiliate him and bring him to his senses. It was a discipline not only to punish him, but to awaken him to righteousness. It is a judgment that takes away a person's Christian privileges with the hope that the discipline will stir him to repent.

2. The discipline means something more than excommunication. It is the miraculous subjection of the person to the power of Satan. The flesh is to be delivered over to sickness and, if repentance does not follow, then death. Physical consequences are seen to be the result of spiritual failings (see outline—' [1 Cor. 11:27-30](#) and note—' [1 Cor. 11:27-30](#)). In [Acts 5:1-11](#), Ananias and Sapphira are extreme examples. It is further argued that mere excommunication would not have the effect of destroying the flesh.

It should be noted that this punishment is seen as remedial. The flesh is destroyed so that the spirit may be saved. There is no question that Paul means "saved" in the fullest sense, for he adds "in the day of the Lord." Paul expects to see the offender in the final day of judgment. The same words are also used of Hymeneus and Alexander whom Paul delivered unto Satan so that they might learn not to blaspheme ([1 Tim. 1:20](#)).

This passage needs to be studied carefully, for the church desperately needs to exercise discipline more than it has in the past in order to strengthen its witness for the Lord.

Note three more facts.

1. The actual discipline of the offending brother is carried out in "the power of our Lord Jesus Christ." It is the power of Christ that executes judgment upon the flesh and upon the spirit. Note this, for it is extremely important. All the church does is what it can do: make the decision that the brother's sin must be dealt with and then, in a heart broken and full of love, pronounce that he has to leave the church. Any physical or spiritual punishment is in the hands of the Lord, not in the hands of the church.

2. The actual steps to be used in dealing with an offending brother were spelled out in great detail by our Lord Himself, and the wisdom of His love is clearly seen in His instructions. Every church should do exactly what He said, and if the offending brother still refuses to repent, then the church should act. (See **outline—** [Matthew 18:15-20](#) **and notes—** [Matthew 18:15-20](#). The Lord's instructions should definitely be closely studied with this passage.)

3. In comparing Scripture with Scripture, it seems that Paul meant something more than excommunication. Scripture definitely teaches that there is a spiritual power that inflicts punishment upon sin. However, this should not be surprising in our day and time, for modern medicine and psychology tell us that misbehavior even causes physical, emotional, and mental punishment. (See [Deeper Study #1—1 John 5:16](#) for more discussion.)

"For this cause [continuing in sin] many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world" ([1 Cor. 11:30-32](#)).

"Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit" ([John 15:2](#)).

"Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him, and said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?" ([Acts 13:9-11](#); cp. [Acts 5:1-11](#)).

"Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme" ([1 Tim. 1:20](#)).

"And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him" ([Hebrews 12:5](#); cp. [1 Cor. 5:6-11](#) for a complete picture).

"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent" ([Rev. 3:19](#)).

"Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O LORD, and teachest him out of thy law" ([Psalm 94:12](#)).

"My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction: for whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth" ([Proverbs 3:11-12](#)).

"O LORD, correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing" ([Jeremiah 10:24](#)).

B. The Case of Shameful Sin in the Church (Part II): What the Church Must Do to Handle Shameful Sin in Its Midst, 1 Corinthians 5:6-13

(1 Corinthians 5:6-13) Introduction: this passage is a continuation of the former passage (1 Cor. 5:1-5). The subject is church discipline, a subject that is critically needed if the church is to be what it should be before the Lord and the world. What is the church to do when shameful sin is found in the life of a member?

1. **The church must learn something: a little leaven (sin) leavens the whole (v.6).**
2. **The church must purge out the leaven (sin) (v.7).**
3. **The church must keep the feast; that is, it must clean itself out (v.8).**
4. **The church must separate itself from the world, but not entirely (v.9-10).**
5. **The church must separate itself from sinners who call themselves brothers (v.11).**
6. **The church must judge only those "within" the church; God judges those "without" the church (v.12-13).**

1. (1 Corinthians 5:6) Church Problems: the church must know something—a little leaven (sin) leavens the whole lump.

The leaven or sin of the Corinthian church was its "**glorying**." The church thought of itself as a strong and spiritual church, a church greatly blessed and gifted by God. Every conceivable gift of the Spirit had been given the church, and the members revelled and gloried in their gifts and blessings. (see 1 Cor. 1:5-7; 1 Cor. 1:12; 1 Cor. 1:26; 1 Cor. 2:6-13; 1 Cor. 3:18-23; 1 Cor. 4:1-5; 1 Cor. 4:6; 1 Cor. 4:7; 1 Cor. 4:8; and 1 Cor. 5:2. A quick glance at these notes will give an overview of the glory and pride of the Corinthian church and of the glory and pride that can seep into any church.)

The depth of sinful pride, however, is when a church begins to pride itself in the fact that certain community leaders belong to its fellowship. This was apparently one of the terrible sins of the Corinthian church.

The church was "**glorying**" because of the man who was guilty of the shameful sin (1 Cor. 5:6). The church, of course, would not have been glorying in the sin of the man. Their glorying was in the man himself: his stature, his prestige, who he was, the money he could give, the contribution he could make, his leadership, and perhaps his wealth. The word for "**glorying**" (*kauchēma*) indicates this rather strongly. It means that they were glorying, boasting, and taking pride in the man despite the known fact of his sin. Perhaps he was a man of outstanding leadership in the community or the city of Corinth. Perhaps he had become a leader of one of the factions in the church. Whatever the case, the church overlooked his sin and took great pride in the fact that a man of his stature would join and become a part of their fellowship.

Thought 1. Too often, a church overlooks the sin and sinful lifestyle of a man because he is a leader in the community, government, or business. In fact, too often a church glories in the fact that the man is a member of its fellowship. As Scripture declares: "**Brothers, these things ought not to be.**"

The point is this: the church must wake up and learn something. A little leaven (**sin**) leavens the whole lump. Leaven is a type of sin in the Bible. Therefore, if the man and his shameful sin are allowed to remain in the church, the sin of the man will spread. If the church accepts the man who is living in clear sin, others will begin to feel that they, too, can be acceptable even if they sin. If there is no restraint upon sin, then sin will grow. If sin is accepted, then sin, not righteousness, rules. If righteousness is not the basis of acceptance, then righteousness does not reign, but sin reigns. If the church accepts the person who lives in clear sin, then the church is letting sin rule, and sin will spread. The man who lives *for sin* influences others to live *for sin*.

Note what Scripture says: it takes only a *little* leaven, not much, for sin to grow. Accepting just one man who lives *for the world and for sin* will cause others to begin living worldly and sinful lives.

"But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died" ([Romans 14:15](#)).

"Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth? This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you. A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" ([Galatians 5:7-9](#)).

"But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh! Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire" ([Matthew 18:6-8](#)).

"Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary [perfumer] to send forth a stinking savor: so doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honor" ([Eccles. 10:1](#)).

"Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes" ([Song 2:15](#)).

2. (1 Corinthians 5:7) Church, Duty: the church must purge out the leaven (sin).

There are two reasons why the church and its believers must purge all sin out of their lives.

1. Believers are new creatures. The picture is that of the Jewish Passover Feast. The Jewish family was required by law to remove all leaven out of the house before celebrating the Passover. They were even required to light candles and search throughout the house for crumbs of leaven that might have fallen on the floor and under tables and other furniture. The purging of all leaven was symbolic of the people purging the *corrupting influence* of sin out of their lives.

Note the statement: "Ye are unleavened." The believers of the church were already unleavened; they were new lumps, new creatures; therefore, they must not run outside the family into the world and bring the *old leaven* back into the family. The believer has become a "**new creature**" in Christ. His *old sins* and *old man* have been cast out of the house; therefore, he is not to let the old sins back into his life nor back into the family of God, that is, the church.

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17).

"For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature" (Galatians 6:15).

"That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Ephes. 4:22-24).

"Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him" (Col. 3:9-10).

2. Christ our Passover has been sacrificed for us and for the church. This, too, is a picture of the Passover Feast. In the Jewish Passover Feast, every family slew a Passover lamb and its blood was painted on the door framing above the main entrance into the house. This symbolized that the family believed the Word of God, that God would save the family from judgment when God saw that the blood of the Passover lamb covered its house.

The point is striking: the Passover lamb of the feast and of the Old Testament symbolized God's great Passover Lamb, Jesus Christ. Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us; therefore, we must purge the leaven, the sin and its corrupting influence, out of our lives. We must purge all sin out and take the blood of Jesus Christ and cover ourselves and our houses if we wish God's judgment to pass over us.

Now note the point: if we continue *to practice and to accept sin*, it proves that we do not really believe that the blood of Christ cleanses us. Accepting and living in sin proves that we have no interest in being free from sin. Accepting and living in sin proves that we love sin—that we like what sin can do for us so much that we are unwilling to purge it out of our lives and church. If we allow the old leaven, the old sin in our lives and churches, it shows that we have little interest in a clean and pure life. It shows God that we care little for the cleansing power of the blood of Christ our Passover. The point is forceful, and it is a warning. Therefore, we must purge out the old leaven, the old sins from both our lives and our church.

"The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, And saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" ([John 1:29](#)).

"Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us" ([1 Cor. 5:7](#)).

"Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father" ([Galatians 1:4](#)).

"And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour" ([Ephes. 5:2](#)).

"Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" ([Titus 2:14](#)).

"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" ([1 Peter 1:18-19](#)).

"Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" ([1 John 3:16](#)).

"And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood" ([Rev. 1:5](#)).

3. (1 Corinthians 5:8) Church, Duty: the church must keep the feast, that is, it must clean itself out.

The point is as clearly stated as possible: the church must keep itself clean and pure. It must not allow malice and wickedness into its fellowship. It must live a life of sincerity and truth.

Note five points.

1. The word "**malice**" (*kakias*) indicates that some in the church were apparently opposing the shameful man's presence in the church. But those who supported the man stood their ground, and malice set in between the two groups.
2. The word "**wickedness**" (*ponērias*) means more than just sin and coming short. It means taking pleasure in evil. The church must purge itself of its pride in prestigious men who were living in shameful sin. Such wickedness must be purged out.
3. The word "**sincerity**" (*eilikrineias*) means pure, clear, transparent. It is something through which the sunlight can pass indicating a flawless purity.
4. The word "**truth**" (*alētheias*) means unadulterated, conformed to the nature of whatever is true. God is truth; therefore, it means to be like God. It means to live and do the truth; therefore, the church must do precisely what is right. It must discipline both itself and the shameful man. The church must purge out the sin within itself.
5. The words "**let us keep**" are in the present tense, which means continuous action. The church *must continue* to *keep* the feast (*heortazōmen*), continue to purge out the old leaven of sin and its corrupting influences. It must not only discipline itself and the man who is living in shameful sin, it must continue to keep itself pure, to continue celebrating the feast of purity before God.

"For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation [behavior] in the world" ([2 Cor. 1:12](#)).

"For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ" ([2 Cor. 2:17](#)).

"This I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ" ([Phil. 1:9-10](#)).

"In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity" ([Titus 2:7](#)).

"My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth" ([1 John 3:18](#)).

4. (1 Corinthians 5:9-10) Church, Duty: the church must separate itself from the world, but not entirely.

Paul had apparently written an earlier epistle or letter to the Corinthians. He had charged them to do exactly what he was now saying: do not keep close company with those who live *for sin and this world*. The word "**company**" (*sunanamignusthai*) means

to mix up. Paul had mentioned **four types of shameful sins** that were to be kept out of the church and separate from believers.

1. The church was not to become mixed with the *fornicators* of this world. The word "fornication" (*pornois*) means all kinds of immoral sexual acts. It includes adultery, premarital sex, homosexuality, and all forms of sexual deviation. Those who practice immorality are not to be part of the fellowship of the church. Believers are not to keep close fellowship with them.

"And likewise also the man, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet" ([Romans 1:27](#)).

"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate [homosexuals], nor abusers of themselves with mankind" ([1 Cor. 6:9](#)).

"Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness....they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" ([Galatians 5:19, 21](#)).

"Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness" ([Ephes. 4:19](#)).

"But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints" ([Ephes. 5:3](#)).

"For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication" ([1 Thes. 4:3](#)).

"For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ....Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire" ([Jude 4, 7](#)).

2. The church was not to become mixed up with the *covetous* (*pleonektais*) of this world. The word means those who seek for more and more while millions within the world are dying from sin, hunger, disease, and poverty. This is a sin that is especially despised by God (see [Matthew 19:16-22](#) ; [Matthew 19:23-26](#); and [Luke 16:19-31](#)).

"And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" ([Luke 12:15](#)).

"But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints" ([Ephes. 5:3](#)).

"Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry" ([Col. 3:5](#)).

"Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" ([Hebrews 13:5](#)).

"Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's" ([Exodus 20:17](#)).

"For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire, and blesseth the covetous, whom the LORD abhorreth" ([Psalm 10:3](#)).

"For from the least of them even unto the greatest of them every one is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely" ([Jeremiah 6:13](#)).

"And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness" ([Ezekiel 33:31](#)).

"And they covet fields, and take them by violence; and houses, and take them away: so they oppress a man and his house, even a man and his heritage" ([Micah 2:2](#)).

"Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the power of evil!" ([Habakkuk 2:9](#)).

3. The church was not to become mixed up with the *extortioners* (*harpaxin*) of the world. These are the thieves, hijackers, grafters, and those who take advantage of the poor in order to get more gain for themselves. Again, these are especially despised by God because of their unreal view of the world, a world that reels under the weight of so many gripped by poverty, disease, sin, and death.

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess" ([Matthew 23:25](#)).

"And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you" ([Luke 3:13](#)).

"How long will ye judge unjustly, and accept the persons of the wicked?" ([Psalm 82:2](#)).

"He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker: but he that honoureth him hath mercy on the poor" ([Proverbs 14:31](#)).

"An unjust man is an abomination to the just" ([Proverbs 29:27](#)).

"Woe unto them that decree unrighteous decrees, and that write grievousness which they have prescribed; to turn aside the needy from judgment, and to take away the right from the poor of my people, that widows may be their prey, and that they may rob the fatherless!" ([Isaiah 10:1-2](#)).

"In thee have they taken gifts to shed blood; thou hast taken usury and increase, and thou hast greedily gained of thy neighbors by extortion, and hast forgotten me, saith the Lord God" ([Ezekiel 22:12](#)).

"Forasmuch therefore as your treading is upon the poor, and ye take from him burdens of wheat; ye have built houses of hewn stone, but ye shall not dwell in them; ye have planted pleasant vineyards, but ye shall not drink wine of them" ([Amos 5:11](#)).

4. The church was not to become mixed up with the *idolaters* (*eidōlōlatrai*) of the world. The word means those who either worship false gods or do not have a right relationship with God. Idolatry, of course, includes all unbelievers; for any person who does not truly worship God is worshipping something else, some idol, even if the idol is self and the possessions of this world.

"Little children, keep yourselves from idols" ([1 John 5:21](#)).

"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth" ([Exodus 20:4](#)).

"Take heed to yourselves, that your heart be not deceived, and ye turn aside, and serve other gods, and worship them" ([Deut. 11:16](#)).

"There shall no strange god be in thee; neither shalt thou worship any strange god" ([Psalm 81:9](#)).

"I am the Lord; that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another [not even to self], neither my praise to graven images" ([Isaiah 42:8](#)).

Now, note the point. The church and its believers cannot go out of the world; therefore, some contact with the unbelievers of the world is necessary. This is understandable to any thinking and honest person. However, it is also understandable that the church must not become *mixed up* with the shameful sinners of the world. The church and its believers must be separate in their behavior and fellowship. The church and the believers are to be holy and pure and righteous before God and to hold up the banner of holiness and purity and righteousness before the people of the world. Believers are *in the world*, but they must not be *of the world*.

"If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" ([John 15:19](#)).

"And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation" ([Acts 2:40](#)).

"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" ([2 Cor. 6:17-18](#)).

"And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" ([Ephes. 5:11](#)).

"Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us" ([2 Thes. 3:6](#)).

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world" ([1 John 2:15-16](#)).

5. ([1 Corinthians 5:11](#)) Church, Duty: the church must separate itself even from shameful sinners who call themselves "brothers."

Note the difference between this charge and the former command. The former charge has to do with the sinner out in the world. This charge has to do with the sinner in the church. Sometimes a professing believer returns to the shameful sins of the world and stays there, refusing to repent. Of course, the church is to seek to restore the man; the church is to take the steps spelled out by Christ (see [Matthew 18:15-20](#) for a clear discussion of what a church should do when a professing brother sins). However, if the man refuses to respond and repent after the gracious attempts at restoration have been made, the church has no choice but to separate itself from the man.

Note that two sins are added in this verse.

- a. The railer (*loidoros*) is a person who rants and scolds; reviles and abuses; uses insolent, abusive, and slanderous language.
- b. The drunkard is a person who intoxicates himself with alcoholic beverages and drugs, a person who deadens his faculties through alcohol and drugs.

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" ([Matthew 7:21](#)).

"He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me" ([Mark 7:6](#)).

"They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate" ([Titus 1:16](#)).

"My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth" ([1 John 3:18](#)).

"And they remembered that God was their Rock, and the high God their Redeemer. Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues" ([Psalm 78:35-36](#)).

"Fervent lips and a wicked heart are like an earthen vessel overlaid with silver dross" ([Proverbs 26:23](#)).

"And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not" ([Ezekiel 33:31-32](#)).

6. ([1 Corinthians 5:12-13](#)) Church, Duty: the church must judge only those "within" the church; God judges those who are "without," that is, the unbelievers.

No believer and no church is to try to exercise discipline upon unbelievers out in the world. Judgment of unbelievers is in God's hands. However, the church is to exercise discipline within the church. Therefore, the shameful sinner who refuses to repent must be dismissed from the church. (See [Matthew 18:15-20](#); [1 Cor. 5:3-5](#) for detailed discussion of what the church is to do with offending believers.)

"Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican" ([Matthew 18:15-17](#)).

"Then said he unto the disciples, It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe unto him, through whom they come! It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones. Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him" ([Luke 17:1-3](#)).

"And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem" ([Acts 16:4](#)).

"Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear" ([1 Tim. 5:20](#)).

"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" ([2 Tim. 4:2](#)).

"This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith" ([Titus 1:13](#)).

"These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee" ([Titus 2:15](#)).

"A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject" ([Titus 3:10](#)).

"Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you" ([Hebrews 13:17](#)).