

"Cleansing the Church"

Part 1

2 Corinthians 13

Introduction: Tonight, in our study of 2 Corinthians we have arrived at the final chapter of the letter. The first two verses of this chapter set the context as we step into this chapter.

Notice 2 Corinthians 13:1-2

In these verses Paul was letting the Corinthians know that he was coming the third time to exercise church discipline among the people if he needed to. Paul had been to Corinth 2 times previous. The first was when he was there for 18 months and that was when the church was founded. The second time was a very quick visit to deal with the sin within the church and that visit was not very pleasant. Now he planned to come a third time and if there was no repentance he would then exercise church discipline in order to purify the church. Last week we looked at two verses that I want to show you again.

2 Corinthians 12:20-21

²⁰ *For I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and that I shall be found unto you such as ye would not: lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults:*

²¹ *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.*

There were two groups of sin which existed within the church at Corinth. The first was the sins of the spirit and they affected the UNITY within the church. Then there was the sins of the flesh and they affected the PURITY of the church.

Now, Paul had recorded something earlier in this letter which we need to see again.

2 Corinthians 11:1-2

Would to God ye could bear with me a little in my folly: and indeed bear with me.

² *For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.*

It was Paul's desire to present the Corinthians as pure virgins to Christ and so for that reason he would exercise church discipline when he came if they had not repented. He had warned them several times that he would come and exercise the power of his apostleship in discipline.

1 Corinthians 4:18-21

¹⁸ Now some are puffed up, as though I would not come to you.

¹⁹ But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will, and will know, not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power.

²⁰ For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power.

²¹ What will ye? shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, and in the spirit of meekness?

Paul had intentionally stayed away so as to give them an opportunity to repent.

2 Corinthians 1:23

²³ Moreover I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth.

As we now approach chapter 13 Paul is letting them know that the grace period is over. He is coming this third time and he will not spare.

Notice 2 Corinthians 13:1-2 again.

In verse 1 Paul references the need for two or three witnesses and he has several verses in mind here.

Deuteronomy 17:15

¹⁵ One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established.

Paul's third visit would make him the third witness in this matter. There was something else here which was at the front of Paul's mind and that was the Words of our Lord.

Matthew 18:15-17

¹⁵ 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.

¹⁶ 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.

¹⁷ 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.

Here in these verses Jesus is addressing church discipline. Church discipline was instructed by Jesus Himself in order to preserve the UNITY and the PURITY of the church. Paul was not a people pleaser for there were other times when he had to exercise church discipline. We see it in the letter to the church at Galatia.

Galatians 1:6-8

⁶ I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:

⁷ Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.

⁸ But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.

Paul also had to confront Peter.

Galatians 2:11-14

¹¹ But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.

¹² For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision.

¹³ And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation.

¹⁴ But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?

Paul knew that sin would destroy a church and therefore he knew sin had to be confronted and dealt with.

Application:

Church discipline is practiced very little today. The idea has come into the church that we must not invade the personal space of others and the idea has come in that if church discipline is exercised people may leave. Let me just say that if sin is permitted within the church there will be things happen that are far more devastating than people leaving.

Joshua 7:1-7, 24-26

But the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing: for Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed thing: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against the children of Israel.

² And Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is beside Bethaven, on the east of Bethel, and spake unto them, saying, Go up and view the country. And the men went up and viewed Ai.

³ And they returned to Joshua, and said unto him, Let not all the people go up; but let about two or three thousand men go up and smite Ai; and make not all the people to labour thither; for they are but few.

⁴ So there went up thither of the people about three thousand men: and they fled before the men of Ai.

⁵ And the men of Ai smote of them about thirty and six men: for they chased them from before the gate even unto Shebarim, and smote them in the going down: wherefore the hearts of the people melted, and became as water.

⁶ And Joshua rent his clothes, and fell to the earth upon his face before the ark of the LORD until the eventide, he and the elders of Israel, and put dust upon their heads.

⁷ And Joshua said, Alas, O LORD God, wherefore hast thou at all brought this people over Jordan, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? would to God we had been content, and dwelt on the other side Jordan!

²⁴ And Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver, and the garment, and the wedge of gold, and his sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep, and his tent, and all that he had: and they brought them unto the valley of Achor.

²⁵ And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? the LORD shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones.

²⁶ And they raised over him a great heap of stones unto this day. So the LORD turned from the fierceness of his anger. Wherefore the name of that place was called, The valley of Achor, unto this day.

NO CHURCH WILL MOVE FORWARD WHILE THERE IS SIN IN THE MIDST! And if it continues to exist there is even greater consequences.

Revelation 2:1-5

Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write: These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks:

² *I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:*

³ *And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.*

⁴ *Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.*

⁵ *Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, **and will remove thy candlestick out of his place,** except thou repent.*

If sin is permitted to exist within the church Jesus will remove the candlestick and the church will become a dead church. The Light will go out within the church. This is the danger of not addressing sin. There is also a personal danger for those who are practicing the sin.

1 Corinthians 11:26-30

²⁶ *For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.*

²⁷ *Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.*

²⁸ *But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.*

²⁹ *For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.*

³⁰ **For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.**

In Corinth there were those who were sick and those who had died because of sin. Let us see what James says.

James 5:19-20

¹⁹ Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him;

²⁰ Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.

From all of this we can see why sin cannot be permitted to exist within the church. Let me put a few verses together to show you another danger of neglecting church discipline.

Hebrews 12:6-10

⁶ For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

⁷ If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?

⁸ But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

⁹ Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?

¹⁰ For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.

When man will not exercise discipline when it is his responsibility then God will step in.

1 Samuel 2:22-24

²² Now Eli was very old, and heard all that his sons did unto all Israel; and how they lay with the women that assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

²³ And he said unto them, Why do ye such things? for I hear of your evil dealings by all this people.

²⁴ Nay, my sons; for it is no good report that I hear: ye make the LORD's people to transgress.

1 Samuel 3:11-13

¹¹ And the LORD said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle.

¹² In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his house: when I begin, I will also make an end.

¹³ For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.

We see the results of no discipline from Eli in the next chapter.

1 Samuel 4:15-17

¹⁵ Now Eli was ninety and eight years old; and his eyes were dim, that he could not see.

¹⁶ And the man said unto Eli, I am he that came out of the army, and I fled to day out of the army. And he said, What is there done, my son?

¹⁷ And the messenger answered and said, Israel is fled before the Philistines, and there hath been also a great slaughter among the people, and thy two sons also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark of God is taken.

Eli's two sons died at the hand of the Philistines under the chastening of God. The bottom line is that sin must be dealt with.

Conclusion:

At the same time, we must always remember that sin must be dealt with and the goal should be the restoration of the one who has sinned. Notice the Words of Jesus.

Matthew 18:12-15

¹² How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray?

¹³ And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray.

¹⁴ Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.

¹⁵ 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.