

The First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians

Immorality and Discipline in the Church

1 Corinthians 5:1-13

1. The Need for Discipline (v.1)

Every Christian is called to be holy (Matt 5:13-16; 1 Pet. 1:16), and all believers will eventually be holy (Rom. 8:30; 1 John 3:2). Christians are given both the desire and the opportunity to resist the temptation to sin and to live in faithfulness to Christ (Gal. 5:17; 1 Pet. 5:9; cf. 1 Cor. 10:13-14; 1 John 2:1). In addition to the factious divisions (1 Cor. 1:11), Paul had been informed that there was an individual in the church who was engaging in incestuous immorality, and a proper response by the local church, though different than if this were done under the Law in the nation of Israel (Lev. 18:6, 8, 29), is required.

2. The Duty to Discipline (v.2)

Discipline is a vital part of training in godliness (Eph 6:4; cf. Dt. 6:7ff; Heb. 12:7-11). The ministry of a faithful local church will include both teaching what God has commanded (Matt. 28:20; cf. 2 Tim. 3:16-17) and correcting believer's sinful actions and beliefs (2 Tim. 4:1-2). A faithful local church has the obligation to discipline those within its midst who do not live in obedience to the Word (Matt. 18:15-20; cf. 1 John 2:3-6; Jude 17-23).

3. The Method of Discipline (vs.3-5a)

The necessary disciplinary action of the local church responding to the ongoing and unrepentant sinful activity of a member of the congregation is expulsion (v.2b). Both the investigation and confrontation stages of church discipline are to be done carefully and judiciously (cf. Matt 18:15-17). The desire of all who are involved at any stage of the disciplinary process is for the repentance and restoration of the sinning brother or sister (cf. Matt. 18:15, 17). If the sinning brother remains obstinate regarding his sinful behavior, he is to be expelled from the community (cf. Matt. 18:17b). The local church is to render this verdict (cf. Matt. 18:17) and from that point on is to interact with him on the basis of evangelizing an unbeliever and not confronting a sinning brother.

4. The Reason for Discipline (v.5b-8)

5. The Sphere of Discipline (vs.9-13)