

The Covenantal Life: Being the Church
Week 9 - Dealing With Sin in the Body: Part 2
1 Corinthians 5:1-7

- The second step of discipline if the sinner remains unrepentant is to bring in multiple witnesses
 - These establish the charges - not one member's word against another
 - In keeping with God's judicial law (Deut. 19:15, cf 1 Tim. 5:19)
 - Needs to be taken seriously, hold ourselves to the standard of God's law
 - We will be judged if we are maliciously false witnesses
 - Drive home to the sinner the weight of his sin
 - Cannot be written off as personal disagreement or the opinion of one person
 - The unrepentance becomes more serious and obviously rebellious after multiple witnesses are brought in
 - Noted by the shift in Jesus's language ("Does not listen" vs. "Refuses to listen") - noticeable hardening of heart
 - We need to be mindful of what kind of witnesses we bring in
 - Must be mature, thoughtful, serious (Gal. 6:1, Matt. 7:3-5)
 - Must be impartial - not wise to use your own close friends - avoid the appearance of "ganging up"
- Clear obstinance in the face of multiple exhortations from multiple people to repent bring discipline from the personal level to the "formal" church level - last resort after multiple attempts to demonstrate sin from Scripture and exhortation to repent
 - This is done under the authority of elders - they investigate, council, exhort, pray for, and urge repentance
 - If this still brings no fruits of repentance, the elders should warn that the sin would be made public
 - This is required by Jesus
 - NT gives many examples of sin being publicly exposed to the church (Gal. 2:11-14, 1 Tim. 1:19-20, 5:19-20, 2 Tim. 4:10, 14-15, Titus 3:10-11, 3 John 9-10)
 - Purpose is not to shame or humiliate but to reconcile
 - Enlists the whole body in praying for and exhorting to repentance
 - Demonstrates how seriously sin is taken in the church
- If unrepentance persists, suspension from the sacraments is the next step
 - A person living in known, unrepentant sin has proven himself unworthy of partaking
 - Honors the holiness of the sacraments, protects the flock from knowing, false profession of covenantal union, and impresses on the sinner the weight of sin

- Suspension from the Lord's Supper is ostensibly excommunication - treating the sinner as an unbeliever and proclaiming he does not share in the blessings of Christ's death and resurrection
- Formal pronouncement of excommunication is the last step of discipline (1 Cor. 5:4-5)
 - Entire church, elders and congregation, together proclaiming that he is not under the blood of Christ but is under the dominion of sin
 - Pronouncement both that he is not in the New Covenant, but also that he has broken the covenant of church membership
 - They are to be treated accordingly - as a Gentile or tax collector - outside the covenant community
 - Cannot enjoy close, brotherly fellowship, but still owe them the love due all neighbors
 - Also must continue to pray for them - hope of all discipline is to bring about repentance and restoration
- Church discipline is necessary
 - We are covenantally joined as one body, so unrepentant sin from any member has an effect on the whole
 - 1 Cor. 5:6-8 - sin must either be repented of or "cleansed"
 - Rev. 2:14-16, 20-23, 3:1-3 - local churches are corporately condemned specifically for "tolerating" sin, false teaching, and those who follow it
 - Sin destroys relationships - when church discipline is carried out, we are not shunning or burning bridges, we are acknowledging the covenantal reality that unrepentant sin has broken fellowship