

INTRODUCE

Well, good morning church! If I haven't met you yet, my name is **SLIDE "Chris Bar"** Chris Martin, and I'm the Lead Pastor here. If you've got your Bibles, and I hope you do, please open them up to 1 Corinthians chapter 5. 1 Corinthians 5. That's where we're going to be.

We want every person to have a hand on their Bible. You can open your phone or tablet and literally Google search 1 Corinthians 5. We have a ton of work to do, so let's get going. 1 Corinthians 5 verse 1

SLIDE 1 CORINTHIANS 5:1

[1] It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife.

INTRODUCTION

Well, aren't you glad you tuned in for this one, church?

- Easter is over and we're back into our study of 1 Corinthians,
- and here's what we get.
- A man has his father's wife.
- Incest.
- If you're here for the first time...I'm really sorry.

But honestly, this is why we preach straight through books of the Bible, cause I just think I'd skip over this one!

So, in order to get to 1 Corinthians 5, we have to do some background work in the Old Testament, so keep a finger in 1 Corinthians 5, and flip all the way back to the Old Testament book of Leviticus chapter 18.

The first five books of the Bible are known as the Torah, and in the Torah we find what's known as the Old Testament law. So,

- Genesis,
- Exodus,
- Leviticus,
- Numbers
- and Deuteronomy.

And, we'll be in the third book...Leviticus chapter 18.

- This is the book you stall out in
- During your One-Year reading plan.
- Leviticus. Chapter 18. Starting in verse 2.

SLIDE LEVITICUS 18:2-4

[2] "Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, I am the LORD your God. [3] You shall not do as they do in the land of Egypt, where you lived, and you shall not do as they do in the land of Canaan, to which I am bringing you. You shall not walk in their statutes. [4] You shall follow my rules and keep my statutes and walk in them. I am the LORD your God.

EXPLAIN: BE DIFFERENT

Now, this is part of the law. This law is what God commanded his people, the Israelites, to obey.

- And there are 613 laws in the Old Testament.
- And God just said,
- *“You aren’t to behave like the Egyptians*
 - *(whom I just rescued you from),*
- *nor are you to behave like the Canaanites*
 - *(those whose land I am bringing you into).*
- *No, you are to be different.*
- *You are to be set apart.”*
- Or the Biblical word we use is HOLY.
- *“You are to be holy.”*

So, God lays out all these laws to the people.

And in Leviticus 18 God gives laws about sexual relationships. So, these are moral laws about how God wants his people to live differently from those around them. Let’s look at them. Verse 6:

SLIDE LEVITICUS 18:6-8

[6] “None of you shall approach any one of his close relatives to uncover nakedness. I am the LORD. [7] You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father, which is the nakedness of your mother; she is your mother [which doesn’t seem to be needed to say, but apparently it was...], you shall not uncover her nakedness. [8] You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father’s wife; it is your father’s nakedness.

EXPLAIN

Now, there is a little bit of context here that is helpful, and makes this a little less creepy. So, remember,

- this is like 3000 years ago,
- and life expectancy wasn't what it is today.
- And if a Jewish man lost his wife,
- it would have been completely proper and normal
- for him to take a second wife,
- and for that wife to be significantly younger than he was,
- so she could bear him more sons.
- And marriable age was usually in the mid-teens.

Well, imagine if he has teenage sons from his first marriage, and mom dies.

- And then dad remarries a much younger Israelite hottie,
- who's about the same age as you are,
- like 14, 15, 16 years old,
- and suddenly she moves into your tent!
- You're in the throes of puberty,
- and now your step-mom,
- who, last week, was in the same Gym class as you were
- but now she lives with you!

So, you're like,

- "Leviticus 18..."
- Leviticus 18...
- do not sleep with my father's wife."

It puts it kinda into context, right?

And then, Leviticus 20 explicitly prescribes the punishment associated with this sin. So, turn to the right two chapters to Leviticus 20:11

SLIDE LEVITICUS 20:11

[11] If a man lies with his father's wife, he has uncovered his father's nakedness; both of them shall surely be put to death; their blood is upon them.

EXPLAIN: PURGE

Now, this may seem extreme, right? I mean, we'd think it a bit extreme to give a capital punishment to someone for sexual immorality.

- But for the Hebrew people, this was the norm.

And the language around this death penalty is so interesting.

- You don't need to turn there,
- but in Deuteronomy, chapter 17,
- here's the prescription for the death penalty in Israel.

SLIDE DEUTERONOMY 17:6-7

[6] On the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses the one who is to die shall be put to death; a person shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness. [7] The hand of the witnesses shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people. **So you shall purge the evil from your midst.**

And later, in verse Deuteronomy 22:22 it says this:

SLIDE DEUTERONOMY 22:22

[22] “If a man is found lying with the wife of another man, both of them shall die, the man who lay with the woman, and the woman. **So you shall purge the evil from Israel.**”

MAIN POINT

And you’ll find this language all over the law of Moses.

The reason why these sins were taken so seriously was because God had commanded his people to live different, set-apart, holy lives.

- And when they broke those laws,
- they were breaking commands directly from the Lord,
- and bringing evil into the community.
- So, God takes this very seriously,
- and tells them to purge the evil from their midst.

And this is the main point I want to reinforce this morning:

SLIDE GOD TAKES OUR HOLINESS VERY SERIOUSLY!

- God wants us to live differently from those around us...
- he wants us to be set apart...
- he wants us to be holy.
- And he takes that VERY seriously.

TRANSITION

He did so in the Old Testament, and as we'll see, he does so in the New Testament as well. Now, back to 1 Corinthians 5.

SLIDE 1 CORINTHIANS 5:1-2

[1] It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife. [2] And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you.

EXPLAIN: CORINTHIANS

Now, remember all the way back to the first sermon in this series,

- Corinth was a sexually saturated city.
- Temple prostitution to the God Aphrodite was rampant.
- We actually have reports that *Corinthian* was a term
- that people would call prostitutes.
- Like, “Ooo ...I hear she’s a real Corinthian.”¹

And yet, Paul says,

- *“hey, that whole sleeping with your step-mom?”*
- *that’s not even cool with the Corinthians!*
- *And they’re kinda nasty!”*

ILLUSTRATION: STINK

It's like this, we've been sheltering in place for about 6 weeks now,

- And I don't know about you,
- but if I don't remind myself...
- I will sometimes get going on the day,
- and forget to shower.

It happened as I was writing this sermon,

- I just got to work,
- and around 10...11am
- I just caught a whiff of myself.
- You ever do this?
- And I was like, "Dang!"
- Like when your own odor starts offending you!
- You've crossed the threshold to become a bum!

And Paul's like,

- *"The people who are known for their sexual immorality*
- *and prostitution*
- *and stuff like that...*
- *when they're offended by you!*
- *You've got a big problem!"*

And Paul was not exaggerating. Incest—sexual relations with primary or adoptive kin—was regarded as a serious infraction in this culture. ⁱⁱ

POINT #1

And this is the first point I want to make. God takes our holiness very seriously because **SLIDE** IT AFFECTS OUR **WITNESS** to those around us.

And recently,

- in an attempt to NOT be considered lame,
- or irrelevant,
- or prudish,
- or whatever,

Christians have really put on this

- *“We’re cool”*
- *“We’re not lame”*
- *“We’re just like you”*
- vibe out there to the world.

But God never intended his people to be just like the world. He intends us to be different, set-apart, holy.

And hear me, the world doesn’t want the church to look just like the rest of the world. They’re looking to us for something different.

TRANSITION

So, a lack of holiness affects our witness. But Paul goes on. Verse 3.

SLIDE 1 CORINTHIANS 5:3-5

[3] For though absent in body, I am present in spirit; and as if present, I have already pronounced judgment on the one who did such a thing. [4] When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, [5] you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.

EXPLAIN

Deliver this man over to Satan? What in the world does that mean? This sounds crazy and harsh and goodness...unchristian at some level. So, what is going on here?

Well, there are different opinions out there on this passage, so let me give you what I think is the best interpretation of this verse in context.

We'll break it down into three parts: (1) **deliver this man to Satan**, (2) **for the destruction of the flesh**, (3) **so that his spirit may be saved**.

EXPLAIN: DELIVER TO SATAN

When dealing with a person who claims to be a Christian (and that's key!).

- They claim to be a Christian,
- but they are living in persistent, un-repentant sin.
- **Delivering them to Satan**
- means excluding the person from the church.
- No longer treating them like they are a Christian.

Paul expects them to remove this man from the church and forbids them from associating with immoral persons like this who claim to be Christians.

And this can be seen 3 other times in this chapter.

- Verse 2 says, **Let him who has done this be removed from among you.**
- Verse 7 says, **Cleanse out the old leaven.** Which we'll get into.
- And verse 13 says, **Purge the evil person from among you.**

So, Paul seems to be picking up on the Old Testament pattern of **purging the evil from their midst,**

- though he doesn't prescribe death,
- but exile from the church,
- back into the world,
- or the domain of Satan.

Now, I just want to clarify here:

- Paul is not speaking of a Christian who is struggling with sin,
- or one who messes up, or falls...
- but one who is in ongoing,
- obstinate,
- unrepentant sin.

We'll get into how to discipline this person in next week's sermon,

- but purging isn't a thing done lightly.
- It's only done as a last resort...
- to one who is unwilling to pursue the holy life
- that God has called his followers to live.

TRANSITION

So, we deliver him to Satan. Now, what does Paul expect to be the result of this expulsion? Well, that's the next phrase:

EXPLAIN: DESTROY FLESH

The purpose of this purge is for **the destruction of his flesh**.

- Now, this has been misinterpreted as a literal, physical death.
- Like, his literal flesh
- would literally be destroyed.

But I don't think that's what Paul is actually getting at. You see, in the New Testament the idea of *the flesh* stands for a certain orientation of life.

- The flesh is the sin-bent self,
- characterized by self-sufficiency
- that wages war against God.

I think Paul is most likely referring to the flesh like he does in Galatians 5:24

SLIDE GALATIANS 5:24

[24] And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

You see, only after destroying the flesh, can a man be truly saved.

So, in essence, what Paul is saying here is,

- *“Based on the way this guy is claiming to be a Christian,*
- *and yet is unyielding in his sin,*
- *I don’t see any evidence that he is truly saved,*
- *and therefore, we must treat him accordingly.”*

But the last phrase:

EXPLAIN: SPIRIT SAVED

That his spirit may be saved...there is the hope in this purge.

- The handing over to Satan is not intended to bring about death,
- but to work some kind of positive result.
- Paul seems to hope that the shock
- of being ousted from the church
- and left to his sin
- would ultimately drive the man to change his fleshly orientation.

And as one who is no longer “inside” the church, he is treated like an outsider.

- He is to be evangelized,
- as one would an unbeliever.
- He is to be pleaded with to turn from his sin
- And to follow Jesus.

It is better for you to be cast out with hope for your spirit, than to be left in your flesh, and ultimately no be saved.

POINT #1

So, I'll make my second point. God takes our holiness very seriously because **SLIDE** IT AFFECTS OURSELVES.

- If you claim to be a Christian,
- and yet have no interest in aligning your life
- with how God has told us to live:
 - differently,
 - set-apart,
 - holy.
- Then I would question what you mean when you say you're a Christian.

Is there any objective evidence that you have crucified your flesh with its passions and desires? If not, well, Paul is pretty blunt here.

TRANSITION

So, God takes our holiness very seriously because it affects our witness, it affects ourselves, but there's one more thing to consider.

Look at verses 6-8

SLIDE 1 CORINTHIANS 5:6-8

[6] Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? [7] Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. [8] Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

EXPLAIN: BOAST?

Now, why would anyone boast in this?

- Well, it's not too hard to imagine in today's culture.
- Churches boast all the time in how open and affirming they are.
- But there is a fine line.
- One commentator I read wrote this:
 - "The church walks a tightrope between being a welcoming community that accepts confessed sinners and helps the lapsed get back on their feet; and being a morally lax community where anything goes."ⁱⁱⁱ

As we saw in the first four chapters of this book...the Corinthian church has the proclivity to exalt themselves.

- They are plagued with pride,
- arrogance,
- and self-admiration.

But this scandalous case

- of them turning the other way
- when a heinous sin is going on in their church,
- is a confrontation about their own spiritual maturity.

Paul is essentially saying, *“quit your boasting, and get your house in order.”*

EXPLAIN: LEAVEN

And he uses the illustration of leaven. Leaven is used in both Old and New Testaments as a metaphor for how infiltrating un-checked sin can be.

- In those days, bread was leavened
- by keeping back a piece of the previous week’s dough,
- storing it in suitable conditions,
- and then adding it to the next week’s dough
- to leaven that batch.

Now, this could go horribly wrong if the dough went bad.

- It would still leaven the new dough,
- but it would cause the whole lump to go bad as well.

You can see why this was a fitting image for the infectious power of evil.

ILLUSTRATION: COVID-19

- And we don’t have too stretch our imaginations
- in this cultural moment
- to understand the need to remove contaminated persons
- from the larger populace
- in order to prevent mass contamination.

POINT #3

And this is the third reasons God takes our holiness very seriously. It affects our witness, it affects ourselves, but **SLIDE** IT AFFECTS OUR **COMMUNITY** as well.

- This man's sin brings great harm to the church.
- It is like a toxin that will infect and ruin the whole community
- unless it is purged from their midst.

Sin that is not dealt with will do the church community great harm.

CONCLUSION

You see, in this passage Paul is echoing the Old Testament law which takes our holiness very seriously. And thus he instructs the church to take sin very seriously.

- Christ's death is supposed to effect a change in our moral behavior.
- We are supposed to live as those who have died and risen with Christ.
- And if we are not living that way,
 - and have no desire to do so,
- we ought very much to be concerned
- whether we are genuinely saved.

Now, next week we will get into more specifically what we call "Church discipline" which is the official, Biblical way we deal with unrepentant sin in the church. But I want to end today with some self-reflection.

Christian:

- Do you have sin in your life that's hidden?
- Is there sin that you have yet to repent of?
- God takes VERY SERIOUSLY our holiness,
- and what we do with that sin is of the utmost importance.

ILLUSTRATION: APEX PREDATOR

There is a common illustration for how we deal with our sin.

So, everyone's watching Tiger King on Netflix right now,

- which is a documentary
- about a really messed up
- Big Cat zoo, park, thing.

And listen, I am not commending that show to anyone, ok? It's the biggest quarantine waste of time. But I watched it, alright?

- And this guy has hundreds of tigers
- and lions
- and leopards
- on this property.
- And they raise them from cubs.

And in one of the episodes, one of the tigers gets a hold of the arm of one of the women who works there, and just bites it clean off!

- Now, that's crazy!

But what's crazier is that everyone was shocked that it happened!

- They had raised that Tiger from a cub,
- and they cuddled with it,
- and they gave it a name,
- and they were just shocked that it would ever do that!

And I'm watching this, thinking,

- *"Are you kidding me?"*
- *You know why that cute Tiger bit her arm off?*
- *Cause he's an APEX predator!*
- *It is built in his DNA to kill,*
- *and you are the prey!*
- *Just because you name him*
- *doesn't make him safe!"*

But church, all too often, that's what we do with sin.

- We treat it like a pet.
- And we let it come into our lives when it seems small,
- and innocent,
- and inconsequential.

But it will grow,

- and it will eventually turn into the predator that it is.
- And one day it will attack you
- and take you down.

Don't pretend that sin isn't a big deal, because it is.

ENDING

If you have hidden, unrepentant sin in your life, I'm pleading with you:

- you need take it out of hiding.
- You need to drag it into the light.
- And you need to put it to death.

- You can't train it.
- You can't keep it as a pet.
- You cannot domesticate your sin.
- It will eventually kill you.
- It may already be killing you.

Today is the day to crucify your flesh.

Today is the day to confess and repent.

Today is the day to put your sin to death.

Before it's too late.

Let me pray for us.

COMMUNION

Well, every week at Fathom we respond in 4 ways:

- First, every week we celebrate communion—The Lord's Supper—
 - We take a little bit of bread and juice, two common elements given to us by Jesus to represent his body and blood sacrificed for us.

- When we eat and drink, we are remembering his sacrifice, and proclaiming once again that we believe in him as our Lord and Savior.
- If you are a Christian here today please get your communion elements ready, as we'll all take communion together.
- If you are NOT a Christian, we ask you to abstain from taking communion, as this ordinance means you are a believer...and you are welcome at Fathom even if you are not.
- Second, we normally give of our tithes & offerings as a community. And this is still needed.
 - Church, even though we are not meeting physically, we are still practicing first fruits giving.
 - We give our first and our best because in Christ Jesus God gave us his first and his best.
 - So, if Fathom is your home church, and you regularly give in the offering boxes, please go to **SLIDE** fathomchurch.org/give or click the link at the top of the screen marked "Give" and give online.
- Third, the staff and elders are here to pray for you, and we are committed to continue this. So, if you have any prayer needs, please click on the screen and submit a prayer request, or go to **SLIDE** fathomchurch.org/prayer
- And finally, we always end with singing praise and worship to our God. Singing is an unbelievably important part of our gathering, and

even as we are scattered in this season, let's continue to worship through song together.

So, I'm going to read the Words of Institution from the Apostle Paul, we'll take communion, and then we'll sing:

1 CORINTHIANS 11:23–26 – WORDS OF INSTITUTION

SLIDE Communion 1

[23] For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, [24] and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." **TAKE**

SLIDE Communion 2

[25] In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." **TAKE**

SLIDE Communion 3

[26] For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Love you church, let's sing together.

BENEDICTION

Well, thanks church for gathering with us. We will be online next Sunday, as well, same time.

If you're on our email list, you have an email waiting for you in your inbox, with all the links from this morning's service.

I'll leave you with this benediction from the Hebrew scriptures:

SLIDE 1 THESSALONIANS 5:23–24

[23] Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. [24] He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.

Love you, church. Have a great week!

ⁱ Mark Driscoll, *Judging Like Jesus*.

ⁱⁱ Cicero, Martial, Tacitus, and Dio Cassius all decried incest as a moral breach.

ⁱⁱⁱ David Garland, 1 Corinthians, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament.