

Things a church should know

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Date: 12 February 2017

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[0 : 0 0] Now, we turn to our Bible reading this afternoon. We're continuing in 1 Corinthians. And this week we're going to be reading chapter 5 and chapter 6. So maybe everyone, including boys and girls, take your Bibles and turn to page number 954. That's 1 Corinthians chapter 5 and chapter 6. As we read, we all follow along together. 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 as his father's wife. And you are arrogant. Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you. 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.

When you're assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus, and my spirit is present with the power of our Lord Jesus, you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be sealed in the day of the Lord. Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens a whole lump? 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.

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. I wrote to you my letter not to us who see it with sexually immoral people, not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or adulterers, since then you would need to go out of the world. But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is found guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, swindler, not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders?

Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? God judges those outside. Purge the evil person from among you. When one of you has a grievance against another, does he dare go to law before the unrighteous instead of the saints? Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world?

And if the world is to be judged by you, are you not incompetent? Are you incompetent to try trivial cases? Do you not know that we are to judge angels? How much more than matters pertaining to this life?

[3 : 0 1] So if you have such cases, why do you lay them before those who have no standing in the church? I say this to your shame. Can it be that there is no one among you wise enough to settle disputes between the brothers? But brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers.

To have lawsuits at all with one another is already a defeat for you. Why not rather suffer wrong? Why not rather be defrauded? But you yourselves wrong and defraud, even your own brothers.

For do you not know that the unrighteous will inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit of our God.

All things are lawful for me, but not all things are hopeful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be dominated by anything. Food is meant for the stomach, and the stomach for food.

And God will destroy both one and the other. The body is not meant for sexual morality, but for the Lord. And the Lord for the body. And God raised the Lord, and will also raise us up by his power.

[4 : 42] Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her?

For as it is written, the two will become one flesh. But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. Flee from sexual morality.

Every other sin a person commits is outside the body. But the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God?

You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body. Amen.

This is God's word. May he bless it to us. Please do turn again to 1 Corinthians. Last year, I visited a driving range with some friends.

[5 : 53] We put our tokens into the machine, filled up a basket full of golf balls, and away we went to hit them. Always ambitious, despite having no golfing category at all, I reached for the biggest driver in the bag, lined up my shot.

No practice swing needed. First hit, and the ball went soaring straight into the post right beside me. Thinking this was merely a one-off, I lined up a few more, and ball after ball, they were mishits and mis-tews, hitting the roof above me, the post beside me, and trickling along the ground in front.

A change of club didn't help. There was a fundamental flaw that played out in each shot, no matter the club, no matter the tee, no matter the ball.

That flaw was, of course, my swing. What we've been seeing in chapters 1-4 of 1 Corinthians is the flaw in Corinth.

We've seen their mistake. We've seen why everything's out of kilter. And now in chapters 5-14, Paul is showing us how that plays out in the various areas of church life, each different shot, skewed in its own way.

[7 : 10] Their fundamental problem was that they rejected Paul's gospel and ministry, thinking that they'd moved on to some sort of higher spiritual plan. They were arrogant and felt superior as Christians to Paul and to other churches.

Their boost was their wisdom, was their strength, and their power. We saw last time that this played out in the pattern of how they did ministry.

They thought that the spiritual was all that was important. They thought that they were now living as spiritually resurrected beings. The body wasn't important now, as they were resurrected spiritually.

So their lives looked impressive to the world, in contrast to Paul's foolish-looking gospel, that obsessed with Christ crucified. And this misunderstanding, this arrogance, is going to shine through in key areas of their church life.

That's what we're seeing today, and in the next few weeks, as we look at these chapters together. We see what a failure to apply a cross-shaped pattern of ministry means for them as a church, with how they view sex, with how they view food and the Lord's table, and with how they view what are often called spiritual gifts.

[8 : 29] This is a church that prides itself on wisdom, but the repeated refrain of this section of Paul's letter are the words, Do you not know? Seven times you read that in these two chapters.

Do you not know? And so my title for this section is Things a Church Should Know. Things a Church Should Know. And we see three of these in our passage tonight.

Three things that clearly the Corinthians didn't know, and maybe three things that we need to be careful in thinking we knew and respond to correctly. The first thing that Paul says a church should know is that they must take sin seriously together.

A church must take sin seriously together. Chapter 5. It is a problem. There is a problem in the church, and it's one that affects the whole church.

We see it presenting in verse 1. There is a man who has his mother's, his father's wife. There's a man who has his father's wife. Sexual immorality, straight away, big problem.

[9 : 43] It's of account that even the pagans know is wrong. Verse 1. But that is only the tip of the iceberg. This man and his actions are the tip, the obvious that it's seen.

But the problem goes deep beneath the surface, because verse 2, the Corinthians are argument. Indeed, verse 6, they boast. This church that thinks itself spiritually superior, that thinks it's moved on from Paul to something better and something higher, are found to be arrogant and boasting, despite having this very serious sin going on in their midst.

What we see here is that they as a church treasure spiritual experience, being superior, looking spiritual to those around them in the world, over genuine obedience.

Faithful, plodding obedience isn't attractive or spiritual in their eyes. They've got bigger fish to fry. They've got other things to be doing which look much more impressive. So of course, Paul wants to deal with this man who has sinned, but that isn't where it stops.

It is for the good of the church that Paul is taking drastic action here. Paul makes clear what they must do. There's a collective responsibility for sin, and that responsibility means at the very least, verse 2, they should be mourning about this.

[11 : 03] Not boasting, not arrogant, but ought you not rather to mourn? And secondly, what they must do is remove this man from amongst them, and that is for his good.

Look at verse 5. Paul says, you are to deliver this man to Satan. Why? So that his soul may be saved in the day of the Lord.

Remove him from the church. That's why verse 4, it is to be done when they are assembled. Remove him from the church, God's wonderful new community of light. Remove him from that back to the world, out from Christ and his people, and back to the slavery of Satan's realm, so that he knows what he has done is serious, so that he knows how disastrous what he has done is.

help him to see just how horrible what he is doing is going to be. If someone is allowed to continue this path, then it leads only to destruction.

That's what Paul wants the church to communicate. Being removed from church, asked not to come, barred, cut off from the fellowship is a drastic measure. It shouldn't be taken lightly.

[12 : 21] Some will maybe think Paul speaks a bit too strongly here. Maybe a better approach is to keep loving this man until he sees sins. Maybe in a similar situation, we might be tempted to think we need to just be compassionate to those who sin in this way.

We must not let them think that we're being unloving or unkind in case he thinks the church isn't for him anymore. Or maybe we just think it's a bit too difficult to cast a friend out.

We don't like confrontation. It sounds a bit cold. What are others going to think about us? It doesn't sound very Christian. No.

Paul is clear here. This man is rejecting what God says is right. He's on a collision course with God unrepentantly. He is heading towards God ignoring what he said.

So the church needs to make clear what he is doing that he might be saved and repent. That he might at the day of the Lord be able to stand. But Paul is also saying that this church must take sin seriously together.

[13 : 30] It's not just for the man's benefit. It's for theirs. Verse 6 and the first of the do not knows. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lot?

This behaviour if it's left unchecked if it's allowed to continue will contaminate and affect the whole church. It will pull the church back to what they've been rescued from. And it's a result of not grasping Paul's gospel of Christ crucified.

It's a result of moving away from Christ down the cross and being shaped by that pattern of suffering now for glory later. as Paul asks the question do you not know his answer his correction is to rightly apply his simple looking gospel.

The solution to this is to be shaped by Christ crucified to be shaped by the gospel that they're leaving behind. Verse 7 Paul says cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump which is what you really are because Christ has been sacrificed he has been crucified he is the Passover lamb that frees his people from slavery.

He is the greater saviour than the Passover lamb in Exodus. The rescue is for much more than just slavery to Egypt. Christ has been sacrificed Christ crucified means that you have been drawn from the realm of darkness where sin rules where evil reigns where all that looms is destruction and as we get to grips properly with the gospel this wonderful gospel of Christ crucified we see that it is true freedom that it brings away from those things we can leave them behind we are now able to leave behind all that would destroy us we can escape the clutches of the evil one so if that is what we now have verse 8 let us not celebrate let us celebrate not with the old way of life not with malice and evil being captive to these things but let us celebrate with what is good and true embrace the freedom that

[15 : 44] Christ has bought you're a new community in Christ sin forgiven transferred from darkness to light free no longer enslaved that's why sin cannot be tolerated in this community because if it's unrepentant if it's continuing if it's allowed then all that it says to the rest of the church is that it's okay to do that here you can be a Christian and commit adultery that's fine no you've been rescued from that brought into freedom brought into real life why would you go back to it the Corinthians cherished the overtly spiritual looking things but no amount of listening to capable preachers no amount of spiritual gifts being practiced no amount of grand display to spirituality remove the call to be obedient to Jesus the Corinthians boast they're arrogant but in their midst they overlook sin they're content to have a serious sex scandal in their midst and to still boast in what a special church they are sin like this is not isolated how it's responded to tells everything about how a church responds to the gospel and all of its implications for our lives

Corinth is a church that treasures experience their sense of spirituality is derived from the tangible the impressive the things that can make us feel special feel different but it's at the cost of holiness a church that wants to be truly spiritual strives to grow together in holiness no amount of apparent spiritual experiences negate that priority one writer puts it like this if we wish to be truly spiritual we are not simply to seek grief experiences of God but rather to strive to grow in holiness and to do so together that's why Paul finishes chapter 5 don't judge the sin of those outside the church God will do that but verse 11 be concerned for your brother be concerned for your brother do not let yours be a church that accepts those who claim to be brothers that takes in lightly that do what they want and presume that in the end they'll be forgiven and okay

Paul is clear if that sort of person is amongst you they need to be removed or they will pull everyone down into the same that is not what you've been rescued for this is a whole church thing this discipline was for the benefit of the individual but as well the whole church this is an extreme case a man having his father's wife but what we can see here is that there is a responsibility for the whole church to look out for each other Paul is giving all Christians responsibility here when he says what he says means you can't look over your shoulder and think this isn't about me Paul is laying at the feet of the whole church to not let it be okay to misbehave bad behaviour thrives when there's an environment that says it's okay whether it be sexual immorality or gossip bad behaviour will thrive in a church when nobody challenges it and so there's a very real sense in which

Paul is saying that you are your brother's keeper we are our brother's keeper if someone is heading down a slippery path that may well lead to this point then it's our responsibility to pull them off it to pull them aside and say where you're going at the minute is very unwise and it could lead to destruction what you're doing at the minute could end in disaster we have a responsibility to do that for one another to take sin seriously together and if they don't want to get back on the path if they're happy with where they're going then we need to help them see how disastrous that's going to be that's what Paul's doing here that's what he's saying to the church remove this man that he might have his soul saved the last day that he might comprehend just what he's left behind and being removed from the church and people not accepting it and normalizing it and letting him think that it's okay and of course with all this sort of thing there can be misunderstanding

Paul isn't saying in verse 12 that we're to walk around church with a new pad marking any little slip that we all make it's not a knee jerk reaction to empty the church of anyone who sins of course not because it would be empty this was a church that was obsessed with great spiritual experiences it created divides amongst the church those who were special and the rest it was a me centred church that didn't care for one another and that did as they wanted so the first thing to know says Paul we must be a church that takes sin seriously together the cross of Christ demands it that means knowing each other and loving each other enough to confront one another when we're unwise when we're heading for disaster it means when we overhear gossip that we don't let it stand that we don't think well that's okay it means being real with each other about how disastrous it is to put our fingers in our ears and ignore what

[21 : 46] God is saying if we're prepared to do that for each other then we will be a church that truly loves the cross and is taking seriously the obedience that is truly spiritual the second thing that a church should know is that our relationships must be shaped by the future our relationships must be shaped by the future chapter 6 verses 1 to 11 we are a family that look forward to shared privileges that the world does not have that's who we are as a church we are a family that look forward to shared privileges that the world does not have the world sees things very differently and Paul continues dealing with a lack of love that the Corinthians have for each other a divided and me centered church where they're apparently special or separated from the rest where sin isn't challenged and where things like this are going on then unpicks these family bonds that are meant to form the church the church are our brothers and sisters you are my brothers and sisters that means that when there are grievances to sort out when we are hurt by people in church we deal with it as family our future our shared future together shapes how we deal with it verse one they are going to those outside the church to sort out their problems with each other no no says

Paul how can that be do you not know that you the church will judge the world do you not know that you are to judge angels we have a grand future there is much to look forward to as the people of God the new community that Jesus has formed means a future that elevates us to share in Jesus glory the world that now sneers and mocks us that thinks us foolish for following the Lord Jesus will see us vindicated we will stand in the judgment we will be with God as the rest of the world is held to account for opposing him that is the future of the church even angels will be judged by the church all those who have rejected God all those who oppose him and his works and his workers will be judged by the church not just people but angels there is a cosmic scoop that is hard to fathom in all that awaits for the church in the future so why do you lay such things such grievances before those who have no standing in the church you will judge angels why are you going to the world to make judgments about what you're doing when they know nothing if you have a grievance with someone from the church then it's not those outside who see it clearly seeking comfort from those who don't know and love what you know and love is never wise when it feels like it hurts to follow

Jesus and serve the church when it's costly and when people hurt you when it feels weak and silly when you're wronged then the thing to do is not go to those outside of the church how can they possibly see things rightly and clearly they're heading for a very family to sort out problems don't go behind their backs don't avoid them don't complain about them don't cut yourself off from them go to them and reconcile your family this supposedly wise church in Corinth can't even sort out disputes between themselves because they're not marked by the pattern of Christ crucified they aren't spiritually superior quite the opposite verse 7 why not rather suffer wrong why not rather be defrauded or to put it another way why not follow the pattern of the cross which is to be prepared to suffer to take the burdens of others for the church's benefit

Corinth was a church that did the opposite they cheated their own brothers they persistently wrong their brothers and sisters in the Lord so Paul warns do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God cheating other people ignoring God's plan for sex living lives that wreak havoc upon other people are not things that belong in the kingdom of God those who persistently do these things those who do them to their church family and are not repentant about it do not belong in the kingdom of God don't be cheats don't be those who hurt others and take advantage of your brothers and sisters because that is what you've been washed from verse 11 that is the old leaven the old life that is left behind Paul applies the cross here yet again that is what some of you used to be verse 11 but no longer because of the cross of Christ you were washed sanctified justified in Christ made new set aside as holy made right with God you have left those things behind

Paul wants to encourage those Christians who are faithful in Corinth you will inherit the kingdom of God because of the cross of Christ and the life that goes with it the cross sets up a wonderful future for us and so that shapes how we love our church family we don't wrong them and when we're wronged with them we sort it out we don't avoid them we don't bad mouth them we most certainly do not complain about them to our colleagues and our neighbours a truly spiritual church is one that is united not squabbling with each other and crying on rifts a truly spiritual church is one that recognises that its members have been washed from all these things and so is gracious to one another because they too have been washed from them a truly spiritual church loves one another because they're heading for the future together verse 7 why not rather suffer wrong why not rather be defrauded we knew that in the end all things will be judged justice will be done and we knew that this is an attitude marked by the cross of Christ it's ok to suffer it's ok to be defrauded because in the end all things will be made right because of the cross of Christ so when you feel like someone hasn't listened to your suggestion when someone sits in your seat or worse will it matter when you share eternity with them is it worth causing ructions in your church family now seek them out sort it out don't let it boil away and cause rifts in the church finally Paul says a church should know that God himself dwells in his new community a church should know that God himself dwells in his new community verses 12 to 20 the church is special why it is not because of its ability to do supernatural acts it is not prophesying or speaking in tongues it is not because it's profoundly wise the church is special because God himself dwells with it and that is both a great privilege that esteems the church with great glory but it's also a great responsibility to glorify him with our lives the

[30 : 19] Corinthians seemed to have a mantra that they repeated they thought of themselves as resurrected spiritual beings they didn't see the body as important they were now kings in Christ wise strong and powerful so they had a mantra verse 12 all things are lawful for me all things are lawful for me we can do what we want nothing is out of bounds so not only have they let someone in their church continue unrepentant about a wrong relationship they don't even think sexual morality is a problem visiting a prostitute is just like going to Greg's for lunch indeed they say food is made for the body and the body for food both will pass away just the same sex is for the body the body is for sex indulging a bit of sexual pleasure is just like eating a nice bowl of ice cream it's only a bodily function the body needs food the body needs to visit the bathroom and the body has its sexual needs no no the

Corinthian error is being exposed once again the body is not for sexual immorality verse 13 but for the Lord the body is to honour the Lord and to serve him and the Lord is intimately involved in everything to do with us bodies included verse 14 he will raise us up he will resurrect our bodies verse 15 your bodies are joined to Christ verse 17 as we are joined to the Lord we become one spirit with him verse 19 your body is a temple of the holy spirit within you this is why we cannot take sin lightly particularly sexual sin this is why sex is not just like eating verse 15 we cannot then join Christ who we are united to and his spirit who dwells in us we cannot join them to a prostitute or to anyone who isn't our spouse the body is important we are not merely spiritual beings no we are physical bodies and our bodies matter the great hope of the future resurrection that we have and that the

Corinthians have wrong is that we will be resurrected physically Paul writes in chapter 15 behold I tell you a mystery we shall not all sleep but we shall all be changed in a moment in the twinkling of an eye at the last trumpet for the trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised imperishable and we shall be changed for this perishable body must put on the imperishable and the mortal body must put on immortality that is the Christian hope one day we will be raised bodily with bodies that can't be defiled that can't die that can't be stained by sin it is not just a spiritual hope where our soul floats up to heaven no we will be raised with new bodies for a new heaven and a new earth these bodies are not inconsequential for now they are joined to the

Lord dwelt in by the spirit what we do with our lives now matters obedience to the Lord matters Christians don't have a free path to do what they want Paul applies the cross here yet again you were bought with a price the price was the cross of Christ this is a world changing truth it means we have been washed forgiven sanctified justified it means we be raised with Christ it means we are joined to Christ it means we have the spirit dwelling in us it means we are part of a new community it means we can celebrate rescue from slavery it means we can be sure that we will inherit the kingdom of God it means that we have been plucked from the kingdom of darkness and brought into the kingdom of light the kingdom of Jesus we have been bought with a price rescued and ransomed so glorify

God with your body sin is not the cross we minimize it we deny it power for us when we feel to take sin seriously we feel to live up to and enjoy all that Christ has won for us when we prefer what the world loves over faithful obedience to God there's a serious sin problem in Corinth they thought that they were their own they thought that they were superior to Paul risen strong spiritual and wise but sexual deviance was rife they didn't love each other and they didn't honour Jesus we must be a church that knows all that we have in Christ it's not a basic simple gospel it's not something we leave behind the cross of Christ is universe changing its implications reach to all of our lives let's take these things on board let's not ignore them in a world that's obsessed with sex that wants to make out that it's okay to do what we want if it makes you feel good do it we must resist our bodies are joined to Christ and his spirit dwells within us we've been rescued from that slavery bought into a new community with a hope of real resurrection a cross shaped church takes sin seriously together they take responsibility for each other they are their brothers keepers they're united together loving one another a cross shaped church knows that they have

[36 : 42] God's presence with them and all manner of spiritual blessings because of it and they celebrate leaving the old life behind they glorify God with their bodies knowing that they have been washed because of the cross of Christ the cross is not just what we preach to people out there the cross is not just for evangelism the cross is to shape and permeate all of our lives and how we relate to each other as a family born out of the cross it is to shape us to be loving to one another to take seriously together our new found lives freed from slavery to sin that we might be holy that we might honour Jesus sin is not to be trifled with it is a very dangerous business but it's one that we have been rescued from because of the cross of Christ we are not our own we are for the

Lord we have been bought with a price so let us strive as a church to glorify God in our body as we love one another and in our bodies in the world we have been bought with a price let us honour God with our bodies Amen let's pray Heavenly Father we are so thankful that we can call you Father that we are part of your family rescued from hopelessness from darkness from the clutches of the evil one we are thankful that we have a real hope that draws us together to be a family that has modelled love for us in a way that is incomparable as we pray that you would work in us to change us to make us loving to help us celebrate all that we have by leaving behind our old lives by taking the cross of Christ seriously never wanting to leave it behind never wanting to undermine it never wanting to remove its power help us love the cross of

Christ and the life that it calls us to live for it is in that hope that we can look forward to the day where we'll be raised imperishable and undefiled immortal because Christ has provided that victory for us and it's in his name we pray amen amen