

Be a Blessing to the Body of Christ
By Loving Devotion to Your Spiritual Siblings – Part 3
Unto the Purity of the Body

I want to begin our time together this morning with an excellent excerpt from Paul Washer's book titled *The Gospel Call and True Conversion*:

"The most common argument used against church discipline is that it is unloving and judgmental. In rebuttal, we merely need to point to the teachings of our Lord, who commanded such a practice. If we are unloving in obeying the command, was He unloving in giving it? Although we are not to judge with critical and censorious attitudes, we are commanded to judge and even expel if necessary. If in the consummation of all things we are going to judge angels, are we not now able to judge matters pertaining to the church and her well-being? Our boasting in a love that refuses to confront unrepentant sin is not good. Do we not understand that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough? Are we demonstrating love toward God when we allow sin to run rampant in the church so that God's name is blasphemed among unbelievers? Are we demonstrating love toward our brothers in Christ when we allow them to be destroyed by habitual sin, or are we demonstrating self-love and refusing to enter into conflict for the sake of self-preservation?"

Let's consider carefully and thoughtfully two of our Lord's commands which we must obey to maintain the purity of His church.

- I. _____ **in One Another** – Matthew 18:15-20; Galatians 2:1-21; 1 Timothy 5:19-22

In **Ephesians 5:1–12**, the Scripture makes clear that the behavior of God's children will be very different from the world.

- How are we instructed to live purely in these verses?

Perhaps one of the most difficult things to do is to confront someone about a sinful act or behavior in their lives. Just to do it is difficult, but to do it with the right motives and in the right manner is also a big challenge.

But that is exactly what our Lord instructs us to do in **Matthew 18**:

v.15 – "go and show him his fault in private"

- Might there be a temptation for the offended brother/sister to confront the sinner about the offense in a public way at this stage?
- Why might a person want to do that?

v.16 – The same action is to be taken but with a small group if the sinning brother/sister doesn't repent.

v.17 – Once again the action is to be taken but publicly, before the entire congregation.

If the offending one stubbornly refuses to hear the loving confrontation of this small delegation, then it is time to raise the stakes.

- And what is the consequence of such a person's unrepentant sin?

II. _____ **One Another** – Matthew 18:15-20

It is essential to proper confrontation of sin in our brothers and sisters that we remember the goal of confrontation is always restoration (or possibly salvation) of the one being confronted and that the motive throughout the process and at every stage is love.

This reality is inescapable in our Lord's instruction to us about confronting sin in Matthew 18.

Two broad sections can be seen in this paragraph—the process to follow when a brother or sister sins (**vs.15–17**) and the "solidarity" that God has with His people when they work to lovingly confront sin and maintain the purity of the church (**vs.18–20**).

At each step, the goal of the confrontation is the same, i.e. **reconciliation** and **restoration** that follows repentance.

In John MacArthur's sermon on this text he said the following, quoting from Dietrich Bonhoeffer:

"Sin demands to have a man by himself. It withdraws him from the community. The more isolated a person is, the more destructive will be the power of sin over him. And the more deeply he becomes involved in it, the more disastrous is his isolation. Sin wants to remain unknown. It shuns the light. In the darkness of the unexpressed it poisons the whole being of a person. This can happen even in the midst of a pious community."

"In confession, the light of the gospel breaks into the darkness and seclusion of the heart. The sin is brought into the light. The unexpressed is openly spoken and acknowledged. All that is secret and hidden is made manifest. It is a hard struggle until the sin is openly admitted, but God breaks gates of brass and bars of iron.' Psalm 107:16."

"Listen to this, 'Since the confession of sin is made in the presence of a Christian brother, the last stronghold of self-justification is abandoned. The sinner surrenders. He gives up all his evil. He gives his heart to God. He

finds the forgiveness of all his sin and the fellowship of Jesus Christ and his brother. The expressed, acknowledged sin has lost all its power. It has been revealed and judged as sin. It can no longer tear the fellowship asunder. Now the fellowship bears the sin of the brother. He is no longer alone with his evil for he has cast off his sin in confession and handed it over to God. It has been taken away from him. Now he stands in the fellowship of sinners who live by the grace of God and the cross of Jesus Christ. The sin concealed separated him from the fellowship, made all his apparent fellowship a sham. The sin confessed has helped him to find true fellowship with the brethren in Jesus Christ."

"What a ministry, the ministry of restoring the sinning brother. It is the key to purity of the church. It is the key to revival of the church, the renewal of the church, and the reaching of the world through a renewed church. We must hear these words of our Lord."

III. **The Special Case of Confronting the Sin of an Elder** – 1 Timothy 5:19–22

- Why is there a warning against bias and partiality when making accusations and confronting sin in an elder/pastor's life?

There are five important principles that we must observe in these verses:

- Accept Only Definite, Certain Accusations (v.19)
- The Matthew 18 Process Applies to Elders Also (v.20a)
- The Purpose of This Action is Warning (v.20b)
- Fairness and Right Motives are Important (v.21)
- Preventative Work is Always Best (v.22)