

Sermon for A Year with the Catechism Confession: Where is This Written?

Date: June 12 2022

Location: St. John's Lutheran Church, Austin, MN

Old Testament: Leviticus 5:5-10

Epistle Reading: 1 Corinthians 5:1-13

Gospel Reading: Matthew 16:13-20

Sermon Text: 1 Corinthians 5:1-13

Sermon Title: Confession: Where is this written?

Introit: Psalm 32:1-5; Antiphon: Psalm 32:7

Hymns:

LSB 611 – Chief of Sinners Though I Be

LSB 644 – The Church's One Foundation

LSB 612 – As Rebels. Lord, Who Foolishly Have
Wandered

Liturgy:

Divine Service III, p. 184



Songs:

Where I Belong

After All

Mistakes (by Unspoken)

Our God is an Awesome God

Liturgy:

Creative Worship



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Text: 1 Corinthians 5

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. 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 are 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 saved in the day of the Lord.

Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the 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 in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people—not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, 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 guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or 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.”

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Grace to you, and peace, in Jesus' name. Amen.

We are continuing our deep dig into this subject of Confession. In his Small Catechism Luther asks, concerning his point on Confession: Where is this written? The answers he gives is:

This is what St. John the Evangelist writes in chapter twenty: The Lord Jesus breathed on His disciples and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven." (*John 20:22–23*)

As we dig deeper into this I want you to open your Bibles to 1 Corinthians 5 and follow along. I want to explore four points with you as we look into this.

- 1) The Sin Confronted
- 2) The Steps Required
- 3) The Preservation of the Sacred
- 4) The Separation from Sin

Today we will look at the first two. The remaining two we will tackle next week.

1) The Sin Confronted

In 1 Corinthians 5:1-2 see how the sin is confronted. Paul begins by confronting the sin of the congregation, not the sin of the individual. He does this because the congregation has failed to confront the sin. The chapter begins with words of accusation:

It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans...¹

Although this is the sin in the church at Corinth, any sin openly tolerated, is sin on the part of the congregation as a whole. Sin always affects the community.² Individuals in the congregation are not islands unto themselves. They are a part of the community. The congregation is not an island unto itself. It is a part of the community. When it becomes known that there is sinful conduct freely and openly tolerated in one or more of the members the congregation, the Church's reputation suffers. Its ability to draw people to Christ suffers.

Unrepentant and continued sin in a church destroys its witness in the community. The city of Corinth was a community well known for its hedonistic

1 1 Corinthians 5:1
2 1 Corinthians 12:26

lifestyle. This sin, in the church, was going beyond what even the pagans were doing. The congregation was out Corinth-ing Corinth in the conduct they tolerated.

When the outside world looks in and sees sin, worse than anything they would endure, being openly tolerated, it drives them away from Jesus.³

That is what an unbelieving world
simply finds unbelievable.

If such things are not endured among godless heathens and pagans, they certainly should not be endured in the Church.

That is to believe there is no consequence for sin. It is to publicly proclaim God is a joke. God's Word is a joke. It is to sow the seeds doubt in God's Word, God's presence and God's power. It is to teach there will be no harvest. The Bible teaches:

Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.⁴

Look in your Bibles at 1 Corinthians 5:2. There Paul points directly to the problem in the church at Corinth. He says, "you have become arrogant." You have become comfortable. You have tolerated, even celebrated, sinful conduct for the sake of peace. He is pointing out they have not dealt with sin in their church because they care more about a false sense of peace and false Christian unity.

We would expect Paul to say the one who has remained in unrepentant sin is arrogant. That is not what Paul says. He teaches, the congregation is sinning. It is the sin of allowing one to become so self-righteous, and comfortable in their sin, they feel above the very Law of God. This is exactly the problem with the Scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23, Mark 11 and John 8.

Paul asks in verse 2, "Ought you not rather to mourn?" They should be weeping in prayer, yet they stand in cooperative defiance with the sinner. They attack the one bringing God's Word. They did not mourn, they did not suffer, over

3 See Jesus message to those who drive people away from Him in Matthew 23, Mark 11, John 8
Matthew 23 especially verses 15 and 33
John 8 especially verses 43-44
Matthew 11:15-19 Especially see the reaction to Jesus in verse 18)

4 Galatians 6:7-8

such sin. Certainly, where they did not grieve, we can be certain the heart of God was grieved. The Bible says:

Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God,
by whom you were sealed
for the day of redemption.⁵

The day of judgment will come. The Last Day will come. It is an undeniable truth: the Blood of Jesus has paid the debt for the righteous anger of God the Father toward sin. Jesus is the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.⁶ That wondrous and precious gift is offered to all. There is no god like our God.⁷

Yet God is grieved over our sins. Sin in the church should be confronted as a loving parent confronts sin in a loved child. It is done by the Pastor and elders who shepherd the flock of God. This is a sacred and holy treasure. This is about protecting the flock, who have been purchased with the very precious Blood of Jesus. There is a Christian and Biblical way to confront sin. That bring us to the second point.

2) The Steps Required

Here one would expect to see Matthew 18 quoted, as it often and correctly is, but I want to look at this through what Paul teaches in 1 Corinthians, and compare that to Jesus' teaching in Matthew 18. Paul gives the steps that must take place. When the disease is discovered, failing to treat it leads only to its spreading. Paul prescribes the cure. In the middle of verse 2 he says:

Let him who has done this be removed from among you.

That is strong language. This one is to be treated like cancer in the body. It must be cut out. Those persistent in sin and unrepentance must be removed from the Body of Christ, and from fellowship of the congregation.

Verse 7 reads:

Cleanse out the old leaven
that you may be a new lump,
as you really are unleavened.

Verse 13 reads:

5 Ephesians 4:30
6 John 1:29
7 Psalm 86:8

Purge the evil person from among you.

This is describing the fourth and final step of Church discipline, as laid out by Jesus. Why is Paul so harsh in these verses? Because the congregation should have followed Jesus' Words. They should have been faithful Christians caring about their brother or sister in Christ; caring about their soul; caring about their salvation. Paul follows Jesus' outline in Matthew 18.

From the very lips of the Head of the Church, Jesus Christ:

If your brother sins
go and show him his fault in private.⁸

What if he will not hear you? What if, even worse, spreads lies about how you did it. Jesus teaches, "If he does not listen to you..." If he becomes resistant or defiant; If he rejects your words; If he begins to make excuses; If he fails to examine himself and look inwardly and humbly; If he does not ask, "Lord, is this true in my life?"

If he does not listen to you, take one or two more
witnesses. So that by the mouth of two or three
witnesses, every fact may be confirmed.⁹

The point here is not to gang up on them. The point is to bring a sense of heightened accountability. The point is to explain the sin, and for two or three witnesses to add weight to the situation, and to witness or watch the response of the sinner.

Is there any soul searching? Is there humility? Is there any regret for even a perceived misunderstanding? Is there any sorrow? Is there a desire to make it right? Is there a "Zaccheaus moment"¹⁰? Is there a grieving within this person's heart and soul?

If so, if there is repentance, is there confession of that sin and a desire to make it right? Then you have won them back. Praise God! What a blessing!! What a glorious ministry for the life of the Church! To be embraced in Christian love and overflowing forgiveness! To be called a fellow brother or sister in Christ. To support and defend each other so the world, sin and the devil would not come pouring into the life of the Church or any one of its members. Just hear the excitement in Jesus' Words when He explains:

8 Matthew 18:15

9 Matthew 18:16

10 See: Luke 19:1-10

I tell you, there is joy before
the angels of God
over one sinner who repents.¹¹

... but, what if they still will not listen? In Matthew 18:17, Jesus says, “If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the Church.¹²” This is the point where you need to go public. This is the most difficult point. The aim here is to call on the whole congregation to pray for this member, (or as St. Paul might put it, “so-called member” at this point.) It is now the responsibility of the whole congregation to urge repentance, in a spirit of Christian love, and in a gentle spirit of firm and resolute warning.

It is to say, “Brother or sister, we appeal to you, see this is true in your life, as the shepherd of this Church has explained it to you. We call on you to repent and to put off your unholy robe. Cloth yourself with humility and the Robe of Christ’s righteousness.”

This is for the whole congregation to rally around the sinning brother or sister, and call them back to ways of “holiness of life and obedience to Christ [which] is expected of all members of the congregation.¹³”

Then “If they refuse to listen...” If they continue to run through the stop signs; If they continues to throw off all correction; “If they refuses to listen, even to the Church, let them be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.¹⁴” This is the point of great sorrow, pain and weeping.

At the point where the names are brought to the congregation it is being done because it is time to remove them from the congregation. That is to say, removed from the fellowship of the Church. It is to put them on the outside looking in. They must be cut off from the privileges and blessings of the people of God, and the people of God are to withdraw their fellowship from them and to leave them to their sin.

This is done in the loving and prayerful hope this will bring about a sober mind and bring them to the realization of their sin and bring repentance and a return to the Lord.¹⁵

If they repent and return, then we would “kill the fatted calf” as the father did with the prodigal son, and we would rejoice “This my son was dead, and is alive again;

11 Luke 15:10

12 Matthew 18:17

13 LSB Agenda: The Rite of Installation of Officers

14 Matthew 18:17

15 Joel 2:13

he was lost, and is found.¹⁶” We would rejoice with the angels in heaven.

This is exactly what Paul is teaching in 1 Corinthians 5:2. Sin is sin, and sin is evil. Defiance and unrepentance have eternal consequences. Such things must be removed from among us. It is not to be tolerated. It is to be removed. It must be dealt with seriously. As seriously as sin offends God. It is done for the sake of the Church and for the eternal consequences of the sinner.

Look in your Bibles at what Paul says in verse 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.

This is not Paul’s judgment. It is not the congregation’s judgment. It is not Paul condemning the sinner. He is simply restating what God has already said clearly in His own Holy Word. Tolerating sin is joining in the sin, and the contempt for God’s Word. Paul has already brought the verdict this congregation should have, but failed to, make. Paul’s judgment is simply stating, “God’s Word has spoken.” This person is in purposeful unrepentant sin, and needs to be removed from the fellowship of the Church.

Again, very strong words from the Apostle Paul. The words need to be strong because what is at stake has eternal consequences for this individual. Also at stake is the very holiness, purity, unity and peace of the entire fellowship of the church, and the church’s reputation and effectiveness in the community to bring people to Jesus. No one ever sins alone. One person’s sin affect all the others.

Later in 1 Corinthians 12:25 Paul state:

...that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together...

This is why Paul makes the appeal he does. Paul appeals to the Name that is above every name.¹⁷ The name of the Lord Jesus Christ. He appeals to the highest court of Heaven.

“When you are assembled,
and I with you in spirit,
with the power of our Lord Jesus...”

16 Luke 15:24

17 Philippians 2:9

That is exactly like when Jesus said, “Where two or three are gathered in My name, there am I among them.¹⁸” In carrying out Church discipline it is the Lord who stands with His Church, and it is the Lord who carries out such loving discipline, for the sake of their soul.

Verse 5 is the most difficult to read. If this were not in the Bible we might find it hard to believe. There should be some sense of shock and awe in all faithful hearts. Paul says, “You are to deliver...”

That is a strong term. It is a legal term of pronouncing sentence. It is excommunication, or putting the offender out of the Church. “You are to deliver this one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh.¹⁹” Meaning out of the Church and cast into the world. It is returning them to the status of “a descendant of the serpent” and no longer a child of God.²⁰

Satan is the god of this age,²¹ the prince of this world.²² It is he who presides (though still under the sovereignty of God) over the world.²³ Paul says, put them out of the Church and into the world where Satan rules, “for the destruction of his flesh.”

This is God’s judgment, spoken by the faithful. This may mean for illness and sickness to come. It may mean death. This person may already be dead in Jesus, and has become such an embarrassment to the Lord that God simply will “take them out.”

Yet it is not the individual, nor the pastor, nor the congregation that is judging. Church discipline is simply speaking God’s own Word, and God’s own judgment, on sin. In the book of Acts the first example of Church discipline was administered directly by the hand of God when Ananias and Sapphira lied in church, and lied to the Holy Spirit. It was God who dropped them both dead.²⁴ God has spoken.

The one who has sinned against God, and remains in defiant unrepentance, must be cast out of the congregation, for the sake of the congregation, and prayerfully for the sake of the individual.

Still there is a prayer, a purpose, a plan of graciousness. Where no one has been able to get through the thick skull, the stubbornness, the heart hardened by persistent sin. Paul proclaims at the end of verse 5 to figuratively grab them and

18 Matthew 18:20

19 1 Corinthians 5:5

20 See: Genesis 3:15

21 2 Corinthians 4:4

22 Ephesians 2:2

23 See: Matthew 4:9

24 See: Acts 5:1-11

shake them, to demand their attention, before the sin drags them to Hell.

As Charles Spurgeon once spoke at a funeral:

If sinners be damned, at least let them leap to Hell over our dead bodies. If they perish, let them perish with our arms wrapped about their knees, imploring them not to go. If Hell must be filled, let it be filled against the teeth of our exertions, and let no one go unwarned and unprayed for.

Paul continues in verse 5: "...so his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord."

We do not, we could not, wish Hell on anyone. However, this one is clearly acting as an unbeliever. Through this ongoing continuous sin, as well as the resistance against those who have come to bring guidance and correction. The actions are as an unbeliever; as one who does not "fear and love God above all things."²⁵ There can be no real assurance this soul is saved, or submits to Jesus Christ who will come to judge the living and the dead.²⁶ The fruit of the Spirit in this person, and the life lead, betray their confession of faith, if there is one. They have abandoned or rejected the vow made at their Confirmation.

RITE OF CONFIRMATION²⁷

...

P Do you this day in the presence of God and of this congregation acknowledge the gifts that God gave you in your Baptism?

R Yes, I do.

...

P Do you intend to live according to the Word of God, and in faith, word, and deed to remain true to God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, even to death?

R I do, by the grace of God.

P Do you intend to continue steadfast in this confession and Church and to suffer all, even death, rather than fall away from it?

25 Luther's Small Catechism: Explanation to each of the Ten Commandments

26 Nicene Creed: Second Article

27 Lutheran Service Book: Agenda

R *I do, by the grace of God.*

P We rejoice with thankful hearts...

Church discipline is about rescuing a soul from Hell. It is about “wrapping our arms about their knees imploring them not to go...” through tough love. Love that is tough to receive, and often even more tough to administer. “So that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.²⁸”

“The day of the Lord” refers to the Last Day, Judgment Day. We pray that, sometime before the Last Day, while this person is in this world, such tough love would sober them, and would grab their attention, that God would use this to plow up the hardened soil of their heart, so the seed of the Gospel would grow, and they would come to a saving relationship with Jesus Christ, who said:

A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.

Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’

Then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you workers of lawlessness.’²⁹

A person’s consistent and regular unchristian conduct betrays any possession of the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ or the Holy Spirit’s work in them. So in Calvary-love we cut them off and we put them out.

We do that to setup purposeful roadblocks and speed bumps in their life. We need their conduct to change so they do not perish in eternally.³⁰ If we are to imitate Jesus, we are to care for their souls enough to act.

28 1 Corinthians 5:5

29 Matthew 7:18-23

30 Matthew 13:42 – In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

If the Gospel messages of salvation is important; if we truly love our neighbor as our self; if we share God's desire to get all people home,³¹ we should share God's disdain for sin and sin's affect and help our brothers or sisters in Christ, by loving them. May God help us see such wisdom. In Jesus' name. Amen.

**Proclaim God's Word,
Encourage one another in faith,
Witness to God's love and
Serve all people**



As we Gather

Collect Prayer

Liturgy Links:

Trad:

Praise:

Children's Sermon