

Time Audit Chronicles: Immorality in the Church

(1 Corinthians 5:1-13)

Prologue: Purging the Leaven of Sin

The Presswood family sat in the cozy warmth of their living room, reading through 1 Corinthians 5, where Paul addresses a serious issue of immorality in the church at Corinth. Ariel had been quietly reflecting on how sin affects not just individuals, but the entire community. Alice, with Mr. Fluffernutter in her arms, was imagining herself standing in the Corinthian church, watching Paul deliver his firm but loving message.

“Daddy,” Ariel asked, “Why was Paul so harsh in this letter? Couldn’t he have just been kind and let the church figure things out on their own?”

Ryan leaned back thoughtfully. “That’s a really important question, Ariel. Paul wasn’t being harsh to hurt anyone—he was being firm because the church was tolerating something that could destroy their holiness. In this chapter, Paul is addressing a situation where someone in the church was living in serious sin, and instead of dealing with it, the church was ignoring it. Paul wanted them to understand that sin affects everyone, not just the person involved, and that they needed to address it for the sake of the church’s purity and witness.”

Ariel nodded, understanding. “So, Paul wasn’t just trying to punish anyone—he was trying to protect the church and help them stay holy?”

“Exactly,” Ryan said. “Let’s use the Time Audit Machine to visit the Corinthian church and see how Paul’s words brought clarity and direction to a difficult situation.”

The Journey Begins: The Corinthian Church’s Tolerance of Sin (1 Corinthians 5:1-2)

The Time Audit Machine powered up, and with a flash, the family found themselves standing in the midst of the Corinthian church, a bustling and diverse community of believers. Despite their enthusiasm for spiritual gifts and growth, the church had a problem: they were tolerating serious sexual immorality in their midst.

Ryan pointed to the scene as Paul’s letter was read aloud. “Paul is addressing a specific situation: a man in the church was having a relationship with his father’s wife—something even the surrounding pagan culture considered shameful. Instead of confronting the sin, the church was acting as if everything was fine.”

Ariel’s eyes widened. “Wait, even the pagans thought it was bad, and the church was tolerating it? That’s terrible!”

“Yes,” Ryan said. “Paul is deeply concerned because this isn’t just about one person’s sin—it’s about the whole church. By ignoring the issue, the church was essentially saying that this behavior was acceptable, which went against everything Jesus taught about holiness and purity.”

Paul’s letter continued, “And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you.” (1 Corinthians 5:2).

Ryan explained, “Paul is saying that the church should have been mourning over this sin, not tolerating it. They were acting as if they were spiritually mature, but their unwillingness to address sin showed a lack of true understanding of God’s holiness.”

Paul’s Call for Discipline (1 Corinthians 5:3-5)

Paul’s instructions were direct and uncompromising. He wrote, “In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.” (1 Corinthians 5:4-5).

Ariel’s face showed concern. “Deliver him to Satan? That sounds so harsh! What does that mean?”

Ryan paused, choosing his words carefully. “Paul isn’t saying to give up on the man entirely—he’s calling for the church to remove him from the community for a time. By doing this, the man would face the full consequences of his sin, which might lead him to repent and turn back to God. The goal wasn’t punishment—it was restoration. Paul wanted the man’s spirit to be saved, even if it meant allowing him to experience the pain of separation from the church.”

Ariel nodded slowly. “So, it’s like tough love—helping the man realize how serious his sin is, so he can come back to God.”

“Exactly,” Ryan said. “Discipline in the church isn’t about rejection—it’s about healing and restoration. But sometimes, the only way to bring someone back to God is to let them face the consequences of their choices.”

The Leaven of Sin: Purging for Purity (1 Corinthians 5:6-8)

Paul continued, using the analogy of leaven, or yeast, to explain why the church needed to act decisively. “Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.” (1 Corinthians 5:6-7).

Ryan pointed to a group of bakers working with dough in the Corinthian marketplace. “Paul is using leaven as a symbol of sin. Just as a little bit of yeast affects the whole batch of dough, unchecked sin can spread through the church and affect everyone. If the church tolerates sin, it undermines their witness and their holiness.”

Ariel watched as the bakers kneaded the dough. “So, Paul is saying that sin doesn’t just stay with one person—it spreads and affects the whole church if it’s not dealt with?”

“That’s right,” Ryan said. “Paul is calling the church to purge the sin, just as they would remove leaven during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Jesus, our Passover Lamb, has made us holy, so we need to live in a way that reflects His sacrifice. Tolerating sin goes against everything Jesus died to give us—freedom from sin and a life of purity.”

Living in the World but Not of It (1 Corinthians 5:9-13)

Paul clarified his teaching about separation, explaining that he wasn’t asking believers to avoid all contact with sinners in the world. “I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: Yet

not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world.” (1 Corinthians 5:9-10).

Ryan smiled as Ariel listened carefully. “Paul is saying that Christians are called to be in the world but not of the world. We can’t avoid sinners entirely—after all, Jesus spent time with sinners to bring them to repentance. But within the church, we are called to a higher standard. The church is meant to be a community of holiness, set apart for God.”

Ariel nodded. “So, Paul isn’t saying to avoid non-Christians—he’s saying that within the church, we need to hold each other accountable to God’s standards.”

“Exactly,” Ryan said. “Paul finishes by saying that God will judge those outside the church, but within the church, we’re called to deal with sin in a way that reflects God’s holiness and love.”

Key Takeaway: Purity and Accountability in the Church

The Purpose of Discipline: Growth through Challenges

After their Time Audit experience, the Presswood family returned to their living room, where Ariel still had lingering questions about what they had witnessed. The scenes in Corinth had stirred something deep within her, and she wanted to understand more.

“Daddy,” Ariel began, her voice quiet but full of curiosity, “why does God allow difficult situations in our lives? I mean, I understand the church discipline part, but why does God let us face things that are so hard?”

Ryan smiled gently, sensing the depth of her question. He motioned for Ariel to sit beside him on the couch, and she did, her eyes fixed on his. “That’s a really important question, Ariel. God’s discipline isn’t always easy to understand, but it’s always about love. Just like Paul’s call for discipline in the Corinthian church wasn’t about punishment, God’s discipline in our lives isn’t about making us suffer—it’s about helping us grow.”

Ariel frowned slightly. “But how does letting us go through hard things make us grow?”

Ryan took a deep breath, thinking back to a time in his own life. “Let me tell you a story from when I was younger. When I first started working, I had a boss who was really strict. He would always call me out when I made a mistake, and it felt really hard at the time. I remember feeling frustrated and even embarrassed sometimes. But you know what? Over time, I realized that he wasn’t being strict because he wanted to make my life difficult—he was trying to help me become better at my job. He saw potential in me, and he wanted me to grow. It wasn’t easy, but it made me a stronger and more capable person.”

Ariel listened carefully, her expression softening. “So, God does something similar? He lets us go through hard things to help us grow?”

Ryan nodded. “Exactly. God loves us too much to let us stay where we are. He wants us to grow, to become more like Jesus. And sometimes, that means facing challenges that help us see where we need to change. Just like Paul wanted the church in Corinth to deal with sin so they could grow in holiness, God allows discipline in our lives to help us become more like Christ.”

Ariel looked down, her mind turning over what Ryan had said. “So, discipline isn’t about being mean—it’s about helping us grow closer to God?”

“Right,” Ryan said. “It’s about love. When we face difficult situations, it’s an opportunity for us to rely on God, to trust Him, and to grow in our faith. Just like a parent disciplines their child because they love them and want what’s best for them, God disciplines us because He loves us. He wants us to be the best version of ourselves—the version that reflects Jesus.”

Ariel looked up, her eyes filled with a new understanding. “So, even when things are hard, it’s because God cares about us?”

Ryan smiled, his heart swelling with pride. “That’s right, Ariel. God’s love is active, even in the most challenging times. He’s shaping us, molding us, and helping us grow. And just like Paul’s call to the church was about restoration and growth, God’s discipline is always about bringing us closer to Him.”

Ariel nodded, a sense of peace settling in her heart. “I think I understand now. Discipline is really about love—about helping us be more like Jesus.”

Ryan hugged her gently. “You’ve got it, sweetheart. God’s discipline, just like the accountability we have in our family and in the church, is all about love. It’s about helping us grow in holiness, so we can shine His light even brighter.”

Ariel smiled, feeling the weight of the lesson in her heart. “Grace, peace, and growth—even when it’s hard.”

Ryan chuckled softly. “Exactly. Grace, peace, and growth. God’s love is with us every step of the way.”

Final Thought: The Church’s Call to Holiness

In 1 Corinthians 5:1-13, Paul addresses the importance of dealing with sin in the church to preserve its holiness and witness. He calls for the removal of the unrepentant sinner, not as an act of rejection, but as a step toward restoration. Using the analogy of leaven, Paul emphasizes that sin, if unchecked, can spread and corrupt the whole community. This passage teaches us that the church must prioritize both purity and accountability, balancing firm discipline with the ultimate goal of restoration and growth in holiness.

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