

## *How to Handle Immorality – October 25, 2020*

*Introduction* — you can't make this stuff up!!! We have all heard of Gov. Mark Sanford of South Carolina, who several summers ago, told his staff that he would hike the Appalachian Trail for a few days. Secretly, he instead flew to Argentina to meet his mistress, with whom he had carried on an affair for some time. Then we heard about former senator and presidential candidate John Edwards, who had painted the picture of wedded bliss, as he and his wife of 20+ years had suffered the loss of one of their two teen-age children some years ago, which prompted them to have two more little children, who were just toddlers when he ran for vice-president in 2004. When his wife was diagnosed with breast cancer that year, great sympathies from many Americans touched their family. Unfortunately, John Edwards admitted a few months ago to having had an affair with one of his staff members, and fathering a child with her. Both marriages ended up in divorce. Adultery is one of the sins expressly forbidden in the Ten Commandments, but it seems that politicians have a hard time staying away from it. (both major parties, you will remember. )

—> Something similar happened almost 2000 years ago. The sin that Paul was writing about here was a case of a young man taking up with his dead father's second wife — not really incest, for she was not his own mother, nor was it adultery, for she was a widow. But it was the sin of fornication, or pre—marital sex; and it was his father's widow, for Pete's sake!! What did Paul want the church to do?!?

### *I. How do you handle “sin” — in the Church ?!?*

1. Paul's concerns — v. 1— 5. Paul preached that the sacrifice of Jesus struck down the “law” — the law of Moses. Paul taught that Jewish people were no longer obligated to fulfill all of the 630— some commandments in the Jewish law, found in the books of exodus, Leviticus, and numbers, or “add—on” laws based on those in Exodus, etc. Those were laws about keeping kosher kitchens, wearing certain kinds of clothes, keeping scripture verses rolled up in little boxes strapped to a man's wrist, defining and restricting work on the Sabbath, and so on.

— but Paul always stressed that Christians must follow the moral law of the Ten Commandments

— “do not steal, do not kill, do not commit adultery, etc.”

— and Paul stressed that all Christians should follow what the apostles called the “law of Christ” — “*love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength — and love your neighbor as yourself.*” (Matt. 22: 37ff. )

— this man presumed on the grace of God— he acted like the death of Jesus not only freed him from keeping all the hundreds of arcane old testament commands, but freed him from obeying any moral laws or rules, whatsoever !! — Paul said: “no way !!! We still have to fulfill God's basic commands and morality for all people ! !” Do you remember:

2. What Jesus taught — in Matthew 18: 15, Jesus taught that if a believer sinned, you should go and talk to him or her privately. If that person repents, great ! If he does not, take one or two other believers with you and confront him. If that does not help, then take it before the body of believers, and if the person still does not repent, then treat him as a “gentile” or a tax collector. This is where we get the practice of “ex—communication” or “churching” someone— dis— fellow shipping them. It is church discipline— it may seem harsh, but God wants believers to act rightly.

3. The bottom line about this scandalous man — kick him out ! ! ! V. 9— 13

*II. Dealing with sin and temptation* how do you deal with sin and temptation ? ? Two things:

1<sup>st</sup>— 1. Know the difference between harmless temptations — and real temptations to sin.

2. Eating that first— or second— dessert may be a “sin” against your diet, but it is not a sin against God!

3. If you pay any attention to the Ten Commandments, however, you know that God wants you to “honor your father and mother,” and failure to do so— is a sin.

4. Now, if your mother or mother—in—law has made that dessert, you might feel that to “honor” her, you need to eat a generous helping!! You are on your own there— I can’t give you any further advice on that ! ! !

2<sup>nd</sup> — 5. The “immoral man” in the Corinthian church presumed on the Grace of God! Because he knew that Jesus’ death paid the penalty for sin and did away with the requirement to obey hundreds of picky rules of the Jewish priests, this man Presumed that he could break all the rules !

6. He was wrong ! God never wants us to assume that, since Christ died for our sins, we can do whatever sin we want to do, because God will always forgive us in Jesus Christ.

7. Do all you can to avoid temptation, and to resist sin. At least, keep yourself out of situations where you might be tempted.

*IIIi. What do we do if we sin ? ?*

1. But — what do we do if we do give into temptation, or slip for a few minutes, and commit one or more sins??

2. The important truth is: if anyone gives into temptation, God can and will forgive us — if we confess our sins, and truly repent and tell God we turn our backs on our sins, God will forgive us !! That is the promise God makes in I John 1: 9 — “*if we confess our sin, God is faithful and just and will forgive us of our sin, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*”

3. So many people want to turn from sinful activities and hurtful actions that have strained or broken their relationships with family, loved ones, friends, and with God. They want to repair their relationships . . . .

4. Paul's message here is not about "condemnation" — it is about "reconciliation" — people who have made mistakes, people who have sinned— being reconciled to God, and to their sisters and brothers in Christ.

*Conclusion* — in a short story, Ernest Hemingway told of a Spanish father and his teenage son. The relationship between this father and son became so strained that it eventually shattered. When the rebellious son— whose name was "Paco," a common Spanish name— ran away from home, his father began a long and arduous search to find the boy. After several months of looking, the exhausted father, as a last resort, placed an advertisement in the Madrid newspaper, hoping his son would see the ad and respond to it. The ad read:

*Dear Paco, please meet me in front of the newspaper office at noon. All is forgiven. Love, father*

The next day at noon, in front of the newspaper office, were 800 boys and young men named Paco, all seeking forgiveness from their fathers. 1

God, our Heavenly Father, has sent an advertisement to planet earth, written in the life, teaching, miracles, suffering, death, and resurrection of his son, Jesus Christ. Whatever sin you may have committed — your Heavenly Father wants you to know— all is forgiven.

----->>> Come home to the Lord.