

Ordinance of Excommunication

Doctrine of Church Discipline

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Bible Text: 1 Corinthians 5:4,5
Preached on: Sunday, May 25, 2014

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We're taking a break from our exposition of the book of Titus this morning in order to draw aside and focus our attention on this portion from 1 Corinthians. Our text this morning is 1 Corinthians 5:4-5. We're taking up with the Lord's help 1 Corinthians 5:4-5, the theme is "The Ordinance of Excommunication." We read there,

4 In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, 5 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.

As those who are gathered this morning, you will be well aware of the responsibilities that fall to us in this service, the pronouncement of the censure of excommunication regarding two who have in time past dwelt among us as a brother and as a sister, and so it is my duty before God as a minister of the Gospel to instruct you from the Holy Scriptures regarding this ordinance of censure so that the pronouncement is backed by the authority of God's word where we are able to explicate and to make clear the nature of the ordinance and of all that is transpiring in that ordinance and the warrant for taking it up. As many of you will know, we have begun last month or so a series of sermons on the doctrine of church discipline and we've covered some ground already establishing the biblical basis for church discipline as a divine ordinance. We've looked at things like the love of God expressed in the chastening of his people, we've considered together the purposes of church discipline that the Lord makes clear in his word, and none of these things do I intend to review. I trust that these things are already in your heart and mind and provide some background for this particular censure, this particular act of discipline, that of greater excommunication.

So here we are, Paul is writing to the church at Corinth and scandal and unrepentant sin has broken out in their midst and he rebukes them. Paul rebukes the Corinthian church for their failure, for their failure to implement the ordinances of Christ, their failure to excommunicate this scandalous and obstinate individual. It reminds us of what we read Jesus saying in Revelation 2 and 3 where he addresses the seven churches of Asia and also rebukes them for allowing unrepentant sin of a scandalous nature to go unchecked without discipline, and the Lord threatens them corporately with chastening for their

refusal to do so, just as we see in the Old Testament law, the Lord threatening corporate chastening for the refusal to deal as God has commanded us with those who are visibly wicked.

So we're taking up this theme of the ordinance of excommunication, what we often refer to as greater excommunication. This is the highest, the most severe censure that Christ has given to his church and you can see almost immediately what it entails. The word "excommunication," if you break it apart, you have the word "communication," the same word as "communion" or "fellowship," and so the word "excommunication" means "to dis-fellowship or to put out of fellowship an individual." They are put out of fellowship with God and they're put out of, consequently, fellowship or communion with his people, all of the privileges that fall to them, as we'll soon see. So it is an act, the censure is an act of church discipline, to excommunicate a person who has formerly professed faith in the Lord Jesus.

We're going to look at three things focusing primarily on verses 4 and 5 but also bringing some help from other portions of God's word. First of all, we see the authority of excommunication. First of all, the authority of excommunication, the origin or the source of discipline must be traced back to Christ. It must be traced back to Christ himself. It is Christ who is carrying out the discipline. It is God, himself, who is disciplining an individual through the means or the instruments of his representation, the officers of his church. So Paul says in verse 4 that this is being affected "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ," and "with the power," or authority, "of our Lord Jesus Christ." And we see the same wording using elsewhere in reference to discipline. In 2 Thessalonians 3 we see him saying in verse 6, "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us."

So it is Christ, that highlights the fact that discipline is ministerial. It is not individuals acting magisterially as lords and as kings, but as servants under the Lord; serving as people and serving Christ himself. Christ is the one acting. Notice that Christ the one present in this ordinance. You go back to Matthew 18 where Jesus is laying out some of the requirements of church discipline. He concludes, having spoken about the process that is to take place and all of the spiritual ramifications associated with it, it's in that context of discipline that we find the well-known words in verse 20, "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." That verse was originally set in the context of discipline. Where God's people are gathered together in his name, Christ is in the midst of them; his presence is manifest in this ordinance.

So it is sober for us, it is sober chiefly because when this ordinance is carried out in accord with the prescriptions and word of God, it is God himself who is at work. We're taught that we should confess that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. It is God's hand, it is Christ who is working and, thus, we are obligated and encouraged to obey him and we are warned against disobeying him. We spoke on Wednesday evening several weeks ago about the fact that this is one of the marks, the

faithful administration of discipline is one of the marks of the true church and it has, therefore, an obligation that falls to us as a result.

Think about this in terms of other ordinances where we see Christ's presence. When God's word is preached faithfully, Christ is present in the ordinance of preaching so that God's sheep hear the voice of the Shepherd and follow him, the passage says. He commends the Thessalonians, "You didn't receive our word merely as the word of man but as it is in truth, the very word of God." Christ is speaking through the faithful preaching of his word. The same thing is true in the sacrament of the Supper and baptism. We often highlight this in the Supper.

Christ is spiritually present and we are, by faith, feeding upon the Lord Jesus Christ who is offering himself to us and so it is with this ordinance as well, but it also points us to the fact that we are dealing with heavenly realities. If it is Christ's authority, Christ's name, Christ's presence, there are heavenly realities that are taking place. We're not just going through administrative forms where a person is removed from a Communion roll, where a person is no longer a member of the church. It's not merely a human ordinance or an administrative exercise that we're engaged in, things are taking place in the spiritual realm, things or transactions are unfolding with the souls of men in heaven itself before the all-seeing eye of God, and this is why Jesus says in that passage we referred to a moment ago in Matthew 18:18, "Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." And this beckons back to the same sort of wording a couple of chapters earlier in chapter 16, verse 19, "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." These are heavenly transactions which are taking place before the Lord. It's interesting because this same individual in 1 Corinthians 5 was excommunicated in the name and with the authority of the Lord Jesus and ends up being recovered, as many of you will know, and there is reference made to him in 2 Corinthians 2, but I want you to notice here in terms of dealing with heavenly realities, that in 2 Corinthians 2:10, it's brought out on the other side, the side of absolution and restoration as well, "To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ."

So the point is that there are heavenly realities. We are merely confirming outwardly what is determined in heaven itself, and there have been times, as you see in this same epistle in chapter 11, when the church had failed to carry out their responsibilities in church discipline, that Christ broke into their midst and carried it out himself. You go back and look at 1 Corinthians 11:23 and following when he says, "I visited you with sickness and death because you would not judge yourselves," and therefore he calls upon them to judge themselves lest they are condemned with the world. So the authority of excommunication is rooted in Christ's authority as the King and Head of his church and there are things taking place that are more real than the reality of being able to touch our own hands and see with our own eyes.

God is at work in carrying these things out. It's a permanent ordinance for the church. There have been some who want to say, "Well, what's described in 1 Corinthians 5 was unique to the apostolic office and the apostolic authority." And there have been some, the most extreme form of this is in Rome where the pontiff, the man of sin, claims for himself the right with his own authority to damn souls and to take them out of purgatory into heaven by canonizing them and other satanic delusions and false doctrines. But it has also taken lesser forms. Is this unique and confined to the apostolic authority or in the case of Rome, their idea of the succession of that authority to the bishop of Rome? No, it would make utter nonsense of the passage because Paul is faulting them, faulting Corinth for their refusal to excommunicate this person. He says, "It fell to you and you haven't done it," and he's chastening them.

So it was not unique to the apostolic office and as I've already proved on Wednesday night, it is a permanent ordinance for the church and it's one that takes place within the corporate church itself. In verse 4 you'll notice that other phrase where it says, "when ye are gathered together." When ye are gathered together. What's happening is happening in the realm of the church. It is a corporate function, an ordinance that belongs to the whole church. You see examples of this in the Old Testament. There were civil punishments and there were ecclesiastical censures and they were distinct from one another in the Old Testament. People could be put out of the synagogue and they could be removed from the camp, and they could be, in the civil realm, they could be executed, but it was the entire body of Israel was involved in such things.

The whole of God's people participated whether it was civil or ecclesiastical in those ordinances, and the same is here as well. In Matthew 18, Jesus says, "Take it to the church," and here he's referring to the elders but it falls within the corporate church as a whole. In 1 Timothy 5, Paul highlights this in his instructions to this young minister when he says in verse 20, "Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear." So this is an ordinance which takes place when the church is gathered together. It's a public ordinance, not done in secret, not done in a closet, not hidden from the eyes of men, but carried out in the authority and name of Christ within his church.

Secondly, we see the alienation of excommunication. Secondly, the alienation of excommunication. Turn your attention to verse 5, "To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh." To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh. Now this involves several things. Let me highlight them for you. It involves, first of all, being cast out of the kingdom. It involves being cast out of the kingdom. When a person professes faith in the Lord Jesus, they and their household are taken from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of Christ and of God's beloved Son, and when those who turn unrepentant and turn from Christ, forsaking Christ, they turn from Christ back to Satan, to the kingdom of darkness. This language isn't only found here. In 1 Timothy 1, we see the same thing in verse 20, "Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme." So they are being spiritually handed over to Satan by Christ and Satan, we have the unleashed influence of Satan brought to bear upon them.

So it's being, first of all, cast out of the kingdom. Now let me just reinforce this by the context. In verse 2, it's described this way, "that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you." Do you see that? Then again in verse 13, "Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person." Again, verse 7, "Purge out therefore the old leaven." Jesus says in Matthew 18:17 that the person who is cast out of the church is to be considered "an heathen and a publican." Not a Christian, not an erring Christian, not a backslidden believer, but they are to be considered as one outside the pale of the covenant and of the church and of the kingdom of the Lord Jesus, they are to be considered and thought of as a heathen and as a publican. 1 John 2, "They go out from among you because they were not of you and thus it is manifest that they were not of you."

So there is a breach of fellowship being delivered unto Satan, being delivered, cast out of the church of the Lord Jesus and confined to the kingdom of Satan and the kingdom of darkness and this brings with it a breach of fellowship with God's people, so that in verse 11 he says, "Listen, you're not to keep company with them." He says at the end of the verse, "with such an one no not to eat." There is a breach in the fellowship with God's people and this comes out in lots of places. Titus 3:10, "A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject." They are to be rejected, the passage says. In 2 Thessalonians, we already read, chapter 3, verse 6. The same thing in verse 14, "And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note," that is, mark, identify, hang a sign, if you will, around "that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed." Likewise Romans 16:17, "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them." And avoid them and so there is a breach and there is to be no familiar fellowship with them. It's interesting that when Paul is referring back in 2 Corinthians 2, when he's referring back to this act of excommunication, he refers to it in chapter 2, verse 6, "Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many." There was a corporate responsibility that fell to the congregation of God's people. It was a punishment inflicted of many.

So following on the heels of Jesus' words, that they are to be considered a heathen and a publican, you're to think of them and to treat them as an unbeliever and not to act as if all is well. You say, "Well, what does this mean?" It means that we don't have fellowship, we don't hang out with, we don't engage in recreation, we don't engage in other informal activities like that, and when we have opportunity to speak to these people, to communicate to them even in writing or face-to-face, we're to make clear that they need to repent and our conversation is to be confined to those sorts of things. So you can picture yourself in meeting someone who has been excommunicated in the store and they might say hello and you might say hello, and you might say to them, "You know, I want to encourage you that we're sinners and that there's a Savior and we have to turn to him and to repent and flee to Christ." And they might interrupt you and say, "What are you doing? Trying to evangelize me?" And you would have to say, "Yes, I am. I'm trying to bring home the Gospel to you." To which they might reply, "Well, I may have been cast out of the church but I'm still a Christian." And you would have to reply and say, "I'm afraid not. All of your actions are contrary to a true profession of faith and, therefore,

because you refuse to obey Christ's word and to walk in accord with his truth, there is no reason for me to believe that you're a Christian and, therefore, I'm calling you to repent and to flee prior to the wrath to come."

We're not to have fellowship with them. This is reinforced everywhere, Old and New Testament. One thinks of 2 Corinthians 6 where it says in verse 15, "And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." There is a temptation because of cowardice, unbelief, awkwardness and many other things, to send mixed signals and to cloud the reality. As we've already noted, what's taking place Christ is doing. It's out of our hands in many ways, and it is a heavenly reality and we cannot, as it were, ignore these heavenly realities. We have to face them.

That also means that they're excluded from all of the privileges and promises which fall to the church of the Lord Jesus. The promises that are given to the church are not theirs. The privileges which are given to the church by Christ are not theirs. They cannot marry within the church. They cannot give their children to the administration of baptism. They are cut off from the covenant and this comes with momentous implications because God has provided for those within the external administration of his covenant and within the visible church, a truckload of blessings, protection, and many points of privilege for us and that includes everyone that is found within the household of God, both believers and their children baptized in the Triune name of God. The Lord is pleased to provide for them spiritual protection, physical protection, to provide for them all sorts of ways in which a shield would defend them, and that includes even unconverted children, baptized children within Christian families. Remember, not only was believing Noah saved but all of his household. His children were included in the protection, the shield that God provided for Noah against the torrent of his judgment upon a wicked nation. So there are many benefits that come to the people of God and to their households. This is removed. This is removed.

It's interesting, I'm not going to take the time but there are a dozen places in the Old Testament referring not to civil censure. I read purposely Leviticus 20 which is dealing primarily with civil censure because it reinforces the gravity of the sins we're discussing, how God views them and how we are to emote and think about them. But there are over a dozen places in which we have descriptions of ecclesiastical censure within the Old Testament and it uses this language of them being "taken out from the midst of you," as we see in this passage here in verse 2 and in verse 13. The same sort of language, they are taken out from the midst, all of the blessings and privileges given to the people of God are ripped away from and now they're exposed. They've been handed over, given over to Satan, and they no longer have any of that consolation. But chiefly what does this have to do with? It is a breach of fellowship with God himself. This is ultimately what's happening. There's a breach in fellowship with God which corresponds to the breach in fellowship with his people and the breach in terms of all the privileges that fall to his

people. The Lord can no longer say to them, "I am your refuge and your strength, an ever-present help in trouble." The Lord gives them no promise of his protection.

The Lord's know even angelic ministry. Hebrews 1, the end, speaks about their ministering spirits which serve the Lord's people. We see references to it everywhere, even the children referenced to their angels. We have Lazarus, the angels take his soul into the bosom of Abraham. The angels are God's servants to carry out his holy will. The angelic ministry is gone.

The excommunicated are stripped of these blessings and it's tantamount to saying this when he says, "I have given them over to Satan," he's saying, "I'm giving them over and they have no defense in body or soul against the devil." They have no defense. It is no longer said that they are "the apple of mine eye."

The first example of excommunication that we find in the Bible is in Genesis 4 in reference to Cain and there are some grave words there. In verse 11, "And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand; When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth. And Cain said unto the LORD, My punishment is greater than I can bear. Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth," and then listen to these words because this underlines what I'm saying, "and from thy face shall I be hid," and from thy face shall I be hid, "and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth." This is what is being described.

The Lord says of his people in 1 John 5:18 that the wicked one cannot touch him. The wicked one cannot touch God's people but he defends us. When the enemy comes in like a flood, he raises up a standard against him. This is removed. They are given over to Satan and it can no longer be said the wicked one cannot touch him.

He goes on to say to deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh. The destruction of the flesh. All of the calamities that are attached to the kingdom of the devil are theirs. They are a slave. Not free. Not liberated. But they abide under the bondage and tyranny of the wicked one. It is his realm that is their abode. It is his reign that they are subjected to. It is his tyranny that they suffer under and Satan, if you will, Satan is let loose, he is let loose upon them and they are exposed outwardly and they are exposed inwardly to all of the torments that the devil is pleased to bring.

One of the things that this does is it communicates in the most graphic and sobering terms that without repentance, this and more are your eternal lot. It is giving the excommunicated a foretaste, a foretaste of what is to come for those who refuse to repent of their sins because in the last day, there will be destruction without remedy. So they are caused to sip at God's own hand from this bitter cup in order that they might profit from it.

So when he says to deliver such a one for the destruction of the flesh, their body and soul are subjected to his reign and his kingdom. This is a judicial act, a judicial act of God, a

verdict that is being passed. The fact is God will not be mocked. God's glory will not be impugned. What you sow, you will surely reap. My friends, I trust that this sinks down into the depths of your very souls, what you sow, you shall surely reap. God will not give his glory to be trampled under the feet of wicked men and God will not give his church to be polluted with the defilement of unrepentant sin. The leaven will leaven the whole lump if the leaven is not removed and so the Lord says purge out the leaven in order that his church might be maintained in the purity of its Gospel testimony and faithfulness to the Lord.

There is alienation, the alienation of excommunication. What is the appropriate response of this alienation on behalf of the church? In a word, the appropriate response is to mourn. That's what the text says. Look at verse 2, "And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned." The appropriate response is that of mourning. There is, in many ways, a parallel to what we experience in a funeral where we mourn the loss of a loved one who has been taken away from among us, out of this world. These are taken away from the midst of us, put away from us. Something like a spiritual funeral and it is to be accompanied with sanctified and holy mourning. We are to exhibit what the father of the prodigal son exhibited. The father mourned over the prodigal.

It is a solemn occurrence, but my friends, there is blessing even in the mourning, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." If we are mourning biblically, appropriately, spiritually, we're mourning for the right things, God promises to make it a condition of blessing for us, and it is the opportunity for us to search our hearts. If you look at Acts 5 where the Lord brings not only spiritual but temporal judgment upon Ananias and Sapphira, the response is telling because in verse 11 it says, "And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things." There is a godly fear that ought to be struck deep into our very souls where we are taught that our God is a consuming fire; that when we come to the public worship of God and sit under the preaching, it is no trifle, and what we do in response to that word, either receiving it with faith or unbelief, and whether we persevere by God's grace, walking in his word not only being hearers or doers, is no trifle. God is in the midst of us and he is working his holy will and our souls hang in the balance and heaven and earth is being set, heaven and hell is being set before us and we ought to be searching our hearts with contrition for our own sin in light of these things, facing reality of where sin that is unmortified leads and what the result will be.

No one starts off down that road thinking about the end, where it all goes. So it is with you, every last one of you, entertaining sin, striking peace, a truce with sin. You think about the immediate gratification and fleeting pleasures that it brings and you are not pondering with godly fear where that will lead because it is one step after another ultimately culminating in the highest censure of his church, greater excommunication, and without repentance, damnation and hell.

We ought to search our hearts but there's also some expectation that we receive from the Lord. In 2 Corinthians 7, Paul says in response to this, 1 Corinthians 5, "You mourned. You sorrowed not as the world sorrows, you sorrowed with godly sorrow." And he then

lists the fruitfulness that came from their mourning. He says, "You've had multiplied spiritual blessing to the entire church that has come about. Everyone has profited. This has been a season of tremendous spiritual fruitfulness for the whole church in Corinth," he says, "as well as for the recovery of the one who is excommunicated."

You go back to that Acts 5 passage, you'd think to yourself, "Well, the Lord breaking out in the midst of his church, striking people dead in the worship where they are carried out of the worship of God? Surely this is the opposite of church growth," and it's true that it warned the unruly and ungodly but go on to look further. It says in verse 13 on the one hand, "And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them." People were recognizing, "This is serious business. We can't be glib about membership in the church of Christ and attachment to his kingdom." But it goes on and it says, "And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women." The Lord brought about an explosion, if you will, of church growth through these means, blessings that humanly speaking you would think it would result in the opposite. The Lord is getting honor and glory for himself in these ordinances.

So the alienation of excommunication, pondering the fact that they're cut off from God, cut off from the privileges that belong to the visible church, cut off from the fellowship of God's people, given over to the kingdom of Satan, Satan being let loose to torment them, without any refuge and any hope in body and soul, all of these weighty things ought to lead us to mourn and if we're not mourning, something is not right with our own hearts. Thirdly, we see the aim of excommunication. Thirdly, the aim of excommunication.

Go back to our text, 1 Corinthians 5, the second half of verse 5, "that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." This is part of the aim, "that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." In other words, we are not without hope. The word "that" is pointing to purpose, saying this is part of the aim of excommunication. We saw it in 1 Timothy 1:20 which is the closest parallel to this passage speaking of Hymenaeus and Alexander, he says, "whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme." So the purpose was to humble them. In 1 Corinthians 11:32 he says, "Judge yourselves that you wouldn't be condemned with the world." And we know that there's hope because this was effected, this man who was excommunicated ended up being recovered and absolved and restored to the church. 2 Corinthians 2:6-8, "Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many. So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him," and so on. We are not without hope. The Lord may be pleased according to his sovereign will to use greater excommunication, delivering a person unto Satan for the destruction of their flesh, he may be pleased to use that in order to recover them; to bring them to see the gravity of what they have done; to terrify them in conscience and in mind and in body with all that has taken place; to break them and humble them and to drive them by Gospel repentance to the Lord Jesus.

So we can pray for their recovery, that God would be pleased to bring this to pass. There is sometimes confusion on this point because greater excommunication is not identical to

the sin unto death of which the Lord says we cannot pray for such individuals. There is a difference between greater excommunication and, for example, the descriptions in Hebrews 6 and chapter 10 and so on. The confusion comes because they can overlap. A person who sins the sin unto death, a person who is guilty of Hebrews 6, Hebrews 10, can also be excommunicated and so the same person can fall into both buckets, but it is not necessarily the case that a person who is excommunicated is equivalent to Hebrews 6, Hebrews 10, 1 John, sin unto death category. It is not necessarily the case and so there can be sometimes confusion on this. Here we're told "that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." This man, indeed, was brought to repentance. In 2 Thessalonians 3:14, he's saying don't have fellowship, "that they may be shamed." It's to humiliate them. "I'm cut off from God and from the privileges of the church and fellowship of his people. What have I done? This is spiritual suicide. I have leapt, as it were, headlong into hell!" Therefore, they are to be brought to shame in these things.

"The spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus," and the Christian, while the Christian is not to hold fellowship, there are civil and familial responsibilities with remain intact, obligations and duties that you may have to a person because of a family tie, but nothing more even in those circumstances. All fellowship is to be cut off. Loving the Lord Jesus Christ means at times hating father and mother, sister and brother, son and daughter, and allegiance to Jesus, supreme allegiance to Jesus means at times being cut off from those who are near of kin to us.

The Christian is still to show Christian kindness to everyone. It's no reason to physically abuse or disrespect a person anymore than we would anyone else. We're to deal in Christian temperance and kindness with them but there is a breach and the breach is healed through the means God has ordained. There are people who think, "I'll smooth things over. I'll play nice. I'll kind of make it not so awkward and aggravated and this will help build a bridge," in order to somehow win them back. You have played the fool. You have sought an end through unbiblical means. That is not the means God has ordained through which they are to be recovered. The means through which they are to be recovered is God's way and it is following the ordinances that God has ordained.

Now we recognize that this is all open to the sovereign disposal of God to do as he sees fit. 1 Timothy 5:24, "Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after." And the Lord may do various things through this ordinance. It gives them, no doubt, a foretaste of the judgment to come and in some instances it will harden the person in their sin and the Lord is using it to heap judgment upon their head. The censure itself is used to harden them and to deepen and to further extend the fury of his wrath and judgment upon them. So for some it will harden them, for others it will heal them. They see, "This is the torment I deserve and, therefore, I must repent and go to the Lord." But God's ordinances regardless of the outcome whether to salvation or to damnation, just as in preaching, it's a savor of life unto life and a savor of death unto death, so the ordinances of discipline are a savor of life unto life and a savor of death unto death but God's ordinances must not be profaned or defiled. We must not expose the Gospel to contempt and we must be conscious that a little leaven does, indeed, leaven the whole lump.

In Hebrews 12:15 he says, speaking about the root of bitterness which springs up, he says, "by which many may be defiled." Many are defiled. We've noted this already. I preached a whole sermon on the purposes of discipline in which we fleshed some of these things out in more detail. It is to deter wickedness among God's people. You see it in the Old Testament as well, Deuteronomy 13:11, "And all Israel shall hear, and fear, and shall do no more any such wickedness as this is among you." It deters the people of God, the professing people of God from such sins. So the prodigal is brought to his senses and what happens? He's brought to the end in the pig trough when he would fain have eaten the swine's husk, he remembers his father's house and he returns. He's left the father's house, alienated, he remembers it in that slough and returns. Paul is saying it may be that God will be pleased though they suffer under severe spiritual chastisements that in the end the spirit may be saved in the last day, in the day of the Lord Jesus Christ. So we see something of the aim of excommunication. They are not without hope. We can earnestly wait upon the Lord that their spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

So here we see something of the nature of this ordinance of greater excommunication and we see the realities that are involved in it; we see all of the implications both for individuals that are excommunicated as well as for the people of God as a whole; we see the purposes that God intends in it; and all of this is grave and all of this is sober and in some ways it chills us, sending tingles up and down our spine when we have to face the music of all that we are engaged in, and yet we do so not after the wisdom of men but with confidence, with faith, with obedience to the word of God and the wisdom of God that he might have all of the glory and honor and praise among us. May the Lord help us as we meditate upon these things.

Morning WORSHIP SERVICE

Afternoon WORSHIP SERVICE

Sermon NOTES

- Call to Worship
- Singing of God's Word
Psalm 96:4-9
Tune: Manchester, #84

***Prayer**

- Singing of God's Word
Psalm 31:13-18
Tune: Eden, #55

- Reading of God's Word
Leviticus 20

- Singing of God's Word
Psalm 31:19-24
Tune: St. Lawrence, #117

- Reading of God's Word
1 Corinthians 5

- Preaching of God's Word
"Ordinance of Excommunication"
1 Corinthians 5:4, 5

***Prayer**

- Pronouncement of Censure

- Singing of God's Word
Psalm 94:1-15
Tune: Torwood, #140

***Benediction**

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*Congregation Standing

- Call to Worship
- Singing of God's Word
Psalm 97:1-7
Tune: St. Andrew, #105

***Prayer**

- Singing of God's Word
Psalm 32:1-5
Tune: Eden, #55

- Reading of God's Word
Isalah 11

- Singing of God's Word
Psalm 32:6-11
Tune: St. Peter, #125

- Reading of God's Word
James 3

- Preaching of God's Word
"Heavenly Wisdom"
Daniel 2:14-30

***Prayer**

- Singing of God's Word
Psalm 97:8-12
Tune: Huddersfield, #76

***Benediction**

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*Congregation Standing

THIS WEEK

Prayer Meeting: Wednesday at 7:00 p.m.
Street Preaching: Friday at 12:00 p.m.

NEW PSALM TUNE FOR JUNE

Pembroke, #100

PSALMODY CLASS

Everyone is invited to join us for a psalmody class at 3:30 p.m. after the second service today. Mr. Ervin will introduce the four parts to our new tune and thereby assist us in improving the skillfulness of our praise.

REFORMED READERS

The Reformed Readers discussion class will meet next Sabbath at 3:30 p.m. We will be covering the last section of Thomas M'Crie's book, *The Unity of the Church*. Everyone is invited to attend.

PSALMS AND TUNES FOR NEXT SABBATH

Sabbath morning service:

Psalm 3:1-8 Tune: Martyrdom, #85
Psalm 33:1-7 Tune: Pembroke, #100
Psalm 33:8-14 Tune: Peterissham, #154
Psalm 92:12-15 Tune: Effingham, #56

Sabbath afternoon service:

Psalm 142:1-7 Tune: Walsall, #142
Psalm 33:15-22 Tune: Pembroke, #100
Psalm 34:1-10 Tune: St. Matthew, #157
Psalm 76:8-12 Tune: Martyrs, #86

QUOTE

"The proper inward effect that accompanies this ordinance (excommunication) is inward affliction and distress of conscience by Satan, which of all afflictions is the greatest punishment. . . . This we see in the excommunication of the Corinthian, whose excommunication is said to be a delivering up unto Satan in the name of the Lord Jesus (1 Cor. 5:4ff). He was to be cast out by a commission from Christ, which going forth in his name, when they published it on earth, he signed it in heaven."

By: Thomas Goodwin (17th century English Puritan)

SCHEDULE

Sunday Morning Worship	10:00 AM
Catechism Class	11:45 AM
Sunday Fellowship Lunch	
Sunday Afternoon Worship	1:30 PM
Wednesday Prayer Meeting	7:00 PM

We encourage everyone to quietly prepare his heart for worship before the beginning of each worship service, as this befits the glory of the God with whom we meet.

There is a meal following the morning worship service. We cordially invite our visitors to join us in this opportunity for Christian fellowship and spiritual conversation.

Offerings are collected on the literature table.

OUR CHURCH

We are a congregation of the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing), which has a presbytery in North America. The Free Church traces its historical roots back to the Protestant Reformation in Scotland, which began in 1560. The same biblical truths and spiritual identity have been maintained to the present day. Our doctrinal standards are the original 17th century version of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* and *Larger and Shorter Catechisms*. Further detailed information about our doctrine, worship, government, and practice are available on the book table and in the church library.

LIVE SERVICES

Via Telephone: Call 712.432.0370. When prompted enter the passcode 838651. Push the # key. Use the speaker phone feature.

Via Sermon Audio (www.sermonaudio.com/greenvillefc/): Click on "Live Webcasts."
Via Church Website (www.greenvillepresbyterian.com/): Click on "Watch Live!"

CONTACT INFORMATION

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- www.SermonAudio.com/greenvillefc
- Church website:
- www.GreenvillePresbyterian.com
- Denomination website:
- www.fccontinuing.org
- Presbytery website
- www.WestminsterConfession.org



GREENVILLE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Free Church of Scotland (Continuing)

MAY 25, 2014