

# How to deal with adultery in the church?

**Scripture: 1 Corinthians 5:1-13**

Please imagine the following situation: Suppose one day you were shopping in a CD store and saw one of your group members holding a stack of pornographic CDs and waiting in line at the checkout counter to pay, but he did not notice you. What would you do if you face this situation? Will you pretend nothing has happened? Should you tell other group members about this matter, or deal with this group member in person?

Let's assume that there is a brother in your group who is very promiscuous. He was dating a sister in the church and they had sex. But not long after, the brother abandoned her, turning to pursue another sister, and then had sex with that sister. The sister abandoned was very sad, so she looked for someone to talk to. The matter then spread in the church, and almost everyone knew about it. How will you deal with this after you know about it? What kind of mentality should we have? What actions should be taken?

The Hong Kong church today is facing an increasingly serious problem: fornication is becoming more and more common in the church. The story I just told is not fictional; it actually happened, and similar things often happen in the church. Like Corinth, Hong Kong is a place where pornography is rampant. In such an environment and social atmosphere, it is definitely not an easy task to keep oneself holy in terms of sexuality.

When adultery occurs in the church, how should we deal with it? In 1 Corinthians 5, we see the proper attitude and steps to take in dealing with fornication in the church!

## **1. Attitude—Be Mournful (v. 2)**

There was a man in the Corinthian church who had an abnormal relationship with his stepmother. Not only did the church not help him escape from his sin, but it condoned him and acted as if nothing had happened. Therefore, Paul rebuked them: "But you are puffed up with pride, and do not mourn to put away the man who has done this deed from among you" (v. 2). When faced with adultery happening in the church, we should mourn.

We not only mourn for the person who committed the sin, because he not only offended the Lord but also hurt himself; we should also mourn for the church, because such things could happen in the church, which shows that there is negligence in discipleship, so that some

brothers actually committed such sins. This is not only the brother's sin, but also the church's sin, because this sin could happen in the church and all the people in the church are responsible.

The attitude should be neither permissive nor punitive, as both attitudes are extreme. We mourn for the person involved and for the church!

## **2. Step 1: Public sins should be dealt with publicly, and private sins should be dealt with privately**

Not all sins need to be dealt with publicly. Public sins are dealt with publicly, and private sins privately.

Now let us look at the adultery that occurred in the church in Corinth. Paul said in v.1: "It is reported that there is sexual immorality among you." This matter has long been known to everyone. The sinners are blatant and refuse to repent. This matter has even reached the ears of Paul who was not among them. It is obvious that this was already a common knowledge. It was no longer a private matter, but had become a public sin. Therefore, it must be dealt with immediately and publicly without delay! In v.4 Paul proposed to exercise Jesus' authority in the meeting to enforce church discipline on that person. Dealing with it in a gathering means dealing with it publicly.

Why should public sins be dealt with publicly? Sin is like leaven in bread-making; a little leaven makes the whole dough rise.(v.6) Leaven represents sin. Sin is contagious. If the church has no stance on public sin and turns a blind eye, this attitude of condoning sin will soon pollute others, causing the entire church to lower its standard of holiness and lose its influence as salt and light.

## **3. Step 2: Expel those who are hard-hearted and unrepentant from the church**

Why should unrepentant people be expelled from the church? The answer is in v.5 "Such a person should be handed over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."

To expel that person from the church is to hand that person over to Satan, to treat him as a Gentile, and to cut off any relationship with him. Paul said that we should not even eat with

such a person.(v.11) Why so repulsive? For those who refuse to repent and still indulge themselves in sin, no matter how many opportunities you give them, they will not turn back. If they are willing to turn back earlier, there will be no need to take this step. Many times, people will only turn back after they have suffered and encountered setbacks, like the prodigal son in the Bible.

This is the hard side of love. In order to get you back, I would rather lose you temporarily, hoping that after you encounter setbacks, you will realize your mistakes and know how to turn back. This is the purpose of expelling hard-hearted and unrepentant people from the church.

### **Discussion Questions:**

Discuss the two examples given at the beginning of the article. What attitude will we take? How should we face the parties involved? What actions should be taken?