

# On dealing with offence

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 27 January 2019

Preacher: Nick Louw

[ 0 : 00 ] You know when you have that drawer full of wires and headphones and things, and eventually over time, I don't know how it happens, they all just get intertwined.

You know what I'm talking about? And you have to actually spend half a day just sort of unraveling all these stupid wires just so you can use them. I think this morning's passage is kind of like that. That it's quite a complicated, long passage. There's a lot of stuff going on, and we need to therefore concentrate this morning, focus our minds, so that I can hopefully unravel a lot of what's going on and we can hear what God is saying through this passage to us.

I want to start by asking you, how do you react when someone offends you? How do you react when someone offends you? Do you defend yourself? Or do you just let it slide and say, it's never mind?

What's your reaction, typically, when you feel offended by someone? Or when someone falsely accuses you of doing something that you didn't do, how do you react? Do you say nothing?

[ 1 : 03 ] Or do you fight it to defend yourself? It's interesting how people throughout history, in fact, have reacted differently to being offended. I was actually listening to a part of a lecture by Professor Jonathan Haidt.

He's a social psychologist. You get those, social psychologists. Just like psychologists analyze what's going on in your brain and study that and work it out. So social psychologists, their job is to analyze what's going on in society and to work out why people do what they do in different societies and different cultures.

Anyway, Professor Jonathan Haidt is a social psychologist, and he's studied these different trends over history and how much culture has changed in how we deal with being offended.

So I watched, as I say, part of this lecture, and he says this. Back in the day, you predominantly had an honor culture in society up until about the 1800s.

And basically, it went like this. It was quite simple, in fact. If someone offended you in an honor culture, you shot them. Okay, well, it wasn't that simple. But you challenged them to a duel.

[ 2 : 11 ] If they offended you, gentlemen did this. In civilized society, it was totally acceptable that if you got offended, you would challenge the person to a duel. I take exception to that, sir. I challenge you.

You know, you could see that in those old period movies. And if they didn't apologize, you would have to duel them. You'll have to have a shootout where you've got some gentlemen watching making sure it's fair.

Because you couldn't lose honor in an honor culture. Honor was the currency of society. And you could just not let someone take your honor away. It was that important.

And so, as you'd expect, people thought twice before saying anything that offended someone else, especially if that someone else was a good shot. Anyway, that's, in fact, as you carry on in history, that slowly faded out as, you know, shooting people became less socially acceptable.

And it was replaced in the 1800s and 1900s by essentially the opposite. It was called a dignity culture. And what's important in a dignity culture, and by the way, this is the culture most of us, I think, have grown up in.

[ 3 : 15 ] And so, we don't realize that it's actually a cultural way of doing things because we've never seen anything else. We haven't grown up in an honor culture where you shoot people. We've grown up in a dignity culture which is not reacting when you're offended.

In fact, you have more dignity and you're a stronger person if you do nothing when you're offended. So, what's valued in a dignity culture is having a thick skin, being able to shrug off insults and not react to them.

That's what's important. You know, it's encapsulated in the phrase that I'm sure you heard. Your parents probably taught you, sticks and stones will break my bones, but words will never hurt me. And that's how people were raised to think. And yet, while that does sound dignified, and while we all agree with that, I think, because that's the time and the culture we grew up in, it doesn't quite work because words do hurt us, don't they?

We like to say words will never hurt me, but actually, sometimes words hurt and have a lasting pain. The things that other people say, it's not as easy as just shrugging them off.

[ 4 : 21 ] We've inevitably got to deal with offense somehow when it comes our way. A deal with hurtful things people say, but how do we deal with them in a dignity culture? Well, what social psychologists have discovered, now this is fascinating, in the last few years only, very recent development in culture, there's a third type of culture that is coming in and replacing dignity culture.

And that is what is commonly called victim culture. And you'll notice, in today's world, people are getting really easily offended. In fact, they take pride in getting offended. Have you noticed that in social media and the news?

And it's all of a sudden, within the last decade or two, offense, people just get offended at anything. And that's because victim culture is essentially a return to honor culture.

You see, people have realized dignity culture doesn't work because I am offended by words. I've got to react somehow. And so they're returning to honor culture, but with one major difference. And that is when you get offended by someone else in victim culture, instead of challenging that offender yourself to a duel or something else, instead of that, you demand the authorities to challenge them for you.

As long as you fall into some or other victim category. And you can make up what you're a victim of. Everybody's a victim of something today because they want the authorities to deal with the people that offend them.

[ 5 : 41 ] Whoever offends you must be punished by someone else. That's the idea in victim culture. And so you'll see in today's society increasingly being a victim of some sort is the in thing.

It's a new type of dignity that people have when they're a victim of something or other. A victim of someone's bigotry or a victim of someone's offensive statements. But I want to say I think it's a very dangerous trend that we're seeing in society.

And social psychologists agree it's actually a veiled return to social Marxism. Where the state enforces what you're allowed to do or say. And when there's no longer such thing as free speech, which we see being eroded today, even now in countries.

Enforcing what people are and aren't allowed to say. So it's a very dangerous trend, this victim culture. It's worth being aware of. Anyway, I don't want to get into a political lecture because that's not what the pulpit is for. But what I do want you to see is how over time different cultures have reacted differently to being offended.

And I want you to think about how you react when you are offended. Think back to the last time you felt offense by someone else. It probably won't take long. Because we tend to feel insulted and offended.

[ 6 : 56 ] We're in a sinful world. We do offend other people and they offend us even without intending it. How do you react to that? How do you react to being offended? Or worse, when someone falsely accuses you of something.

Do you blow up? Do you bottle it in? What do you do? And the reason I ask that is because what we'll discover in this morning's passage in 2 Corinthians, what we'll discover is that there is another way to react to offense or false accusation.

Other than the honor way and other than the dignity or the victim way. And that is the Christian way. There is a Christian way to react to being offended and being falsely accused.

And the Christian way is neither to ignore the offense nor is it to defend your honor in face of the offense.

Because what we'll see is in what Paul writes to the Corinthians here, we see an example of a Christian reaction to being treated unjustly and being offended and being unfairly accused.

[ 8 : 03 ] Because that's the situation that we find ourselves in this letter that he writes to the Corinthian church. Because the Corinthians had treated Paul unfairly and it's in this section of his letter that he responds to that unfair treatment.

Now, to understand what's going on in this rather complex passage, you need to get a bit of background. You need to understand the situation, the background situation, which I'll summarize really quickly.

Basically, Paul visited the Corinthian church after writing the first letter to the Corinthians. Because he wanted to see how they were doing. But it turns out that after he wrote that letter and then a little bit later he visited them, there were a lot of opponents to him.

He arrived there and suddenly he found a lot of enemies, a lot of critics who were criticizing what he had written in his first letter. There was a whole group of people and there was a ringleader apparently.

And when Paul was there, they persuaded the rest of the church to reject Paul. And they had this big public confrontation and Paul left Corinth on really bad terms with the Corinthian church.

[9:10] Now, this visit when he visited Corinth, it was the first of two visits that he had planned to make when he was in the area. But because of what happened in this first visit, he didn't come back for the second visit.

Instead, he decided to go off back to Ephesus and write a letter to the church after thinking about it. It's always a good policy, isn't it? Not to, you know, when we're in a confrontation with someone, just cool off a little bit.

Cool off. And what he decided to do was cool off, go back and write a letter, a considered letter to these Corinthians. But it was a harsh letter because he refers to it in 2 Corinthians.

He refers to this letter that he wrote in between these two books as the severe letter or the painful letter. That's what he calls it. Because in it, he was telling the Corinthians what they needed to do to rectify the situation.

And then later on, Titus, who was Paul's colleague, came and he had visited the Corinthians since. He told Paul, listen, they got your letter and they've listened to you. They've responded to it and they've got rid of the troublemakers.

[10:11] And that, of course, was a great relief. And yet, despite that, the rest of the Corinthians, who still remain in the church, still had some nagging doubts about this guy called Paul. They still weren't quite sure that he was the real deal and whether they should listen to him or not.

And that is what he writes 2 Corinthians to address. They're nagging doubts about him as an apostle. That's one of the major points of 2 Corinthians. And you won't understand, therefore, what 2 Corinthians is about unless you understand that background situation.

So I hope that makes sense to you so far. Now, one of the reasons the Corinthians still had nagging doubts about Paul, we saw last week, was because he suffered. And they didn't think that a messenger of God should suffer.

They thought that that disqualified him from being a legitimate messenger of God. But Paul, therefore, in the first passage we saw last time and in our growth groups, had to explain that suffering was actually part and parcel of being an apostle.

It's actually what qualified him as an apostle of Christ Jesus who suffered for us. And so that's the first thing. He explains why. He explains away that doubt that they had.

[11:18] But there is another reason that the Corinthians doubted him that he addresses in this passage this morning. And that is that they thought that he was unreliable and dishonest.

And the reason they thought this is because he didn't come back that second time for that visit, which he promised he would. Well, he said he was planning to. He didn't so much promise he would. And so they say, Paul, you're unreliable.

You didn't keep your word. And so here now he defends against that accusation. Now that you know the situation, let's see how Paul goes about responding to these accusations.

So from verse 12, he says, Now this is our boast. Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world and especially in our relations with you with integrity and godly sincerity.

So here he's defending his integrity, his reputation, first by appealing to his own conscience, saying, listen, our conscience is clear. If there's a problem, the problem is with you, Corinthians, not with me.

[12:20] Not that conscience is always a brilliant way of working out whether we're right or wrong because our consciences can be affected by sin. But Paul's conscience was pretty useful.

And so that's the first reason he says that, you know, the accusations are unfair. But then he goes, he doesn't stop there. He goes on to explain his travel plans, goes into some details about his travel

plans to explain to the Corinthians why he did what he did.

So he starts in verse 16. I wanted to visit you on my way to Macedonia and to come back to you from Macedonia and then to have you send me on my way to Judea.

Was I fickle when I intended to do this? Or do I make my plans in a worldly manner so that in the same breath I say both yes, yes and no, no? Okay, so let me tell you what he's saying here.

Basically, he's saying that the first time when he told the Corinthians he was going to visit them twice, not just once, that itself was a change of his original plan.

[13:22] So he says, listen, you know, I was going to go through Corinth, but now I've changed my plans to come back to you for a second visit. And he's saying, you didn't have any problems with that change of plan.

You didn't call me fickle or dishonest then, so why are you now calling me fickle and dishonest when I change my plans again? So he's just showing the Corinthians inconsistency in what they were accusing Paul of.

But now let's stop right there. And let me guess, right now you're saying, so what? I've come to church to learn about God, to learn how to live in a God-honoring way, to learn how to live out the gospel.

Why get so hung up on Paul's travel arrangements? Why may I waste my time on Sunday morning and waste so much ink in the Bible talking about Paul's travel plans? Come on. Because it seems that Paul takes a lot of effort here to defend himself, doesn't it?

It seems that he's quite insistent. Even that it's such a seemingly petty thing, his travel plans and why he didn't come back on the second visit. You know, and those of us brought up in a dignity culture wonder, why doesn't he just brush it off?

[14:30] Just move on, Paul. Sticks and stones, Paul. But you see, you can't really understand this passage and its relevance to us unless you understand why Paul is so adamant to defend himself here.

And he goes on to explain that in verse 18. So that's the structure of the passage. He defends himself, and halfway through, he explains why he has to defend himself and his reputation.

Have a look from verse 18. But as surely as God is faithful, our message to you is not yes and no. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, by me and Silas and Timothy, was not yes and no.

But in him, it has always been yes. For no matter how many promises God has made, they are yes in Christ. And so through him, the amen is spoken by us to the glory of God.

Okay, now it's starting to get interesting. Because what Paul is doing is that he's connecting the fact that he is not unreliable in his travel plans. And he had every right to change his plans.

[15:34] That doesn't make him unreliable. He's connecting that with the fact that God is not unreliable in the gospel. But why is he doing that? Why is he taking this so seriously?

Well, because of who he is. He is a messenger of the gospel. He is an apostle. He is someone who has been commissioned to take the most important message the world has ever heard to the Gentiles.

To these people. To these Corinthians. And so he knows. These people aren't going to trust his message. If they can't trust the messenger.

Do you see why he's making such a big thing of this? That's the reason he's defending his own reputation here. Because he's defending the gospel's reputation. The reputation of a messenger of the gospel.

Affects the reputation of the gospel itself. That's the principle. And he wants people to know. Adamantly. And he's at pains to make sure people know.

[16:32] They can trust his message. They can trust the gospel. Because if you can't trust the gospel. What can you trust in this unreliable world. Full of untrustworthy people.

You see. Paul wants the Corinthians to know. And God wants you and I to know this morning. That in the gospel. God is not unreliable. God does not change his mind.

If you've been saved. From your sins. Through trusting in Jesus. Who took those sins for you. If you really believe that. And you've been saved through that. And your sins have been taken away.

Then when you die. And you find yourself face to face with God. It's not like he's going to say. Oh you know what? I've changed my mind. Jesus didn't die for your sins anymore. It doesn't count. And that would be horrifying.

Wouldn't it? If he did. If God changed his mind. If God at one moment. In the whole of history. Decided to change his mind. We would be doomed.

[17:32] If he was like one of us. Basically. We would be doomed. Because we change our minds. Don't we? We. We. We say. We make promises. And we don't keep them. We. We say we're going to do one thing.

And we do another thing. We even say we're going to do one thing. When we intend in our minds. To do another thing. We're completely unreliable. Human beings. And we're so used to unreliability. That we just. Account for it. But you know what? Paul is making the point. Sure. God is not like that. God is never unreliable. When he makes a promise. He keeps it. Through to eternity. And he doesn't. Change his mind.

And the whole Christian hope. Depends on the fact. That God is reliable. And we should praise. And glorify God. Because he is reliable. That is one of his attributes.

That he wants us to know. And to rest in. He is completely. Utterly trustworthy. And that is. One thing you can know for sure. You can rely on his words.

[18:26] More than anything. You can rely on in this world. You can't really rely. On anything in this world. But you can rely on the words of God. In the Bible. That is the only. 100% reliable thing.

That you have. In your life. Don't forget that. And so you see. Paul didn't want the Corinthians. To lose their trust. In his words. Because they failed to trust.

Him. They didn't want. He didn't want them to lose their trust. In God's message. That he is completely reliable. In the gospel message. That if you believe this. You will be saved. He didn't want them to lose their trust. In that.

Based on. What they thought of him. And that's why. He's at pains. To defend himself. And to protect his reputation. For his sake. He is protecting his reputation.

For the Corinthians. Sake. Not. For his own. Misplaced sense of pride. That's not what's motivating him here. He wants them to trust. Him.

[19:23] For their sake. So you know. The rescue worker. Who comes down on a zip line. And comes to rescue a little girl. Who's trapped in a dark cavern.

He comes down. And she's there. And she's scared. And she doesn't know what to do. And he holds out his hand. And he says. Grab my hand. You can trust me. You can trust me.

Grab my hand. Because he wants to convince her. That he's trustworthy. Not for his sake. As the rescuer. But for her sake. She needs to know. That the rescuer is trustworthy. If she's going to be rescued.

We need to know. That God. And his messengers. Are trustworthy. And the Bible is trustworthy. If we're going to be rescued. From our sins. And so that's kind of Paul's motivation here.

His reputation matters. Because of the importance. Of the message he carries. So how does that apply to us? Besides. The fact that we must make sure.

[20:17] We are relying on the gospel. And the words of the Bible. And the fact is that these words. Have been transmitted. And preserved by God. They're not unreliable. So don't listen to those people.

Who come and say. Oh the Bible has changed over years. It hasn't. You can prove it. They're just talking rubbish. So that's the one application. That we must. If we want. To experience the benefits of the gospel.

We have to believe. That the way the gospel. Has been given to us. We have to believe. The authority of the message. The Bible itself. What we think about the Bible. Is vital to our salvation. But more than that. Just as. Paul's reputation matters. Because of the importance of his message. In the same way. If you're a Christian.

Your reputation to outside matters. Because of the importance of your message. That you carry to this world. You see as Christians. As members of the church. Our primary. Reason that we're here.

[21:16] Is because we bear a message. The most important message. The world has ever heard. And the reputation of our message. Actually. Is affected by our reputation. How outsiders view us.

Our conduct. Has to match our message. In other words. If we talk about. For example. The transforming power of the gospel. But then our friends. Hear us sharing dirty jokes.

Or seeing us living the same way. The same worldly life. We've always lived. Well then how can we expect them. To really believe our message. Our conduct. And how outsiders see us.

As Christians. Is vitally important. For them to hear. And believe our message. And that's why. That's what Paul is. Is realizing. That's why he has to defend himself. Okay. So that explains. Why Paul is saying. These things. But that still doesn't answer. The question. Why did he actually. Change his mind. I mean. He said to the Corinthians. He was going to come back. That second time.

[ 22 : 15 ] So why didn't he. It's a good question. Isn't he unreliable. And so. What he does. In the rest of the passage now. Is that he goes on.

To explain that decision. Of not visiting them. A second time. And. It's important. To take note of. Because. We learn another major lesson. In. In this. About how Christians. Should respond. To those who falsely accuse us. Because look at what he says next. Verse 23. So. Now that he's gone through. This explanation. Of his importance.

As the messenger of the gospel. He goes back to. Defending his travel plans. And he says. I call God as my witness. And I stake my life on it. That it was in order to spare you.

That I did not return to Corinth. Okay. So. He sees this as really important. Based on the words he's using. He makes the most firm affirmation. He can think of. As God is my witness.

[ 23 : 08 ] It reminds me actually. Of growing up. You had. As a child. We had different levels. Of making a promise. You know.

And to my first was. I promise. Then the second was. I promise. I cross my heart. And the third. The most sacred. Was. Cross my heart. And hope to die. You know. That was. You know. You couldn't. Possibly say something false. If that's what you said. So Paul's kind of doing that here. He's using the most sacred promise. He can. And he's saying. Listen. Corinthians. If you're going to believe one thing. Believe this. I made that decision.

Not to visit you again. For your own good. Because if I had come back right away. I would have walloped you. And I would have had every right to do so. I would have brought down the full force. Of my apostolic authority. And it wouldn't have been pretty. And you probably wouldn't have made it. It would have cut you off. From God's people. It would have ended you. You see. Often we think of Paul as this.

[ 24 : 05 ] Kind of. I don't know. What your image of Paul is. But this guy. Stick in these. These rags. He's been to prison a few times. And he's really gentle. And he's. He's really loving to his people.

As you can see in his letter. But actually. While that's true. He had. God's authority behind him. He didn't often. Have to use it.

But he had it all the same. Because he was God's. Apostle. God's messenger. He bore God's authority. And he was able. To judge. And cut people off. From God's church.

If they didn't listen to him. But he. Over and over again. He refrained from using that authority. Like he did here. He knew.

Even though he had every right. To do that. To go there. And lay down the judgment on them. He knew it wouldn't have been. For their best. To do that.

[ 25 : 00 ] You see. Even though the Corinthians. Had been so nasty to him. He was still thinking of their eternal good. What's best for them in eternity. And so he rather chose to write them a letter.

To try fix this relationship. Instead of cut the relationship off. Rather than exercise his rights. He chose the much harder. Messier road.

Of reconciliation. Reload. In fact he writes. If you have a look in your Bibles. In chapter 2 verse 4. He writes about that harsh letter. He sent them.

He writes this. I wrote you. Out of great distress. And anguish of heart. And with many tears. Not to grieve you. But to let you know the depth of my love for you.

He. This was tough love. Okay. He wrote them this harsh letter. But as he was writing it. As he was saying these. These hard things. The Corinthians needed to hear. He was crying. That's what he says here.

[ 25 : 57 ] And he is doing it. He was writing. These harsh things. Because he loved them. We live in a world that says. Oh no. If you love someone. You'll never say something harsh to them. Because we live in a victim culture.

But that's not Paul. You see. Paul. Knows. The best thing for these people to hear. Is these severe and harsh words. That he has to. He has to bring them. Because only that will change them.

Only that will truly reconcile him to them. You see. He went through all of this. And these tears. And this pain. Of the messiness. Of talking about stuff that.

You know. We would normally just sweep under the carpet. He went through all of that. Because he saw. Reconciliation with the Corinthians. As more important than winning the argument. And what a great example for us.

Isn't it? He saw reconciliation. Reconciliation. And the eternal good of the Corinthians. More important than winning. The argument that he had with them. And that's an example for us.

[ 26 : 55 ] Because when we find ourselves. In conflict. With other people. Especially other Christians. What is our first instinct? I'll tell you what. It's not. Our first instinct is not to go. When we're all.

When our blood pressure is rising. When this person's. Confronting us. Or when there's something they've said. That's offensive. Our first reaction is not. Well how do I react in a way. Which will lead to the best eternal outcome.

For this other person. Do we do that? No. Let's be honest. Our first instinct. Is how do I react in a way. That I can win. And preserve my dignity.

And my pride. But you see. That is not the Christian way. To respond. To offense. It's not the Christian way. To respond.

To your opponents. Let alone. Your husband or wife. When you have an argument. To try win that argument. Is not the Christian way.

[ 27 : 51 ] Rather. To think. What is best for our reconciliation. And best for this person's. Eternal outcome. And this person's. Spiritual walk. It's hard. But that is the Christian way.

A Christian shouldn't seek. To preserve their own honor. In an argument. But to seek. The other person's. Eternal good. Which is what Paul does here. You see.

The reason he didn't return. To Corinth. Was for their good. So that they would have. A chance to reconcile. But now. We've got to understand. Why reconciliation. Was so important.

For their eternal good. Why did. Them reconciling. Matter. For their eternity. And what was going to happen. After they die. Well. Paul tells us in verse 11. Look at this. This is.

Probably my favorite verse. Of the whole passage. He says. He's gone through all this. In order that Satan. Might not outwit us. For we are not. Unaware. Of his schemes.

[ 28 : 47 ] See. Paul. Because he's an apostle. Because he's. Been revealed. Deeper things. Than. Than. And. Ordinary. You and me. Are revealed. He could see.

The bigger picture. Of what was going on here. He could see. This argument. That he was having. With the Corinthians. In context. Of a spiritual battle. That was going on. Unseen. But. Dangerous. And very real. And the reason. Why he so badly. Wanted to reconcile. With the Corinthians. He says. Is because Satan. Is scheming. And one of Satan's. Primary goals.

In the church. Is to divide us. That is what he is busy. Working on. How to do. Even here. It's a marks. He's trying to think. Of how he can divide us.

And so. Paul. Was willing. To do the hard work. Of reconciliation. So that Satan. Didn't win. Paul knew. His argument. Wasn't actually. With the Corinthians. It was with Satan.

[ 29 : 42 ] And he didn't have to win. Against the Corinthians. He had to win. Against Satan. He knew. That division. In the church. Is how Satan. Does his work. He knew. That division. In the church.

Is how Satan. Takes us away. From God's word. Because what's really. Important to see here. And yeah. This is. This is something. That struck me as well.

When I was studying. This passage. Satan's clever scheme. With the Corinthians. Is more than just. Divide the Corinthians. Cause an argument. Within the church. Of Corinth. Bad as that is.

But his main goal. Was actually. To cause division. Yeah. But you see. The moment. He stopped doing that. The moment. People in the church. Begin. To. Sit in authority. Over the Bible.

The moment. The moment. The moment. The moment. We get to pick. And choose. What to listen to. And what to ignore. From the Bible. Like we think. We're in a sweets. From heaven shop. You know that. Those shops.

[ 30 : 35 ] You go. You don't. You don't get all the sweets. Cause. That would be terrible. You just pick. And choose. What you like. People do that. With the Bible. People treat the Bible. Like a sweets. From heaven. Where they just think. They can pick.

And choose. What's good. For their life. The moment. We think. We can do that. Or we think. We can reinterpret. The Bible. Like so many. Liberal churches. Do today. To make it say. What we want it to say.

The moment. That happens. Satan has already won. Because that is his tactic. But we're not going to. Let him out with us. Are we? At St. Mark's. Because we're not.

Unaware of his schemes. Because we gather. Around the word. And we see. What he's doing. And so. How do we make sure. That doesn't happen. In this church.

In the years to come. How do we make sure. That we don't go. The way of so many churches. Whose relationship. With each other. And relationship. With the word. Has crumbled. And the church. Has eventually. Fallen away.

[ 31 : 28 ] How do we make sure. That doesn't happen. In our church. Well I'll tell you. In closing. We do that. The same way. Paul made sure. It didn't happen.

In the Corinthian church. And that is through. Something called. Church. Discipline. Church. Discipline. So before we finish. There's another thing.

We learn in this passage. And that is the place. Of church discipline. And by church discipline. What I mean. Is something that. Is not popular today.

And that people. Often try to avoid. And that is the church leadership. Calling out. Members. In sin. And disciplining them. Punishing them.

It's not. You see. Immediately. I say that. And we don't like. The sound of that. Do we. But you see. Paul. When he wrote. That severe letter. That's exactly.

[ 32 : 22 ] What he told. The Corinthian church. To do. He called. The church leadership. To. Call sin. What it is. To not sweep it. Under the carpet. For the sake of. You know. Good relationships. And he called them.

To take action. So that the whole church. Didn't fall under. God's wrath. And that was the way. He knew. To truly reconcile. And to outwit Satan. Through church discipline.

And so. You know. We might argue. Oh. But you know. Church discipline. People. Calling out sin. And punishment. From the church leadership. And excommunication. That's. That's not the way.

We reconcile. But actually. It is. Because unless. We do that. We'll never be truly. Reconciled. Around God's word. Together. We outwit Satan. Today. The same way.

Paul did. By taking church discipline. Seriously. By the church leadership. Calling out. Unrepentant sin. In the church. And dealing with it. With appropriate punishment. Now people might say.

[ 33 : 18 ] Well that's not. It's not the place. Of the church. To punish. You know. They've got to be loving. It's. It's. Too judgmental. When you do that. But you see. That is the place.

Of the church. In spiritual matters. God mediates. His authority. Through his word. Which is mediated. Through his church. And so. If church leadership. Or I.

As your pastor. Show you. From the word. How you are sinning. You must listen to us. Or face the consequences. But. Let me tell you.

We don't like to do that. It is not easy. To do that. I don't want to do that. Because. Church discipline. Is messy. It's hard.

It causes. Relationship breakdowns. I've been accused. To my face. Of. Of. Being overly harsh. And policing people. And people have left. The church. Because of that. And the church.

[ 34 : 11 ] Is accused. Of being overly. Judgmental. Well. You know what? Rather. Fall. Under the judgment. Of the church. Temporarily. Then fall.

Under God's judgment. Eternally. And that. Is why. Church discipline. Is so necessary. And it's. Why. Why. It's something. That Paul teaches. And why. It's something. That Jesus teaches. But notice.

As well. Very importantly. Good church. Discipline. Seeks. Not just. To punish. The offender. But to reconcile. With them. Knowing. That true. Reconciliation. Only happens.

After repentance. Look at verse 6. Of chapter 2. Quickly. Paul says this. To the Corinthians. Who he told. To kick this guy out. Look what he's saying now. The punishment. Inflicted on him.

By the majority. Is sufficient. Now instead. You ought to forgive. And comfort him. So that he will not. Be overwhelmed. By excessive sorrow. I urge you therefore. To reaffirm. Your love for him. See.

[ 35 : 07 ] Amazing thing about Paul. He is still. Thinking. Of the eternal good. Even of his enemy. He doesn't go. I'm glad you guys. Kicked him out. I didn't like him at all. He says.

Yes. You kicked him out. He repented. It was sufficient. Now bring him back. Love him. Welcome him. Into the fellowship. He's still thinking. Of the eternal good. Of the guy who is so.

Harsh and mean to him. What an example to us. As you see. While this guy needed to be disciplined. So he repented. He also needed to be restored. After his repentance. And that is. Just as much a vital part of church discipline. And often. A harder part. Of church discipline. To restore. With the people who. Have had church discipline. Anyway. Let's wrap this up. What have we learned from this passage? I hope I've unraveled. The earphones. Out of the ball of wires. A little bit for you. We've learned.

[ 36 : 03 ] Not only. What Satan's major tactic. To take down churches is. Which is a great revelation. And his tactic is to separate us. From the authority of the word. So we think we don't need to listen to it.

So we think we can pick and choose. And we've also learned. How to guard against. Satan's attempt to do that. Through church discipline. But. To refer to what I said at the beginning. We've also learned in this passage. The Christian way to respond. To being offended. And falsely accused. By other people. Paul has shown us that. In how he both defended the truth. As well as exercise grace.

To his offenders. For their eternal good. And so let's take his example on board. And let's learn to react. To our opponents. In the same way. Not like in an honor culture. Or a victim culture. Demanding compensation. For our hurt pride. And not like in a dignity culture. Just saying nothing. And letting mistruth rule the day. No. But let's react. As members of a Christian culture.

[ 37 : 02 ] Showing the world. Both the truth of the gospel. That we're not going to back down from. And that we will defend. As well as the grace of the gospel. That we will show to our offenders.

And accusers. As we seek for their eternal good. And let's ask God for his help to do that. Lord we do thank you. That even. Long and seemingly complicated passages like this.

When we. When we get. Around your word. And when we sit under the authority. Of your word. Thank you that you speak to us. And you reveal eternal truth. Which is so important for us to know. Lord. Thank you for revealing. Yet again. Another characteristic of yourself. Through this passage. That you are utterly. Reliable. That we can trust you more than we can trust anything in this world. And so we pray Lord. Help us to trust you. Help us to trust. Your message. In the Bible. And help us. To live as members of a Christian culture. Responding to people.

[ 37 : 59 ] As Paul did to his opponents. In grace. And for. Their eternal good. We pray for your help in this. In Jesus name. Amen. Amen.