

**Paul now began to close his letter to the Church at Corinth:**

From Chapter 10 to this point, it seems to me to have been somewhat of an unpleasant experience for the Apostle Paul to put his pen to the paper, and to write unto them what the Spirit of God put into his heart.

The worst thing that we could do when reading about the problems in Church at Corinth is to be critical of them; the best and most profitable thing for us, is to learn for ourselves and for our church.

But then that is how we ought always to come to the Word, not as critics, but as disciples and learners of Christ... with the question, what do you have for me today, Lord? To stir up your minds to where we were last week: 2

Corinthians 12:14-21, (Text: V20-21)

Brethren, we live in a time in which, sin is no longer seen as sinful. Behaviors and opinions once viewed as abhorrent and sinful are now celebrated, promoted, and defended by the world's elite, and sadly, even by some who profess to be Christians.

We should not be surprised by godlessness and wickedness flourishing in the world... But what should grieve us, as Christians, is when sinful behavior is no longer seen as sinful to God's people; when sin, no longer appears TO US, to be sin. 2 Timothy 3:1-5

**2 Corinthians 12:20: Paul's fear and warning to the impenitent in the church:**

All the way back to his 1<sup>st</sup> letter to the Corinthians, Paul dealt many different sins in the church. NOW, as he closed his letter, he feared that there might STILL be MANY who not repented nor cast off these sins from their lives; sins that he had reproved them of previously.

All the way back to 1 Corinthians 1:11, Paul dealt with contentions in the church. If there were contentions, there was pride. (Pro. 13:10)

Paul then told them, you are NOT spiritual, you're carnal, for there is envying, strife, and divisions among you, and... the sin of fornication was being reported commonly in one of the church's members, and if that wasn't bad enough, the church was doing nothing about it.

And there was quarreling, brethren taking each other to court over matters that ought to be settled in the spirit of meekness and love.

Their reaction to Paul's 1<sup>st</sup> letter, which was full of reproofs, encouraged him. 2 Corinthians 7:5-13

Well, here in 2 Corinthians 12, Paul now wrote that HE FEARED that MANY of these sins might still exist in the church!

You can cut off a weed at the ground, but unless you pull it out by its root, it's gonna come back!

**Look at this list of sins in 12:20: These are normal behaviors in the world!**

Debates (quarreling), envyings (contentious jealousy), wraths (angry tempers), strife (selfishly ambitious, the desire to put oneself forward, one who court's distinction), backbitings (slandering the absent), whisperings (secret slandering), swellings (high-mindedness and pride), tumults (social instability and disorder) These are some of the most common sins that exist between people in the world, in their relationships. All you have to do is put 2 or 3 fallen humans together in a room and give them one task and wait.

In fact, put (4) of your precious little grandchildren together and watch how long it takes before there is a big mess of quarreling, envying, anger, and wanting to be first!

These sins are ROOTED in carnal and fallen minds, and they are so common and prevalent, and viewed as normal in the world, by the world, that they end up being cultivated rather than rooted out.

Now what do I mean by that... when people fight and quarrel and get angry toward one another, if there is never any genuine contrition, remorse, repentance, or change of heart in them to turn from such attitudes and sins to Christ... THAT SIN becomes harder and more habitual!

Sin that is no longer sinful becomes accepted, acceptable, normal behavior. It's no longer viewed as sin. You've heard this, or maybe you've said this... "that's just the way I am"! THAT is a statement of an accepted sinful behavior and refusal to repent of it.

When we no longer view sin as sin in the world, when we no longer see it as offensive and abhorrent to God, we are in great danger of the same thing happening to us, as a church, as what Paul feared was happening in Church @ Corinth!

How you live OUT THERE, if it's worldly and sinful will eventually find its way into the church! We should ALL fear this!

EVERY DAY that we live in the world; (in our interactions in the world) we are in great danger of being influenced by the sins and attitudes of the world, and worse, of adopting their sins and attitudes as ours!

**This is what Paul feared might be happening in Corinth! 2 Corinthians 12:21**

Once again, we ought to see Paul's heart for this church! And (I fear, is also implied here), that when I come again, my God will humble me among you, I will be humiliated and I will mourn because of many of you, who have continued to sin and have not repented.

Here of their uncleanness, fornication, and lasciviousness.

Any sin not repented of will become a normal practice and a "besetting sin". The word "beset" means to be restrained, entangled, enclosed, or that which hangs around.

Hebrews 12:1: "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith."

The allusion is that of a runner in a race, the command is to get rid of that which would burden and weigh down the runner and keep them from running well. Our Christian lives are what the apostle pictures for us; it's a race...and the apostle teaches us HOW we are to run the race.

Let us lay aside every weight, (or burden), and the sin which doth so easily beset us."

This should beg the question in your mind, what is a besetting sin? And don't miss this, these sins EASILY beset us!

A besetting sin is a sin that YOU are prone to easily fall into, it's tailor made for you and your old man. It fits you, it's your weak spot, and everyone that knows you, KNOWS IT. You are peculiarly liable to this sin, maybe more than you would like to admit. It surrounds you; you are easily entangled in it; it's always hanging around you. IT IS THE SIN that restrains and hinders you from running your race.

You and I must beware of ANY SIN, but besetting sins are particularly dangerous, WHY? Because we get used to them "hanging around" ... when we do nothing to cast them off, they end up becoming darling sins, and "that's just the way I am" sins!

How must we deal with besetting sins? Any sins in our lives?

You gotta keep killing the old man and feeding the new man! Just because you cut him off and killed him today, don't think that today's work is going to be good enough to keep him down tomorrow.

Every single day, Christian, we are called to: "Lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience, the race that is set before us, LOOKING UNTO JESUS, the Author and Finisher of our faith."

### **Closing. RECAP: When sin finds its way into the church, perilous times have come.**

Do a sincere and honest inventory of yourself and your ways... have you normalized and accepted certain sins or sinful attitudes in your life?

Psalm 139:23-24, Lamentations 3:40: "Let us search and try our ways and turn again to the LORD."

Be careful in your interactions in the world...as citizens of the Kingdom of Christ, we should not be worldly, but

heavenly minded, with our affections set on things above, not on things on the earth.

It ought to be troubling for us when we begin to embrace and adopt the world's attitudes and sayings, and most troubling, when we embrace and adopt the world's philosophies, practices, and sins! Romans 12:2

*You should be troubled if you comfortable and content in the world!*

Let us lay aside any sins, which doth easily beset us... these are sins that fit your old man, sins that you are peculiarly liable to... sins that we allow to "hang around".

*Close with text: 2 Corinthians 12:20-21*

**If you're not a Christian, if you've never turned from your sins to Christ, you're not in a good place.**

In fact, you're in a terrifying place! The wrath of God abides on you. Don't let your sins be the ruin of your soul for all eternity.

One of the most troubling things to me, is to behold someone who is lost, dead in their trespasses and sins...who couldn't care less!