

The Poisoned Body

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[0 : 00] Well, this is a difficult passage, isn't it? Not so much in terms of understanding it, although there are one or two parts which would need further explaining. But I think the main point is clear, as we would see.

But it's difficult to apply. And so we really need God's help, His strength, His grace, His wisdom to be willing to implement the teaching of this passage. So let's pray now and ask God to give us listening ears and humble hearts to submit to His Word.

Let's pray. Father, we thank You for Your Word. We thank You that it is living and active, that it is always useful, Lord, for teaching and correcting and rebuking and training in righteousness.

So we pray indeed that will be the effect that it will have on us now. Indeed, help us now to approach Your Word with humility, but also with expectation that we will get to know You more, even through a passage like this.

We pray all this in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. What happens when we encounter sin in others? Now, if there's a list of things that Christians least like to do, confronting the sin of another is probably near the top of the list.

[1 : 08] It's certainly near the top of mind. So when we see something that's clearly wrong, we tend to do one of the following things. We pretend that actually there isn't a problem and ignore it.

Or else we gossip about the person and their sin behind their backs. Or we condemn from a distance while avoiding direct conflict.

And what happens when a church community encounters sin in its midst, especially a serious one? Again, that makes us uncomfortable.

And often the tendency today is to say, well, Christianity is all about forgiveness, isn't it? So let's just forgive. God's love is unconditional. Let's not be judgmental. After all, isn't that the reason why people don't come to church?

And yet today, when Paul addresses precisely such a situation, that is not what he says. In fact, as you've already picked up, I'm sure, from the reading itself, he says some very difficult things.

[2 : 11] It sounds harsh and not at all gospel-centered. But that's because sometimes we misunderstand the nature of the gospel. If we think of the gospel exclusively as pardon for sin or just as an insurance policy, then everything Paul is going to say in 1 Corinthians 5 would make little sense to us.

He would just sound extremist. But if we understand that the gospel is about how Jesus has come to establish a kingdom, that he has not only won for us citizenship in this kingdom by laying down his life for us, but that by his resurrection, he has demonstrated he is also the king of this kingdom whom we now serve.

Well, that would change things, wouldn't it? Or to change the metaphor a little, if we understand that the gospel is about how God's son sacrificed himself to bring us into his family, but that he is also now the template for how God's royal children should relate to their heavenly father.

That again would change things, wouldn't it? In other words, the gospel is not just about Jesus as saviour, but Jesus as saviour and lord.

And the church is the domain where that truth should be seen at its clearest without any ambiguity. And so with that clarification in place, let's now think again.

[3 : 44] What should the church community do when it encounters serious sin in its midst? 1 Corinthians 5 tells us how the community of Christ ought to act.

Firstly, we must grieve over sin. Grieve over sin. In verse 1, we're told what's happening in the church at Corinth.

There is sexual immorality amongst you. The Greek word translated as sexual immorality is the word *porneia*, from which we get the English word pornography.

And it covers a whole range of sexual sin, a topic that we'll return to in the second half of chapter 6. But in this instance, Paul is referring to a specific case.

There's a man who is sleeping with his father's wife. Now, the typical Greek word for one's biological mother is not used here, suggesting that this is almost certainly his stepmother.

[4 : 43] And this man is engaging in ongoing sexual relations with her. This is not a one-off. This is going on even as Paul is writing. It's clearly public knowledge, since news of this has reached even Paul's ears.

We're not told any more details. You might say, thank God. So we don't know if the father is still alive or not, how this man justified his act, whether they were going to get married.

But Paul is clear. It's wrong. There are Old Testament texts that clearly disapprove of this. Leviticus 18 verse 8 and Deuteronomy 27 verse 20 come to mind.

But as Paul says, verse 1 again, even pagans don't tolerate this. You don't need the Old Testament to know it's wrong. And that's saying something, given that Corinth is a place that is well known for its liberal attitudes to sex.

Indeed, it was forbidden in Roman law to marry your stepmother, which shows that even a liberal Greco-Roman society had lines it would not cross.

[5 : 55] This is behaviour even non-Christian society regards as scandalous. But Paul tells the Corinthian church the problem is, you don't.

You see, in this chapter, Paul is not going on a witch hunt against this man, although he clearly names his behaviour as contrary to God's will.

He doesn't make any comment on the stepmother either, indicating she's almost certainly an unbeliever who doesn't fall under the church's jurisdiction.

Rather, what he's doing is naming and addressing the church's failure, that they are willing to accept such ongoing sin in their midst.

And they're not just willing. In verse 2, they're proud. Now, I don't think that means that they're proud of the man's sin, as if they're applauding his behaviour. It's more likely that they are proud of themselves, of how tolerant they were, of how loving they were, how non-judgmental they were.

[7 : 04] They saw it as proof of their spiritual maturity. Now, perhaps they had some slogans circulating amongst themselves. Love is love. It's none of our business.

God will sort it out. Let's not be close-minded. Let's give him the benefit of the doubt. In many ways, our 21st century mindset, which makes an absolute value of tolerance, would not have been foreign to the Corinthians.

Now, it's possible too, although we can't be certain, that the man in question was someone who had a certain social status, or who had the kinds of gifting that the Corinthians valued.

And so they gave him a pass. But Paul says, that kind of tolerance is toxic. As we'll see later on in this passage, it's extremely damaging for everyone.

And such tolerance is toxic because in the end, it's also sin. As James 4 verse 17 soberly reminds us, if anyone then knows the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, it is sin for them.

[8 : 23] Now, you might think that it's impossible for Christians today to fall into this trap. You know, we'll never be like the Corinthians. We think, come on, we won't tolerate such scandal. But it's when we are believing that we're incapable of being like the Corinthians that we are in the most danger.

Let me just give you a very recent, high-profile example. Take the tragic case of the late apologist Ravi Zacharias, for example. As we now know, he engaged in ongoing sexual sin over a long period of time, behavior that has proved scandalous even to the non-Christian world.

After all, it was an atheist rather than a Christian who first consistently raised doubts about Ravi's conduct. But despite the fact that the evidence is very credible and has been accepted in full by his own organization, Ravi Zacharias International Ministries, it's tempting for us to defend Ravi's legacy, to minimize his sin, and keep saying that we shouldn't judge him.

We're tempted to say, as some believers have done, Oh, but he's so gifted. He did so much good. It's the women who's the problem. And in a way, that reaction is understandable because for many years, so many people saw Ravi as a great resource to make the Christian faith appealing to non-Christians, especially the thinking type.

But that could cause us to become blind to the troubling signs that he wasn't above reproach, to excuse his wrongdoing, to indulge in toxic tolerance, and ironically, become proud because we are so sure that we are on the right side.

[10:20] We are the spiritual ones. After all, God blessed Ravi's ministry with impressive growth, right? And why would we listen to an atheist? Ah, Ravi's critics are clearly wrong and doing the work of Satan.

And that seems to have been the mistake of some within his organisation. And it so easily becomes our mistake as well.

But Paul says, despite what you might think, tolerating ongoing sin is never the way of the Gospel. Rather, the way of the Gospel is to grieve sin whenever it occurs within the community.

Look at verse 2 again. Instead of being proud, he says, shouldn't you have gone into mourning? Shouldn't you grieve when sin brings down the name of Christ?

And Paul doesn't just limit this to sexual sin. Look down at verse 11 and notice that Paul broadens the list of ungodly conduct to include greed and drunkenness and cheating and so on.

[11:33] And so we should grieve all kinds of sin, not just the obvious sexual sin. Notice that we shouldn't try to hide it. The entire chapter presupposes that the sin has been brought into the light.

It has been exposed and it's not to be covered up shameful as it is. But where it has been exposed, we should grieve.

We should lament. To truly grieve over sin is not simply to lament the consequences of the sin. It's not just to feel bad that the church's or the Christian organization's reputation has been damaged. It's to feel sorrow because we've caused offense to God himself and possibly damage other people as well. We've brought anti-glory to him, if you like.

And grieving sin can be a collective thing, not just an individual thing. In Ezra 10 verse 6, for example, we learn that Ezra mourned over the unfaithfulness of the exiles.

[12:45] Even though it was not his own sin, Ezra felt the wake of the transgressions of his fellow Israelites treating them as his own. And as Paul himself will say later on in 1 Corinthians 12 verse 26, if one part of the body suffers, every part will suffer with it.

But when we mourn together, we open the door to healing. As Jesus himself taught, blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

When we truly grieve over sin, we are showing that we are truly aligned with God's will. Loving what he loves, treasuring what he treasures, saddened by what he is saddened by.

And God is honoured by that. God loves to see that. And he is more than happy to come and restore any church that does that, damaged as they are by sin such as this.

I know that in the history of KEC, we've sadly had to encounter at least one case where a leader's sexual sin came to light. I wasn't here for that, so I don't know how it all played out, at least not firsthand.

[14:11] But I'm sure there were feelings of anger, moments of panic, maybe, some hostility and division almost certainly. But I hope that for those of us who were here, we also took the moment to grieve and to mourn for the person himself who has fallen, for his family and those closest to him, and for the way that his sin affected both our fellowship with God and with each other.

Sometimes I think we still feel the ramifications of that incident. And I hope that we were willing to examine ourselves, to see our blind spots, to repent of that.

And so we must grieve. But that is not the main cause of action that Paul recommends in this chapter. For we mustn't just grieve.

Secondly, we must purge the poison. Purge the poison. You can't miss it. Six times in this chapter, Paul makes the same point in different ways.

Now look at verse 2 again. Shouldn't you, Paul says, not just go into mourning, but put out of your fellowship the man who has been doing this?

[15:28] Shouldn't you, verse 7, get rid of the old yeast? Or in plain and direct English, Paul says in verse 13, expel the wicked person from among you.

Wow. Paul leaves us in no doubt when you encounter serious sin amongst you, he says, the person has to go. My goodness, Paul, where's the love?

Where's the mercy? Aren't we all sinners? Didn't Jesus say, do not judge, and here you are passing judgment on others? Why should we act in this way?

Well, those are good questions, and we'll dive into them in a moment. But first, let's clarify a number of things. Firstly, we need to remember who Paul is talking about.

Look at verse 11. But now, I'm writing to you that you must not associate with anyone who claims to be a brother or sister, but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or slanderer, a drunkard or swindler.

[16:36] So this is a person who says that he or she is in Christ. This is a person who claims to be a Christian right now, and who is active in church or Christian fellowship right now.

And so, Paul is not talking about those who make no such claim like the stepmother in this case. And secondly, we need to remember what sort of behavior is in view.

The man having sex with his stepmother is doing so in a habitual and unrepentant way. He's not fighting to not do it. He's not lapsing into such behavior.

On the contrary, he justifies his behavior. He thinks it's okay. And so, we're not talking about a Christian who is fighting with the temptation to view pornography or get drunk.

We're talking about someone who insists he or she is a Christian, and yet their behavior is such that people, whether Christian or not, identify them by their sin, whether that's a drunkard or a swindler or a sexual abuser.

[17:47] Their sin is characteristic of them. They are a walking contradiction. And Paul says, expel them.

But why? What's the reason behind enacting such church discipline, as it's often called? We find two big reasons in verses three to eight that it's for the good of the church and it's for the good of the offender.

Let's take them in turn. It's for the good of the church. Look at verse six. Your boasting is not good. Don't you know that a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough?

Now, many of you are bakers, and I'm not, so you'll probably understand this image better than I do. But from what I understand, as you make bread, what do you usually do?

You add a little bit of yeast. And that small bit of yeast will permeate your whole lump of dough so that it will rise. Now, in post-day, the yeast is not like our yeast.

[19:00] In fact, it's called leaven. It hasn't been through all the health and safety protocols that we would have nowadays. And so, that yeast, that leaven, would probably be filled with bacteria, or even more, since before you add it in, it would have been sitting at room temperature in a hot climate for a few days.

And that is what you're mixing into your dough. And Paul says, sin is like that. It's unclean and it corrupts.

Just like it takes just a little yeast to leaven the entire dough. So, the ongoing presence of an unrepentant sinner within a Christian community will contaminate the entire church.

You know, just imagine the impact that this person sleeping with his stepmom was having on the church. Young Christians would be confused. You know, they'll be scratching their heads and thinking, you know, does this mean that God is okay with such sin?

He doesn't mind? Older Christians might think that God is someone he's not. Oh, he's not actually pure light. And that could be why they were a church with many problems.

[20:15] Get God wrong, and you'll probably get a lot of other things wrong as well. Their tolerance of this one sin led them to compromise on so many other things, which we already know from reading 1 Corinthians, and which we'll also find out even as we go along in this series.

And so that's why the offender has to go. Now, let's be clear. Paul isn't saying that we all have to be perfect to be a member of a church.

But he is saying that there must be a commitment to ongoing repentance and continued trust in Jesus. And if there is someone present whose commitment is in the opposite direction, who is willfully disobeying Jesus despite repeatedly being corrected, well, that person has to go.

The poison must be purged. The contaminant must be removed. You see, God does this because in the end he loves his church.

He loves his bride. He cares too much about his temple, that's us, that he doesn't want to see it destroyed from within. For don't forget, God has already cleansed his people, his sacrifice, his only son, Jesus Christ, our Passover Lamb.

[21:43] He's taken away our corrupt sin nature and freed us from the contamination of sin by giving us Jesus. He has made us to be like a new and unleavened batch of bread, unpolluted by

any leftover yeast.

that is who we are. And that's what verses 6 and 7 are all about. And so now, verse 8, let us keep the festival, not with the old bread leavened with malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

What does Paul mean? Well, in the Old Testament, God's people celebrated the festival of unleavened bread. It was their way of remembering the exodus when God had rescued his people out of slavery in Egypt.

And it was also a way of reinforcing their new identity as a rescued, unleavened people whom God has provided a Passover lamb for.

And so when Paul calls on us to keep the festival, he's really saying, let's be those who remember what we've been rescued from and who we've been rescued for.

[23 : 05] We've been rescued from sin and we are rescued for a holy God. So let's be who we already are.

Let's leave Egypt in Egypt. We've left it behind. Let's not bring it back into our midst. And so we purge the poison for the good of the church.

But we also purge the poison for the good of the offender. In verse 5, Paul frames the language of excluding the person in supernatural terms.

Hand this man over to Satan, he says. In other words, treat him as someone who is not submitting to the rule of Christ, in which case he is under the rule of Satan, treat him as an unbeliever.

Now, how can that be a good thing? The rest of verse 5 tells us. It is for the destruction of the flesh. Now, at first that sounds even more horrible.

[24 : 12] It sounds like Paul is recommending that we cast him out to be completely annihilated. But that wouldn't make sense in light of what follows, so that his spirit may be safe on the day of the Lord.

You see, Paul is using the word flesh here in the way that he does in a lot of his other letters, to mean his rebellious and unrepentant sinful disposition against God.

And so Paul is saying, as we exclude this person from being identified as a member of Christ's body, we hope that that would shake him up and communicate the gravity of his offense.

We hope that would be enough to wake him up, to cause him to repent, to make him one to kill his sin, to destroy his flesh, so that we can welcome him back and be assured that on the day of judgment he will be saved.

And I hope you can see why such an act is not unloving. It's an act motivated by concern for the person's ultimate destiny.

[25 : 24] It might be tough love, but it's still love. And it's an act of love not just for the offender, but for the rest of the congregation. You know, if all of us were gathered here in this church hall today, and you discovered that there was actually a poisonous substance contaminating our air supply somewhere, you would remove it straight away, wouldn't you?

That's an act of love. love. That's what the church is to do. And notice, according to verses 3 and 4, as the Corinthian church does this, they do it not on their own authority or on their own whim.

They do it in the name of Jesus and on the apostolic authority of Paul. And notice that as they hand this man over to Satan, the power of our Lord Jesus is present.

You see that at the end of verse 4. What a thing to say. But Paul is simply applying Matthew 18, verse 20. Now, many of us, I believe, know that verse, where Jesus says, when two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.

Now, that's a promise we often cling to that we usually apply in the context of a prayer meeting or some other Christian gathering. But perhaps many of us are not familiar with the context of Matthew 18, verse 20.

[26 : 56] When Jesus says those words, he was talking about a church that had gathered together to pass judgment on one of its members. That becomes clear the instance you read the verses before verse 20.

And so when a church exercises church discipline in this way, Jesus is working. He's present in judgment as much as he is in salvation.

Now, this is not something that Jesus shies away from. And when we encounter serious, unrepentant sinners in our midst and purge the poison, we are simply doing what Jesus wants us to do.

And so this is not the same as the words of Jesus on the Sermon on the Mount, where he says, do not judge. There, Jesus is condemning hypocritical judgmentalism.

Now, there's a sermon from last year available on our website if you want to dig further into that passage. But here, Jesus is simply calling for repentance via the instrument of judgment.

[28 : 12] This is done not with smart condemnation, but with the hope of reconciliation. But what does it actually look like to purge the poison?

Now, I don't think it's possible to cover every scenario. In any case, wisdom and discernment is often required. 1 Corinthians 5, and really the New Testament as a whole, doesn't try to give us a comprehensive step-by-step guidebook to cover every possible scenario that you can think of. Instead, it simply gives us the framework. And so, just before we look at 1 Corinthians 5 again, let's just go briefly to another key passage, and that's Matthew 18.

Because in Matthew 18 verses 15 to 17, Jesus gives us a basic outline of how we typically proceed. It should be on the screen. Let me read it. Jesus says, if your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault just between the two of you.

If they listen to you, you have warned them over. But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.

[29 : 27] if they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church. And if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector, in other words, as an unbeliever.

And so Jesus says the first step, should there be sin, especially between one member against another, is to deal with it privately, just the two of you.

This assumes, of course, that the sin is not already of a very public nature. Gradually, if necessary, involve more people, not for the sake of gossip, but for the sake of clarification and persuasion.

And if there is still unrepentance, the church, especially through its leadership, is to get involved.

And as we do so, it's wise in general to take this process slowly, patiently, prudently, prayerfully, and graciously, taking into account various factors, such as how long has a person been a Christian, and so on and so forth, so we must exercise wisdom and patience.

However, in 1 Corinthians 5, it appears that Paul has presupposed that all these steps have either already taken place, such that we are at the end of the Matthew 18 process, or that the nature of the transgression is bringing Christ's name into such disrepute, and that the lack of repentance is so clear that swifter action is necessary.

[31 : 13] And so twice, in verse 9 and verse 11, Paul says that if we know someone is clearly indulging in ongoing sin and is unrepentant about it, we are not to associate with such people.

In verse 11, he adds a further detail, we are not even to eat with them. Now, does this mean that we are to cut off all contact with them?

I don't think so. After all, we don't cut contact with unbelievers wholesale either. The context suggests that the key thing is not to associate with them in such a way that they think that they are okay in the eyes of God and that they are still in good standing with members of the church. It's to not associate with them in such a way that they think that they can still be considered Christians. In biblical times, the sharing of a meal was an act of intimate fellowship.

And Paul says that is to be withdrawn. Now, what might that look like today? That takes wisdom and discernment to work out. Again, I think each situation can be a little different.

[32 : 38] but formally speaking, the church should deny them access to take the Lord's supper while they remain unrepentant.

That would be a clear sign that the church doesn't regard them as Christian. But informally speaking, it might mean not accepting an invitation to makan with them or mixing with them in ways that you normally would with other Christians.

it might mean asking someone not to come to a small group or cell group where there's more intimate fellowship. In my experience, I've seen that happen once before.

It would, however, I think, still be right to keep inviting them to church as you would a non-Christian so that they would have the opportunity to hear the word of God in a public setting, not such an intimate setting.

so that they might be convicted and turn back to Jesus. Remember, that is the goal. It's not about personal vendettas or anything like that.

[33 : 46] It's about bringing them back to Jesus, even though the actions required can be painful. Now, I'm sure such strong medicine provokes equally strong reactions in you.

not only does it sound unloving, it also brings into play the question of effectiveness. After all, if we do what Paul says, what's there to stop people from simply joining another church or Christian fellowship?

In Corinth, there's only one church fellowship, but in our 21st century context, it's pretty different. Now, this is where it's important to remember. God doesn't promise in 1 Corinthians 5 that such action would definitely, inevitably, 100% lead to a person's repentance.

Verse 5 is a possibility, but verse 5 is not a promise. It's possible that as we exclude the person, they will repent.

And of course, that's what we pray for, that's what we hope for, that's what we long for with all our hearts. But it's also possible that they just say, bye to us, and either stop being a Christian, or go to another church, although I hope that a discerning church would soon realize that they shouldn't take such a person into their midst.

[35 : 12] And so, yes, in that sense, it's not necessarily effective. But it is definitely effective in protecting the rest of the church from this person's influence.

Remember, that's one of the reasons as well. the original church, at the very least, would receive the message loud and clear. God's holiness matters to us, and we love God's church too much to allow the poisonous influence of an unrepentant sinner to spread.

And actually, God can use such an incident to benefit others in the fellowship as well. a friend once told me about her sister, whom she described initially as not really a committed Christian.

You know, she went to church on a Sunday sometimes and that was it. But it so happened that this church had to enact church discipline. Now, I can't remember all the details now, but I believe a leader, maybe of a small group or something like that, had been caught in an affair.

And the church called for a meeting of all its members, and basically they followed the steps of 1 Corinthians 5. Although, if I remember correctly, the happy ending is that in time they did eventually repent.

[36 : 31] But watching that play out had a transformative effect on her sister. For the first time, she realized that following Christ was truly serious business.

and that this church was serious about following Christ. And my friend watched her sister turn from someone who was just content to be a spectator, a so-called Sunday-only Christian, to someone who is actively taking up her cross and ready to be a disciple of Jesus.

And it was church discipline that made that happen. And this is true love. It's not just about making someone feel good, but actually helping someone know Jesus as Lord and encouraging them towards Christ-likeness.

And not just the offender, but even those watching as well. And so as we come to the conclusion of today's sermon, let's grieve over sin. Let's purge the poison if we have to.

And finally, as Christ community, let's look outside, not inside. Sorry, look inside, not outside. Look inside, not outside. Look at verse 12.

[37 : 50] What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? God will judge those outside. God says it is right to judge in the sense that we've just been talking about.

And it is right to examine ourselves. Sometimes the church has become so consumed with the state of affairs outside the community that it fails to practice self-examination.

It's easy to talk about how Hollywood is so decadent or how American society or how that other religion is doing stuff that we would never dream of doing. But God says, what did you expect?

They're not Christians. They don't have God's spirit in them. Let me worry about them. The question is, within the church, are we exercising a similar zeal to throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles?

Are we passionate enough for God's name that we are willing to help each other not be hardened by sin's deceitfulness but to daily turn to Christ?

[39 : 00] Are we willing, should the situation ever arise, but I really hope not, to put into practice 1 Corinthians 5. You see, that's the kind of church that God wants.

A church that cares about sin because it's a church that loves one another so much that they don't want anybody to be lost to Satan, to not be safe at the final judgment.

Most, if not all of us, I think, are influenced by our Asian culture. Our Asian culture stresses looking good, saving face, not poking into anybody's business.

But we could easily let that shape church culture in such an unhealthy way that we end up hiding our struggles and our sin, and we aren't daily seeking the wisdom and the accountability of others to ensure that we are regularly repenting, and before we know it, we're ensnared into something serious.

And so can I encourage us? let's be willing to be honest with each other. Let's be willing to be vulnerable with one another, to confess our shortcomings to one another, to encourage each other to look to Christ daily.

[40 : 19] You know, if that's happening all the time, if Matthew 18 verse 15 was happening regularly, where one person realizes that he has sinned against his brother, goes and confesses to him, and the other person is willing to forgive him or her, you know, if that was happening all the time, then we might never ever need to get to a 1 Corinthians 5 situation.

But if we do, then let's submit to God's word. Let's be willing to trust that God knows what he's doing. Let us not be a kingdom merely of talk, but of power as 4 verse 20 puts it.

The Corinthians were talk only, unwilling to actually conform to God's wisdom, because they look like foolishness. But remember my friend's sister?

God knows what he's doing. And so let's not be arrogant and presume that we know better than God's prescribed way. Let Jesus define for us what Christian love looks like.

Let Jesus be our saviour and Lord. let's pray. Father, as we come to you this morning, we know that sometimes the word of God can be sharp.

[41 : 49] Sometimes it pokes us in places that we don't wish to be poked. But Father, I pray that you would cause all of us to be humble before you, to be willing to examine ourselves individually and collectively.

Father, we praise you so much that we have a gracious saviour, the Lord Jesus, that his death indeed does cover all our sin. And we pray that our supreme desire, supreme longing is that everyone will come to know that gracious saviour.

And so Father, even if it means occasionally having to take certain things, do certain things that we find it uncomfortable to do so, we pray we will do so because we want to do it out of love.

We want to do it because we have a concern for people's eternal destiny. We want everyone to come to know Jesus. So I pray that you would help us to be a community that cares about sin, that cares about the name of our saviour and that longs to worship him with all our hearts and with all our lives and to help each other to pursue the same goal.

All this we pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.