



2026 3Q First and Second Corinthians

Lesson 4: Sin in the Church

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

Read the first paragraph,

- Our brains are like sponges: whatever is brought to them, via our senses, stays in them. We might not be conscious of most of what comes in (we'd be unable to think clearly if we did remember everything), but it's all there, and, **to some degree**, impacts what we think, feel, and do. *Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2026, First and Second Corinthians*, p. 30, emphasis mine.

In the second paragraph the lesson states,

- That's why it's so easy for us, even as Christians, to be impacted by all the bad things around us... *Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2026, First and Second Corinthians*, p. 30.

And in the third paragraph the lesson states,

- And we can see this principle unfolding here in Corinth. After an appeal against factionalism (1 Corinthians 1–4), Paul now turns to issues related to sexual immorality, lawsuits, prostitution, marriage, and singleness (1 Corinthians 5–7). The standards of the world affected them extensively. The factionalism portrayed in 1 Corinthians 1–4 opened the door for the moral behavior denounced in the ensuing chapters. *Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2026, First and Second Corinthians*, p. 30.

What are your thoughts about this?

The lesson is making a case for the underlying cause of the problems in the church. What case are they making?

- The human brain absorbs what it experiences to some degree (which is true).
- Christians are impacted by all things around them whether good or bad.
- The world has factions and the church in Corinth had factions, and that factionalism opened the door for the immoral behavior.

Thoughts about this? The lesson is suggesting that factionalism in the church is the open a door that allows immoral behaviors in.

I teach my team that all effective treatment starts with an accurate diagnosis because if the diagnosis is wrong, then the treatment is almost always wrong.

And the premise that factionalism opens the door to immoral behavior is a fundamental misdiagnosis of the problem. In fact, factionalism is simply another symptom of the very same problem that is the cause of all the other problems Paul is addressing—and it isn't factionalism, it is failure to keep Christ at the center, the true gospel—the good news about God Himself, His character, government and design law principles are not in the heart.

The cause of the factionalism is that they are believing new truths that appeal to their hearts, but they are still motivated by fear and selfishness in many of their beliefs, actions, and understandings.

The church is a mix of true converts and the unconverted—as Jesus taught that in the church the wheat (converted) and weeds (unconverted) grow up together. Further, it is a virtual certainty that even among the truly converted, most would still be infants, babes in Christ—and just like good hearted children who want to do the right thing to please mommy and daddy—they don't know how reality works, so they look to authorities to tell them what is right and wrong. And that caused the factionalism—who is right, Apollos, Peter, Paul, James, Jesus? Who has the final authority—and you can see this elementary arguing is the exact type of things children who want to be good but are still afraid they will make a mistake, get it wrong, do. Why? Because they are focused on rules and conformity and haven't grown up to understand the reasons why something is right or wrong, they are following their trusted parent—my mommy said we don't have to brush our teeth because we use a water pick to keep them clean, and the other child replied, well I am obedient to my mommy and she says we must brush our teeth with a brush for five minutes in the morning and evening. And a third child says, well, my mommy taught me we only have to brush for 1 minute if we use toothpaste with fluoride. And a fourth child says, well I follow my father who said, fluoride is dangerous so we only brush with water. And Paul hears about it and writes, who do you think made your teeth your mothers or fathers—and who knows what keeps them healthiest? The Creator, that is who you are supposed to be following.

So, factions, along with all the other conflicts arise out of the same root problem, sin-sick hearts that have not matured.

Okay, then how do we get rid of the factions?

It all depends on how one sees God's law, kingdom, methods, and principles.

If one uses God's methods then we present truth in love and leave everyone free to make up their own mind. We do not fear having our ideas questioned because truth loses nothing by investigation, so we prayerfully reason together through the various views, ideas, questions, seeking harmonized and integrated truth from the various threads of evidence, of reality, provided by our Creator—Scripture, science and nature, and the experiences of life. And we rest confident upon beliefs that are borne out in reality to be true, functional, how things actually are.

But if one sees God's law as imposed, like human law then...

We seek to get rid of factionalism by clearly defined rules and enforcement from authority. We make clearly defined doctrines, develop a creed, a list of fundamental beliefs. We establish a system of membership that requires attestation to the creed. We tie baptism into Christ to attestation to the creed. We create study guides for the membership that consistently reinforces the creed to ensure we don't have factions arise, that every mind stays locked into the same system of thinking—all of this is done to ensure that new light from heaven, new truth, unfolding truth is kept away from the minds of people, for new truth could cause factions, divisions, conflict, and we must have unity.

Jesus was teaching in Capernaum when a demoniac interrupted and Jesus drove out the demon and the Bible says:

- The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, "What is this? A new teaching" Mark 1:27 NIV84.

What Jesus was teaching was perceived as a new teaching. In reality, it wasn't, but because their system had been infected with legal, imposed law, distortions, when Jesus spoke the truth about God's design law reality they thought it was new. And what is the response to unfolding truth when our system of beliefs is built on the imposed law lies? It is fear and insecurity with an inner urgency to act to hold together the church, to stop factionalism through protecting the old landmarks and historical doctrines—by what method?

When our beliefs are built on distortions that protect a spirit of fear, that spirit of fear arouses when truth is presented—initially becoming more fearful and desperate to hold the old system of beliefs in place to make us feel secure by resisting, denying, and rejecting the truth.

Our fear can be so strong that we actually end up calling the people bring the truth agents of Satan—and they accused Jesus of working with demonic power.

This reveals the next step in the worldly methods of protecting the church from factionalism, because indoctrination campaign alone is not enough to keep out the truth and keep minds in darkness, why?

Because of how reality works: truth is unfolding and the Holy Spirit is working on sensitive hearts by revealing new and advancing insights into God's kingdom. So new truths will arise in the hearts and minds of all who are following Jesus, because God is the infinite source of truth and we are finite, so it is the outworking of reality—we cannot avoid learning new truths as we daily grow in our relationship with the Lord.

And just as in medicine, science, information technology and every other field of study, truth unfolds. So indoctrination is not enough to keep the people lockstep and believing the same thing—a system of hierarchy must be put in place to police the thoughts and purge from membership the voices of advancing light. The organization must institute worldly systems of hierarchy and authority, authority of office, position, claim, committee, declaration, anything but the authority of truth—but of course, this is only done to prevent factions and protect the vulnerable from heresy.

But such systems always obstruct the truth and prevent the gospel from going forward. Why? How reality works.

How does truth on any subject advance through humanity?

Does new truth happen this way: One day every person in the world awakens with the new truth understood and accepted?

Or does it happen this way: A few individuals have an epiphany, an insight, an idea that they share, propose, put forth and then that idea is tested against Scripture, by its application in reality, against reliable standards and design laws of life. Initially, the new truth is resisted but as the evidence supports the new position, more people are convinced and change their views and share the new truth with others who study and are persuaded by the evidence and the truth gradually spreads through the human family?

Consider germ theory. When first proposed by Pasteur and Lister, the idea that there were invisible organisms that caused disease was ridiculed and rejected by the medical authorities. Doctors refused simple hygiene recommendations, such as handwashing and sterilization of instruments. But, the idea was tested in reality and patient outcomes demonstrated marked reductions in infections and deaths after surgery. The Mayo brothers (founders of the Mayo Clinic) were lovers of truth and they accepted germ theory and began applying Lister's sterilization techniques in their hospital and had drastically improved outcomes. More investigation was done, experiments, instruments to examine microscopes were developed, and more evidence was compiled. This led others to accept the truth, more evidence came in to support this new perspective, and germ theory slowly spread around the world and today is accepted in all cultures.

This is how ALL truth advances, whether scientific truth or biblical truth. Why is this the case? Because of how reality works—God designed and created human beings with genuine freedom. Every person must be fully persuaded in their own mind in order for salvation truth to have any benefit for them—why?

Because salvation truth is not ideas acknowledged, it is reality, individuals choosing to change their understanding, priorities, beliefs, values leading to actual living trust in the Creator who then fills them with a new spirit, and all of that that encodes within their brain resulting in reality-based transformation of the being. This cannot be done through external application of might and power, only through internal application of truth, love, and trust.

A mother can forcibly wash the dirty hands of their toddler before dinner without the toddler understanding anything about germ theory—and the toddler will benefit from having reduced risk of sickness. Why? Because of how reality works, the germs have been objectively removed.

But sin is not an external germ on the body, it is an internal corruption of heart and mind, an infection of lies that cause distrust of God and corrupts the spirit with fear and selfishness. And salvation is

healing and restoring of the heart, mind, and character of the sinner back into living trust with God by removing the lies, restoring trust, purging the fear by filling the heart with love, washing the guilt and shame with a new identity that comes from Christ—a new living breath of life, the spirit of Christ.

And because of how we are designed, how reality works, our cleansing from sin, from lies, fear, distrust, and selfishness, cannot be done by the application of physical might, power, force, rules, imposed law, law enforcement, legal penalties, compliance committees, or any other external means of behavior monitoring and control. Every person must be fully persuaded in their own mind.

What is required is exactly what God has provided—truth, love, and freedom to choose a new sinless life received through trust that provides divine power to succeed when we choose.

And as our hearts, minds, lives, characters, are built upon Jesus, His kingdom of truth, love and freedom, the Rock of our salvation, when the storms of false accusation, rejection, and every other attack come, we are not moved, we grieve for the accusers and say like Jesus, like Stephen, “Father, forgive them, they don’t realize they are destroying themselves.”

We realize reality, that they are sick and their minds are delusional and our Christlike love, patience, and consistent advancement of the truth of His design law kingdom, of how reality works, provides lived out evidence of the difference between the two systems—the system of lies, fear, selfishness, imposed law, external control, dogmas, creeds, fundamental beliefs enforced through compliance and the system of truth, love, trust, and freedom.

So, with this in mind, the methods of God, truth, love, freedom versus the methods of Satan, lies, fear, coercion, control—we can examine the systems and structures of the church and evaluate what systems and structures in the church foster the principles and kingdom of God and which do the opposite.

If you were to design a church organization to maximize the ability for truth to advance, unfold, and spread throughout the membership at the fastest possible rate, what would that organizational structure look like?

Conversely, if you were to design an organizational system to maximize the opposition to unfolding truth, to keep the members locked into a system of thinking that resists the unfolding truth, what would that organizational structure look like?

As you consider these questions remember how reality works:

- Truth never advances in a population by everyone awakening with agreement upon new truth.
- Truth advances with individuals studying, being enlightened by the Holy Spirit, bring their ideas forward, testing them against Scripture, science and nature, experiences of life—in other words reality.

- Then presenting them to others—those who are lovers of truth will honestly examine the new ideas and concepts and they will study and examine and test and if true they will accept it and share it and truth spreads.

With this in mind, what kind of organizational structure maximizes the growth in truth and what kind of structure shuts it down?

Would a system with central hierarchical authority with a single human being or a small committee of people as the authority who decides what is true, orthodoxy, right and then set up a creed, a list of fundamental beliefs, and then enforce that list of beliefs by accepting and retaining in membership those who stay faithful to what the leadership has determined is orthodoxy be a system that maximizes growth in truth? Or would it be a system that maximizes stagnation, maximizes resistance to truth?

What about setting up an organization that rather than having a central hierarchical authority it disperses authority to local small groups, the local church body has authority over its own local group, and they organize together with collective authority in their local conferences, which organize together with local authority in their unions, divisions, and ultimately worldwide.

Consider the difference in how unfolding truth is experienced in these two structures.

Because truth is initially questioned, and often resisted, advancement of truth is slow and even contentious at times. With local control truth unfolds just like it did with germ theory, some groups will practice the new truth, while others will stick with tradition and the old landmarks. In time, however, what is reality-based truth will be demonstrated to be healthier, more evidence supporting the unfolding truth will be identified, resulting in greater acceptance until practiced by the vast majority—unless some obstacle is inserted into the system that functions to prevent truth from its normal and natural advancement. And what is that obstacle? A central hierarchical organization—a top-down authoritarian system of rules and rule enforcement. The methods of the world!

In that system, when new truth presents, it is not applied, tested, and accepted, it is viewed as a threat to hierarchy, to orthodoxy, to power and therefore procedures must be in place to protect the system, the structure, the orthodoxy—and unfolding truth is obstructed.

Now, what if a church organization was initially designed with local control, what method could Satan introduce that if accepted would corrupt that system from within and functionally establish a hierarchy of central orthodoxy while still appearing to give local control?

- First and foremost reject design law and accept and promote the lie that God's law functions like human law—a system of rule that require policing and enforcement.
- Once that first lie is accepted, the system, the minds and hearts that believe it, function on fear, threat assessment, and survival drives and will seek safety and security through right rules, doctrines, ceremonies, beliefs, and ever more power and control to enforce their way.
 - This is because of how reality works. All false systems are by definition false and inherently unstable, they are based on ideas, beliefs, practices that are out of harmony

with how reality works and will slowly deteriorate and decay and thus will require ever increasing external authority, rules, enforced structure, and control. The system will devolve into a system of fear and threat with proscribed actions for people to take that they are told will resolve the threat, while keeping the people trapped in fear, and giving the elites and the false system more power.

- God's kingdom is the kingdom of reality of truth, and truth loses nothing by investigation, by examination, by testing, but will instead be confirmed and expanded. And when truth is applied the system becomes healthier, more coherent, and the need for external rules, oversight, compliance, pressure, threat, decrease and fear evaporates. Consider children who brush their teeth based on a rule and fear of getting in trouble with mommy or daddy. As they mature, as truth, reality is understood and applied, they internalize it, solidify it into their hearts, and continue to brush because of truth, reality, and a change in their understand and motivation of heart and when that happens the rule goes away, the fear of getting in trouble evaporates and greater love and trust in the parent is established.

This is how reality works, truth, winning us to trust, that we apply and experience in our lives and are transformed and experience ever more freedom.

But when the system is motivated by fear, rules and rule enforcement, it continues to decay, with ever increasing problems and escalations in fear, with more central authority and attempts to control behavior through compliance and purging from membership the voices of truth.

So, if a system was set up with local control and one wanted to corrupt that system and obstruct advancing truth, the first step would be to reject design law and accept the lie that God's law is imposed and requires external enforcement. And then, with that false view of God's law as foundational, the next steps to corrupt the system are to:

- Indoctrinate the members into that false legal system. Teach them that God's laws are imposed and enforced through punishment, which incites fear and undermines trust in God and shifts trusts from God to the systems the false religion controls
- Then indoctrinate into a theology that increases fear of punishment (not fear of sin, fear of punishment for sin).
- Then teach a mechanic, a system of rules and conformity that one must comply with to stay out of legal trouble with God, but also with the organization.
- Then make your list of rules and behaviors the orthodox list and ensure specific elements will be behaviorally measurable and distinct from other groups and make those elements legal requirements for salvation.
- In such a legal system, someone must be the umpire, the referee, the judge, the one to determine the orthodoxy and therefore who is right and wrong when disagreements arise. So set up an orthodoxy committee, some form of Biblical research committee that is invested with authority from the system to determine from their ruling what is the official truth.

- Then form a creed, a list of fundamental beliefs, that become a test of orthodoxy and require all members to publicly proclaim faith in that list.
- Tie membership in the organization to the creed.
- Restrict baptism into Jesus to those who proclaim faith in the creed (so don't baptize until they have completed their indoctrination classes).
- Then police the membership to ensure the list is enforced. This will take multiple layers:
 - Control the curriculum of the church owned schools, particularly the seminaries and teach the corrupt imposed law legal theology to all seminary graduates.
 - Require church leaders, particularly pastors, be trained in the seminaries that teach the orthodoxy.
 - Slowly take over the Bible teachers at the high school and elementary school levels, ensure they are indoctrinated into the penal orthodoxy and then, of course, control the textbooks.
 - Ensure the worldwide church gets the same weekly church Bible study guide that consistently indoctrinates into the orthodoxy.
 - If pastors arise with new light, seek to intimidate them into compliance and silence them, if not, fire them. How, ensure the local congregation does not pay their salary just in case the local pastor and congregation are accepting advancing light, the employing conference can purge the pastor and replace them with one to reinforce the orthodoxy.
 - If members arise locally and are voted into office, SS teach, elder, deacon who bring advancing light, it is the pastor's job to oppose it, to guide them back to the orthodoxy of penal substitution theology with a punishing god who is the source of death. If the pastor cannot achieve this then remove that person from office. If the pastor has lost control of the church board and cannot remove the voices of truth from local office, then replace the pastor.
- Ensure ownership of property is removed from the local congregation so that if a local congregation embraces advancing truth and light and the conference cannot redirect them back to the orthodoxy, then the conference can purge that group from the system by closing down the property.
- And then, when the representatives from the local congregations come together in official church capacity, at official meetings of the worldwide church, ensure that the agenda, rules, procedures put in place are established by the ruling elites in committees outside of the body of representatives, and make sure those rules and procedures give the appearance of representative bottom up advancement of light, but ensure that in reality the procedures prevent honest, open, and real discussion and advancement of truth. How? By setting the agenda of what can be discussed, by preselecting what motions or people can be voted upon, and by restricting the time for delegates to discuss what the central committee has determined can be discussed. And if per chance, a glimmer of truth was to break through this gauntlet of obstruction, then procedure will require that such advancing light will be diverted to a study committee where it will be buried in years of study so that the truth never come before the church.

This is why every person must be fully persuaded in their own mind, we must study for ourselves, and why one of the founders of the SDA church wrote the following—which is interesting comment about what she saw as how truth would unfold as we approach the events right before Christ's return, what do you think?

- It has been shown me that our camp meetings are to increase in interest and success. As we approach nearer the end, I have seen that in these meetings there will be less preaching and more Bible study. There will be little groups all over the ground with their Bibles in their hands, and different ones leading out in a free, conversational study of the Scriptures. E.G. White *Testimonies to the Church* vol. 6 p. 87.

The lesson takes the position that the problem in Corinth of immorality was due to factions, loss of central control.

But the problem in Corinth was the natural unfolding of truth and error fighting out on hearts and minds. It is the pursuit of the elimination of controversy, the fear of one's ideas being questioned, the lack of understanding of reality, the building a system upon error that is the true problem, which leads to the implementation of methods that shut out the advancing light.

In his book *The Subversion of Christianity*, Jacques Ellul describes the process of how Christianity became subverted. He details the history of the church betraying the gospel of Jesus that transforms hearts for a legal code that punishes bad moral behavior.

Ellul writes:

- The popes use laws to fight the corruption of the clergy ... the church's reaction to the encounter with immorality, its immense attempt to enforce law and morality, and its reply to loose conduct in the ethical fields is closely connected with the error of confusing the church and society. ... **The perversion, then, was that of making the gospel into law** ... the mistake was dealing with these on the moral and legal plane instead of following the example of Paul, who always works through the moral question to the spiritual question, gets back to the essence of the revelation in Christ, and from this derives some models of conduct that are consistent with faith and love. The church did not do this. It thus set itself on the same level as the world and treated moral matters on the moral plane. *The Subversion of Christianity* pp. 88, 89, emphasis mine.

What is the problem in the Roman church and what is the problem in our church today? Replacing God's design law reality with the imposed law lie. That is why the final message to the world is a call to return to worshipping God as Creator, which requires rejecting the rules-oriented approach and returning to reality, to understanding all of God's laws are design laws that function within the living being. Then when we are won to love and trust we experience healing and restorative power through reality-based reconnection with God, the living source of life.

But what if Jesus were the true head of the church, what then? Would a centralized system with Jesus at the head and which ran as a system of rules, with Jesus providing all the answers—which are always 100% accurate and true—and which we are to believe **because Jesus, our King, has said it**, result in the outcome God wants for His universe, why or why not?

I ask this question because I think many people believe this is the goal, a system with Jesus at the head telling us all the answers that we are to believe because He said it.

Would such a system result in what God wants? Why or why not?

And what does the evidence of history reveal?

Did God use this method of telling people what to believe in heaven when Lucifer started his rebellion? When Lucifer lied about God, while God, of course, spoke the truth, did He stop and say, “You have heard Lucifer, and I have spoken the truth—now make up your mind. I have said it, believe it, that is all there is to it. I assure you I am righteous, I am holy, what I say is correct and accurate and if you don’t believe me, then because what I said is true and you have refused to believe it, I will in justice kill you. I only want your love and trust but now that I have spoken the truth and you have refused to believe it, I can no longer trust you. You are in rebellion, so I must kill you, even though I don’t want to. So please choose to trust and believe me so I won’t have to kill you.”

Did God use this method in heaven? Why not? What happens if this method is used BY SOMEONE SPEAKING THE TRUTH? It incites doubt, fear, rebellion—why? Because first, it violates one of God’s design law, the law of liberty—love only exists in freedom. To violate liberty destroys love, undermines trust, and incites rebellion. So, Satan loves it when Christians present a doctrinal truth set in the imposed law lie that deceives people into thinking that God will kill them if they don’t believe what He said.

God cannot win by use of law and law enforcement, this is why He said it is not my might or power but by His Spirit of truth and love that wins people to freely choose to trust.

On the road to Emmaus did Jesus use the method of speaking the truth from His position of authority as God with the disciples, “I am the risen Savior, believe because I say so”? Why did Jesus NOT use that method?

Because it would have no transforming power to believe the right thing without understanding why it is right.

If you believe $2+2=4$ *because* the teacher says so—you may know the right answer but you are not secure. All a deceiver has to do is be more persuasive, convincing, dynamic, or come from a position of higher authority than the teacher and tell you $2+2=7$ and you will believe it.

God will NOT use the method of believe based on His proclamations of truth alone—even though He will always proclaim the truth. No, God is the God of reality, all truth is on His side and He wants us

to believe not merely because He spoke the truth, but because in reality it is true. And when we follow truth it always leads back to God.

Satan has no truth on his side, thus he absolutely wants to get people pursuing “truth” by any means other than the truth, believing because someone said it, because of a rule, a creed, a doctrine, a miracle, sign, wonder, a strong powerful feeling or conviction—anything other than reality itself.

Satan will come as an angel of light, like He tempted Jesus in the wilderness, even quoting Scripture. He will come impersonating Christ, and those who believe because God said it, will be extremely vulnerable to accepting Satan as Christ. And those who believe because God said it **and also** believe the lie that God’s law functions like human law, will have no real defense against satanic deception.

When people hold to the human law fiction they misunderstand what they are seeing. They see the immorality, sinful behaviors, and think that this immoral and corrupt behaviors are the problem. They see “law breaking,” and they want “justice” and in their false understanding of reality their “justice” requires punishment, and they seek more rules, more oversight, more external enforcement of various kinds.

But when we return to reality and worship our Creator God of reality as Creator—we realize that all the bad deeds, sins, are *symptoms*, the external manifestations of hearts and minds corrupted by lies, fear and selfishness.

And that justice is not punishing people for their symptoms, but providing a real remedy that heals and delivers them from the sin-sickness of heart that causes the symptoms.

And, if people refuse the free remedy provided by God at infinite cost, then the justice of God, of design law, of truth, love, freedom, of how reality actually works is to set them free to reap what they have insisted upon and that is decay, degradation, disintegration, and death—exactly what happens when people refuse healing remedy. And that is what the Bible teaches, those who sow to the carnal nature from that nature reap destruction Galatians 6:8.

What is so sinister and toxic about the penal legal religion is that the people caught up in it know something is wrong, they know they are sin-sick in heart and mind, they struggle with insecurity, fear, guilt, shame, they are afraid of punishment, death, and facing their record of sin, and thus they want deliverance, they want freedom, they want to be saved, they want peace with God and within themselves, but they are deceived by the lie that God’s law is imposed into believing that they need to be saved from God, from His legal punishment, rather than being saved from sin.

Thus, the desperately hold to the penal legal lie in hopes of salvation claiming belief in ideas that function to hide and protect them from God, but the way reality works that very system of belief keeps them in fear, keeps their hearts and minds separated from God, they cling within themselves to beliefs that they intend and long for to hide them from God because they don’t trust God, and thus they keep themselves cut off from God while claiming to believe in Him. This is exactly what the Pharisees in Christ’s day did.

SUNDAY

The lesson focuses on a specific issue in the Corinthian church, read 1 Corinthians 5:1-5:

- It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans: A man has his father's wife. And you are proud! Shouldn't you rather have been filled with grief and have put out of your fellowship the man who did this? Even though I am not physically present, I am with you in spirit. And I have already passed judgment on the one who did this, just as if I were present. When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present, hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord. 1 Corinthians 5:1-5 NIV84.

There is a lot in this paragraph, but let's read the third paragraph from the lesson:

- However, this bad situation gets worse. Paul is more stunned when realizing that, rather than feeling sorry about the situation, the Corinthians were even **proud of themselves for tolerating such a sin** (1 Cor. 5:1, 2, NIV). Thus, he intends to correct not only the immoral man but also the church for its apparent dissonance between faith and practice. In fact, Paul makes it clear constantly that the **church's indulgent attitude** toward the incestuous man demanded a correction. **But being proud of such a sexual scandal, and even boasting of it** (1 Cor. 5:2, 6)! This was too much for Paul to bear. What was wrong with these people? *Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2026, First and Second Corinthians*, p. 31, emphasis mine.

How do you read the pride that the Corinthians were having in this situation? Do you think they were proud of sexual immorality and were actively seeking to promote more sexual immorality, or where they proud of something else?

I think they were proud of their supposed gracious, kind, patient, loving and accepting attitude toward this man and the woman. I don't think they were proud of the sin going on, but they boasted as to their kind and accepting attitude toward them.

Is it a problem to be accepting, kind, non-judgmental toward those actively living destructively? Why?

Because it is, in reality, not love! And this is one of Satan's greatest tricks, deceits, traps—what some call toxic empathy, the compassion, love, and concern that focuses on how someone will feel, the fear of hurting another person's feelings, the concern that they might get upset, or they might feel condemned or judged if we speak truth in love. So instead we don't speak the truth, we don't communicate reality of health and life, we just lovingly comfort them as they destroy themselves.

But the Bible tells us that love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. You cannot actively, and in reality, love people if you are not being truthful, advancing and apply the truth, which requires

we understand truth, design law, what is actively and objectively healthy—in the relationships, domains, situations where it is appropriate for us to do so.

And when we love someone, have the proper connection and relationship with them, and we see them engaging in activities that are destructive—and I don't mean they stumble, make a harmful choice, but experience the reality-based pain that choice caused and repent and go a different direction. No, I am talking about people who are living destructively and deceiving themselves into thinking it is good, healthy, or at a minimum not harmful—if we love such a one we don't ignore it, we tell them and explain why.

For instance, a loved one who is smoking marijuana (not a brief experimentation and already given it up but actively using) and they think it is a medicine, that it helps them. If you love them you don't actually go along with that, if you love them you engage with them in efforts to bring the truth to them and win them to reality and realize that they are destroying their brain, that it is toxic, in reality, regardless of how it makes them feel.

And what causes many people to think it is okay to smoke marijuana? The lies and propaganda that it is not harmful and the imposed law lies, that the state has passed a law to make it legal, therefore if it is legal it is okay, they can't be doing anything wrong if it is legal. And this exposes the difference between human law and God's law. Humans can pass laws to make marijuana legal, but they can never pass laws to make it healthy.

If marijuana is only a problem because it is illegal, then if we make it legal it is no longer a problem. If sin is a problem only because it breaks a rule, then if we can get the legal punishments paid by Jesus then our ongoing sin is no longer a problem. It is all paid for.

One cannot love without being truthful and that requires returning to design law and how reality works. However, the other ditch on the opposite side of cheap grace which the Corinthian church was falling into, is the penal legal ditch, in which sin is behavioral, and various facts and truths become regimented into legal behavioral standards that are judged externally and applied without genuine love. And people become judgmental and intolerant of those who don't dress like them, eat like them, observe Sabbath like them etc.

The judgment that Paul talks about here is not a legal judgment, it is a diagnostic judgment, diagnosing accurately what is wrong, why it is wrong, and what is the most therapeutic action.

And toxic empathy is not therapeutic, it colludes with evil and promotes destruction and this is what we see in our society today, and it is being reacted to by an increasing intolerance and judgmentalism and the world needs Jesus, God's truth, reality-based grace built upon truth and love combined.

So what are therapeutic interventions for this....

MONDAY

Paul said to do the following,

- Hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord. 1 Corinthians 5:5 NIV84.

What does this mean?

Let's try an illustration and see if sheds any light onto what is transpiring.

Someone you love is in the kitchen preparing a meal—this is a metaphor for their living their life. And you see them putting in rotten eggs, sawdust, marijuana, several cups of salt. You immediately recognize that this is going to not only be awful, but unhealthy. So, in love, wanting to be a blessing, you begin to add sugar, vanilla, cream, flour, chocolate, and other flavorings so that what comes out of the oven will look and taste much better.

But, despite your best efforts, because of what they are putting in the bowl, what is the product that comes out of the oven?

And when the inedible, nausea inducing cake comes out of the oven, will your loved one realize that the problem was with what they did and not what you did?

One of two things happens in this scenario, either you have been effective enough in diminishing the immediate toxic effects so the person doesn't realize how bad what they are doing is, so they eat it, and keep making it and slowly get worse over time as the toxicity builds in them. Or, if they do get immediately sick from their product, they blame you, "If you would have stayed out of it my cake would have turned out great, but you just couldn't leave me alone."

So, Paul is saying, stop it. Stop trying to comfort, stop the messaging that says it is all good, the reassurance that reduces the inherent fear, guilt, and shame that sin naturally causes. Stop seeking to numb up their own conscience, instead, get out of the way, if they refuse to acknowledge their own destructive preferences, if they won't listen to counsel, then set them free to reap what they have sown. Get out of the way, put them out of your fellowship, but with doors open to return WHEN they have changed their understanding of reality, repented, and want to live in harmony with God's design.

So turn him over to Satan to reap the full force of what sin does, the full force of the fear, pain, guilt, shame, confusion, until they have come to realize what they are doing is destroying them. This is the story of the Prodigal Son. This is the alcoholic hitting rock bottom.

And when that happens, and they have opportunity to turn and surrender in repentance, then their spirit/life, can be saved as they die to the old carnal life and are reborn in Christ.

TUESDAY

Read 1 Corinthians 6:1-8:

- If any of you has a dispute with another, dare he take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the saints? Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life! Therefore, if you have disputes about such matters, appoint as judges even men of little account in the church! I say this to shame you. Is it possible that there is nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute between believers? But instead, one brother goes to law against another—and this in front of unbelievers! The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated? Instead, you yourselves cheat and do wrong, and you do this to your brothers. 1 Corinthians 6:1-8 NIV84.

What is going on here? What is the problem?

Why were they going to local courts? Because they thought they would get a better judgment than from their fellow believers—why?

Because the believers are still immature—as evidenced by all the problems. They are converted to Jesus, but they haven't grown up. And what do good little children do to try and be good? They seek to know the rules and apply them—they become rule-keepers and law enforcers.

But Paul is calling them to grow up and understand how reality works, that when we understand reality we can make accurate diagnosis, judgments of what is actually wrong, what is the cause of the pathology, the sickness, the pain, suffering, and what is the reality-based solution to bring healing. And that is why we will be able to accurately diagnose angels who fell, because we understand reality. There is nothing penal legal going on. But if we read the Bible through the human law lens, then we think Paul is describing a judicial or legal judgment and I have heard pastors teach that one day in heaven the saints will sit on juries and pass judgment on the fallen and angels to determine their guilt and how much punishment they deserve.

No, that is not what Paul is saying. He is saying that we will be able to evaluate and judge exactly what the angels did, where they went wrong, what errors they made, what deviations from reality they chose and encoded, and exactly why they reap what they reap in the end.

And Paul is saying, when you understand God's reality then when disputes arise you can make judgments as to the true underlying reason for the dispute, diagnose where lies, fear, selfishness are operating in the heart and make judgments about what is most therapeutic to help bring healing to hearts minds and relationships.

WEDNESDAY

The lessons points us to 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8:

- Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more. For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God; and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you. For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit. 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8 NIV84.

What does it mean that the “Lord will punish men for all such sins...”

What law lens do you understand this through?

Imposed law, God keeps a record, if you do bad stuff, He uses His power to inflict punishment upon you if you don't get legal coverage through Jesus being punished in your place.

But returning to reality, we realize punishment comes out from unremedied sin when grace and healing are rejected. No secret sin can avoid its punishment because every deviation from God's laws of life damage the person doing them. And if not healed they always result in further decay, degradation, and eventual destructions.

Now, which view is the one that is true? Why don't we let Paul himself tell us:

- Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, **from that nature will reap destruction**; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Galatians 6:8 NIV84.

This is how reality works—God is Creator, the builder of reality, and His laws are the design laws that sustain its operations. Sin is corruption, error, deviations from life. If we choose this we change ourselves, degrade ourselves, and deteriorate and die unless healed by our Creator. Jesus came to do that, to fix the corruption within humanity. If we reject the Spirit from then we remain in a state of decay and from that state we reap destruction.