

Victory of the Lamb – Foolproof Series – Morals – 1 Corinthians 5
January 9, 2022 – Pastor Bill Limmer

The expression *to draw a line in the sand* means you can go this far and no farther. For example when I was a kid on a rare occasion when I would act up – rarely – my parents would tell me to go to my room and not come out until they told me I could. I could enjoy the blessings of my room but I could not come out or there would be consequences. We can think about our computers too. We have firewalls for protection of personal information. And we are really glad that people can't just get all of our personal and financial information.

Today we are continuing our series **Foolproof**. This is a study of the book of 1 Corinthians. If you didn't catch Pastor Ben's message last week, I encourage you to go into the archive or Youtube and worship with it. It was a great message to start this series.

The setting for the Corinthian congregation and ours are like mirror images. Both of our cultures are pluralistic, hedonistic, materialistic. Both cultures tell us that happiness comes from having the freedom to choose your own morality. To be open-minded and accepting of every lifestyle is considered a virtue. Both cultures are open to new ideas because everything goes. So I am going to ask you to be open minded as I share a new idea for our culture which is really God's wisdom.

As we move into 1 Corinthians 5 we want to remind ourselves that Paul, the author of the letter, has already professed his love for the people of the Corinthian Church. And so in love he addresses them: 1 Corinthians 5:1 **It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that even pagans do not tolerate: A man is sleeping with his father's wife. And you are proud.** In Corinth a Christian or at least someone who called himself a Christian transgressed. The word transgression is a word that we sometimes use for sin and it means to cross the line. In the congregation there is a man who has crossed the line. He is sleeping with his stepmother. And everybody inside and outside of the congregation knows about it. Paul through the Holy Spirit says even the pagans, people far, far away from God, they don't even do that. And you have a man who is doing that and you are approving of it.

As we talk about this man's sin, keep this in mind: we are not talking about a sin of weakness, or sin of struggling, or falling and doing something . . . well stupid.

We aren't talking about repentant sin. We are talking about ongoing willful sin. The man is saying this is my right. This is my core value. This is my identity. If sleeping with my stepmom is wrong and it is not, I don't want to be right. And people were proud of his supposed freedom to say yes to sin.

Paul said, **Shouldn't you rather have gone into mourning and have put out of your fellowship the man who has been doing this?** When do you mourn? When a person dies. Paul says, you should have been mourning but you are celebrating. You should have been crying but you were clapping. You should have been on your knees in pleading pray but you were jumping up and down. By his actions this man has crossed the line and is outside of the community of believers. He is not alive in Christ. He is spiritually dead. You should be mourning.

Jesus says come as you are, but Jesus doesn't say stay as you are. Christians have been washed and purified by Jesus so that we can live holy lives of love, different than we were before. People who are in the church or want to be in the church are to follow Jesus not try to move the lines. To move the lines is to tell Jesus to follow you. If you want to follow Jesus, Christianity is your thing. If you don't want to follow Jesus, Christianity isn't for you.

Just because God's grace in Jesus forgives all sins doesn't mean we are to commit all sins. It doesn't even give us permission to commit a single sin. The man thought grace meant he could live any way he wanted. He was using God's grace as permission to sin. He was using God's grace to cross the line. And he thought it was great and so did the people.

And that is why Paul says in 1 Corinthians 5:5 **For my part, even though I am not physically present, I am with you in spirit. As one who is present with you in this way, I have already passed judgment in the name of our Lord Jesus on the one who has been doing this.** ⁴ So when you are assembled and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present, ⁵ hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord . . . I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people— ¹⁰ not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. ¹¹ But now I am writing to you that you must not associate with anyone who claims to be a brother or sister^[c] but is sexually immoral or

greedy, an idolater or slanderer, a drunkard or swindler. Do not even eat with such people. . . “Expel the wicked person from among you.” Remember this isn't a sin of weakness, or struggling against sin and failing, or a one-time big mess up. This is an ongoing I can live how I want to live sin. This is a public sin inside the church. And that is not ok. That is crossing the line.

1. We struggle with lines because we our culture says the most loving thing to do is to let him cross the line. It's ok. That is like allowing a child to play on I-94 and thinking it is going to turn out ok. It's not going to turn out ok. The words hand him over to Satan, judge those inside, expel the wicked person are words that say a line has been crossed. Remember this is not a sin of weakness, or falling into sin, even big sin, this isn't someone struggling to do the right thing, this is someone committed to doing the wrong thing. 2. We struggle because we are afraid to point out someone's sin because the light will shine back on us too because we too have crossed the line. We all have dirty little and dirty big secrets. 3. We struggle with it because we like to be liked. And if we say something they may not like us. And we will feel bad about that. And trust me, I get that one too.

But here is why we keep the line where God put it. Love. 1. Love for the person concerned. This person needs a wakeup call from their hypocrisy and lack of repentance. The desired outcome is the salvation of their soul. (Spoiler alert in 2 Corinthians the man has repented and is once again alive in Christ) 2. Love for the rest of the congregation. Paul says, 1 Corinthians 5:6-8 . **Don't you know that a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough? ⁷ Get rid of the old yeast, so that you may be a new unleavened batch—as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. ⁸ Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old bread leavened with malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.** When you put yeast into a batch of dough, it works it's way through the whole batch of dough. Yeast can't be managed. Yeast spreads throughout the whole batch. Sin cannot be managed. Sin spreads itself out. Jesus doesn't want sin to spread through the church. Love leads us to get involved because sin is destroying a person and threatens to destroy others. 3. Love for God. This is love for God – to obey his commands. When we are silent we are validating the person's behavior – which gives the impression that God is validating a way of life that is completely opposite of who he is.

Some of you are shaking right now because you think you have gone too far. You are worried that you are not a Christian because of what you have done. If that's you, take comfort in this - you are a Christian otherwise you wouldn't be worried about it.

In a few minutes we are going to celebrate the Lord's Supper. And if you are not a believer since this meal isn't for you, this would be a great time to think about what would life be like if I stood for something instead of falling for everything? What would life be like if I followed Jesus? And if you have any questions Pastor Ben and I are here to help!

So as we celebrate the Lord's Supper bring your sins of weakness, your sins of struggles, your big time sins, all your sins whatever, and if you who have been living in willful sin right now is great time to repent and stop the slide away from God and ask for Jesus help.

Here is our comfort and our hope. Remember when Paul said yeast goes through the whole batch of dough. Jesus is unleavened bread. He has no yeast of sin. Perfect in our place. His blood washes away our sin. As you come forward receive the unleavened wafer of Jesus' perfect life for you and since the wages of sin is death, receive Christ's blood because it should be yours and mine instead. Receive Christ's body and blood for your forgiveness.

The cross of Jesus is an uncrossable line. Jesus outstretched arms on the cross grabbed up every single one of our sins and kept them from getting to God. 1 Timothy 2:⁵ **For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus,** ⁶ **who gave himself as a ransom for all people.** And that's a new thought for our culture. The uncrossable line of Jesus cross is a new idea for our culture. **Your performance can never make your right with God. Only Jesus performance can make you right with God.** You aren't going to hear this from the box office movie smash hit. You aren't going to hear it on the most popular radio stations. Primetime sitcoms are going to share this with you. But you are going to hear it here. Because the uncrossable line of Jesus' cross is Foolproof and is God's wisdom for our salvation.