

## Lessons from the Sins of Church Leaders

Rarely does a week go by without hearing of a church leader who has abandoned the moral principles of the Bible. This is tragic and serves as a warning to all who confess Jesus Christ as Lord. We are admonished to "take heed, lest we fall." We know that within each of us lies the potential to do what others have done. However, this knowledge of our own propensity for evil thought and act does not justify or excuse any evil thought or act. Sin is sin regardless of who commits it or why they commit it. The cross not only calls us to holiness, it provides the power for holiness. Though any confessing believer may surreptitiously or blatantly choose to practice sin, thankfully many do not. When any confessing believer chooses to practice sin and that sin is exposed, the church is responsible to judge those within her midst, to discipline them, and to call them to repentance and restoration.

The following Scriptures offer instruction and warning to all believers, and especially to church leaders.

### **Be sure your sin will find you out.**

**Numbers 32:23** <sup>23</sup> But if you will not do so, behold, you have sinned against the LORD, and be sure your sin will find you out.

**Luke 12:2-3** <sup>2</sup> Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. <sup>3</sup> Therefore whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed on the housetops.

### **Church leaders/Teachers are held to a higher standard.**

**James 3:1** Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.

### **Church leaders who sin are to be rebuked before all.**

**1 Timothy 5:19-21** <sup>19</sup> Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses. <sup>20</sup> As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear. <sup>21</sup> In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels I charge you to keep these rules without prejudging, doing nothing from partiality.

### **Do not fellowship with one who claims to be a Christian yet lives immorally.**

**1 Corinthians 5:9-11** <sup>9</sup> I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people-- <sup>10</sup> not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. <sup>11</sup> But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler--not even to eat with such a one.

**Ephesians 5:5-7** <sup>5</sup> For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. <sup>6</sup> Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. <sup>7</sup> Therefore do not associate with them;

**Romans 16:17-18** <sup>17</sup> I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them. <sup>18</sup> For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive.

**Sin in the church is a time for the church to mourn.**

**1 Corinthians 5:1** It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife. <sup>2</sup> And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you.

**James 4:8-10** <sup>8</sup> Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. <sup>9</sup> Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. <sup>10</sup> Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

**We are called to pursue those who depart from the faith.**

**James 5:19-20** <sup>19</sup> My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, <sup>20</sup> let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

**A time may come for forgiveness and restoration.**

**2 Corinthians 2:6-11** <sup>6</sup> For such a one, this punishment by the majority is enough, <sup>7</sup> so you should rather turn to forgive and comfort him, or he may be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. <sup>8</sup> So I beg you to reaffirm your love for him. <sup>9</sup> For this is why I wrote, that I might test you and know whether you are obedient in everything. <sup>10</sup> Anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive. What I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of Christ, <sup>11</sup> so that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs.

**Galatians 6:1** Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.

The Bible challenges us to seek the balance of godly judgment and gracious forgiveness toward those who fall and to exercise great care over our own hearts at all times.

**Proverbs 4:23** <sup>23</sup> Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.

**1 Corinthians 6:18 - 7:1** <sup>18</sup> Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. <sup>19</sup> Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, <sup>20</sup> for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

**Romans 6:12-13** <sup>12</sup> Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions. <sup>13</sup> Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.