

# Called Workers Who Commit Public Sin

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“Called Workers Who Commit Public Sin.” It might seem strange that we should talk about such a topic. Isn’t everything within the ivory towers of the church pure? Aren’t called workers more perfect than other people? Aren’t all their sins at least done only in private? Of course, the answer to all those questions is “no.” I don’t have to remind any of you that called workers do fall into public sin.

Perhaps it has become so common that it doesn’t shock us as much as it used to, or as much as it should. Most of you have probably been involved in at least one case of a called worker who committed a public sin. I have not been out in the ministry all that long. Yet in my short life, I’ve seen how the public sin of a called worker has affected four different congregations in one way or another. Perhaps there was a pastor who had a drinking problem or whose greed tempted him to steal from the church. Maybe there was a lady teacher who got pregnant outside of marriage or one who was not faithful to her calling. Possibly there was a male teacher charged with child abuse or one who promoted false doctrine among the lambs of Jesus’ flock. Called workers do fall into public sin, and it happens all too often.

I don’t claim to be an expert on the subject nor do I have any easy answers for dealing with the problem. Each case must be dealt with in an individual manner. In this paper I simply want to present some things for you to consider in dealing with this issue. Since I like alliteration, I’ve chosen to outline my paper with the following terms: Sin, Our Savior, The Scriptures, The Sinner, The Saints, Self, and Surrender and Submission.

## Sin

We shouldn’t be surprised that called workers fall into public sin. We are living in a world where we are surrounded by sin. We see it on every side. We read about it in newspapers and magazines. We hear about it on the radio and from other people. We see it in television and in the movies. We live in a sinful world that appears to be getting worse and worse every day, and it won’t get any better. Jesus reminds us that in the last days, “...many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold...” (Matthew 24:10-12)

We shouldn’t be surprised because we are all sinful human beings—even called workers. Our human nature is completely corrupt, and no matter how hard we try, that sinful nature clings to us. Our sinful nature isn’t just a minor personality imperfection. It is not only spiritually dead and spiritually blind. It is also “hostile to God. It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so.” (Rom. 8:7) Our Old Adam fights tooth and nail against the truth.

We shouldn’t be surprised because the devil is doing everything possible to destroy Christ’s church and his people. The roaring lion is not just seeking to scare us, but to devour us. He will go to great lengths to accomplish this task. Today, he hasn’t sought to destroy us with the same outward persecution which the early church faced. Yet, he hasn’t given up. He is attacking us from within. He can use the sin of the called worker to discredit Christ’s church to the people outside of the church, and to discourage the people who are already within it.

We shouldn’t be shocked when called workers fall into public sin because this happened in the Old Testament, too. Just look at Eli’s sons. Even though they were called to publicly serve

in the temple as priests, they sinned openly before the people. When Eli gave them one of his flimsy rebukes, he said, "Why do you do such things? I hear from all the people about these wicked deeds of yours. No, my sons; it is not a good report that I hear dreading among the *Lord's* people." (1 Sam. 2:23,24) Another example is King David. He was called to be the leader of God's people. Yet, he too fell into the sin of murder and adultery. A public sin which not only brought shame on David, but also on God. Nathan rebuked David saying, "...by doing this you have made the enemies of the *Lord* show utter contempt..." (2 Sam. 12:14)

We shouldn't be shocked because the New Testament church faced these same problems. Just look at the epistles, and see the problems which our New Testament brothers faced. Just look at the warning that God inspired the holy writers to give individuals and whole congregations. Paul warned the Romans about the public sin of false teachings when he said, "I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them." (Rom. 16:17)

The focus of this paper. is not on the private sin of called workers. Paul reminds us that "...*all* have sinned and fall short of the glory of God..." (Rom. 3:23) We aren't called to peek inside bedroom windows. We aren't called to turn over every rock in search of sin. We aren't called to be spies sent on a mission of dredging up dirt on our brothers and sisters who are called into the ministry. God hasn't called us to be the Reverend Sherlock Holmes. He has called us to preach the Gospel of Christ.

Even though he hasn't called us to search for sin, we aren't called to ignore it either. When a sin is made public, it must be dealt with. For instance, you might know that a fellow pastor is having a marriage problem. This certainly won't be dealt with in a public way, but when a divorce is filed then the sin becomes public. A young teacher might sin against the sixth commandment in secret, but it becomes public where God blesses that sinful union with a child. A teacher might have questions and doubts about certain doctrines, but when he publicly and persistently proclaims false doctrine we must deal with it.

When talking about public sin, we should keep in mind that we are not speaking about every time we see a called worker sin in weakness. I'm sure we have all been guilty of doing this. Perhaps we lost our temper with a delinquent. Maybe we said something which should not have been said. Possibly, we treated our family in a way that is not in keeping with the office of the ministry. For these sins, we must humbly go to our Father in heaven, and ask him to forgive us. We pray that he will create in us a heart that will turn from that sin, and turn toward a path of righteousness. God doesn't want us to self-righteously condemn others without taking the beam out of our own eye. Jesus reminded the Pharisees of this same fact. When they were ready to condemn the adulterous woman, he told them, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." (John 8:7)

Perhaps the public sins that we are dealing with is best summed up in our congregation's constitution. (I assume that our constitution is not dramatically different from the constitution of others in this respect.) St. Paul's Constitution states under "Removal from Office Article X": "Any officer of the congregation can, according to Christian form and order, be removed from office. Sufficient and urgent causes for removing a pastor or pastoral assistant *are persistent adherence to false doctrine, scandalous life, or willful neglect of duty.* All such action will be guided by Matthew 18:15-20."

The first area of sin with which our constitution deals is persistent adherence to false doctrine. We must remind ourselves that we are speaking about *persistent adherence*. We have probably all misspoken at one time or another; at least I have. We said something that we wished

we could take back. If we dealt with everyone who accidentally taught false doctrine, there probably wouldn't be anyone in the ministry.

But when the called worker promotes false doctrine, we have a different matter. Paul was very patient with those who showed a weakness of faith, but he lost his patience with those who continued to promote false teaching. He told the Galatians to restore the weak brother gently, but he wished that the Judaizers would emasculate themselves for their persistent error.

Secondly, the constitution speaks about a scandalous life-style. I know that in God's eyes sin is sin. He condemns loving something more than God with the same condemnation that he gives to bowing before a graven image. He condemns lust with the same severity that he condemns adultery. He condemns hate in the same way that he condemns murder. He condemns coveting with the same power that he condemns stealing.

Even though sin is sin, God does point out the seriousness of certain sins. In 1 Corinthians 6:9,10 we read, "Do you not know that the wicked *will not inherit the kingdom of God*? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers *will inherit the kingdom of God*." Another similar list can be found in Galatians 5:19-21: "The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this *will not inherit the kingdom of God*."

Thirdly, the constitution speaks about the willful neglect of duty. We are called into the ministry to be faithful. In Paul's second letter to Timothy he speaks about the faithfulness of the called worker. "And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others (2 Tim. 2:2)...But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry." (2 Tim.4:5) In 1 Corinthians 4:1,2 we are told, "So then, men ought to regard us as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the secret things of God. Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful." Professor Schuetze speaks about our faithfulness with these words, "Faithfulness is a comforting term, for it indicates that the Lord does not expect any one pastor to match another in ability or accomplishments, but rather to do only what he has been made able to do." (*The Shepherd Under Christ*, page 13)

Even though it is a comforting term, there are times that I have wondered what must be done to be faithful. How many hours each week? How many calls? How to divide time between church work and family? Therefore, we must emphasize here that we are speaking about *willful* neglect of duties. Notice the warning in Hebrews 10:26,27: "If we *deliberately* keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God." Look also at Numbers 15:30,31: "But anyone who sins *defiantly*, whether native-born or alien, blasphemes the *Lord*, and that person must be cut off from his people. Because he has despised the *Lord's* word and broken his commands, that person must surely be cut off; his guilt remains on him."

### **Love for Savior**

Now that we have established the sin that we are talking about, let us look about whom we should be concerned when a called worker falls into such a sin. The first person to consider is our Savior. We can't view this subject without first considering what our Savior thinks about sin and the sinner. We know that he loves us. He didn't just love us, but he showed us his love by

dying for us. He died for all sins, no matter, how heinous the crime. He died for private sins, public sins and even sins that we didn't realize we committed. He died for the sins of lay people and clergy. He died for your sins and my sins. You won't find any greater love than that.

We also know what he thinks about sin. He is a jealous God, "punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me." (Deut. 5:9) He is a God whose wrath is "being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men." (Rom. 1:18) The blue catechism reminds us that we need this warning to show us that God is serious about wanting us to keep every one of his commandments, and because our sinful nature opposes God's will and is inclined to do only evil. (See Questions 136 and 137)

We also must remind ourselves of the fact that the life of a Christian reflects on our Savior. He tells us all to "...let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:16) When a public sin is committed, a different light emits, one that reflects poorly upon the true Light of the World. This is true of laymen and especially true of those called workers who are representing him in his work on earth. Yes, God does expect more of called workers. Whether we like it or not, he tells us, "That servant who knows his master's will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows. But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked." Luke 12:47,48

Since he loved us and hates sin, we must also feel that same way. We can't condone sin, but we must condemn it. We can't hide it, but we must confess it. We can't ignore it, but must abhor it. We can't just let the public sin of a called worker pass by. Love for our Savior moves us to hate sin like our Savior hates sin. We can't ignore the very thing which caused our Savior to die. We can't underestimate that very thing which cost him so much. We must call sin, sin. We can't just sweep it under the carpet and ignore it any more than God could sweep sin under the carpet and ignore it. When a called worker falls into sin, our love for the Savior will move us to call a spade a spade. Our love for our Savior will move us to condemn sin with the same power that he condemned sin.

Our love for the Savior will move us to forgive as he has forgiven. When penitence is expressed by the fallen brother or sister, we must remind them of the Savior's dying love shown for them also. We cannot look down our noses like the self-righteous Pharisees.

### **Loves for Scripture**

When dealing with the public sin of a called worker, we must also remember our love for Scripture. Scripture defines sin. We certainly don't want anyone to think that Scripture doesn't mean what it says. If the called worker is caught in a sin and we ignore that sin, it could give the impression that the Bible doesn't really condemn that certain sin, or that the Bible doesn't condemn any sin at all. It could raise questions like: Did God really say that premarital sex is a sin? Did God really say that a husband and wife should be married until God parts them? Did God really say that drunkenness is a sin? Did God really say that child abuse is wrong? The list could go on and on.

In our day and age Scriptures are being attacked. People are again and again posing the question, "Did God really say?" As his people, we don't want to add fuel to that fire by ignoring the public sin of a called worker. We don't want people to think that the Bible has changed. We

don't want people to think that it is outdated. Our love for the truth of Scriptures will move us to be very careful that we don't cause people to misunderstand the truth.

Our love for Scripture will not only show in our love for the truth, but also in how the Scripture is used in each individual situation. We must use Scripture carefully and wisely. We must be careful how we divide the law and the gospel, and wisely use the doctrine that is needed at that time and in that place.

Great care test be taken that we don't offer the comfort of the gospel to someone who is still quite comfortable. We must be careful that we don't give the water of life to someone who is not thirsty. We will have to make greater use of the law on the called worker who is still making excuses for his sin, or for the congregation who is self-righteously breaking the eighth commandment in their condemnation of the called worker, or for the congregation who regards this certain public sin too lightly.

We must also be careful not to withhold the sweet message of the Gospel to those who have been crushed by the powerful hammer of God's law. Remember how Paul condemned the Corinthian church for withholding forgiveness from the man whom they excommunicated. The Gospel must be applied to the fallen brother or sister, to the offended brother or sister, and to the whole congregation.

When applying the law and gospel, we must take into account their attitude and their response to our admonition. Just look at the response of Jimmy Swaggart to his alleged public sins. The first time he got up before his congregation, and made a tearful confession and request for forgiveness. The second time he told them that what took place was none of their business. Perhaps there wasn't a sin in his latest escapade. (Always try to put the best construction on everything.) Even if there wasn't, it was the congregation's business because there was an alleged public sin. There seems to be some real resentment to the admonition that was given to him. In that case, the gospel was not needed yet, but the cutting edge of the law.

Such a task is not easy. Professor Habeck points this out in his essay on Church Discipline (*Our Great Heritage* #430, Vol. 3). "We contemplate the awful power and the awful responsibility which are involved in the use of the keys and approach the matter of dealing with the sinning brother with fear and trembling. Here we want to make no misstep. But how can we weak and erring human beings take sure steps? The promise of Jesus which follows is just what we need when overwhelmed with a sense of our fallibility and weakness, verse 19 (Matthew 18): "Again, I tell you that if two of you an earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven." So join with those whom you have asked to help you to try to gain your brother in praying for guidance in your undertaking."

### **Love for Sinner**

In dealing with this issue we must also be reminded of our love for the sinner. Our action must be motivated out of love for the one who has fallen into sin. This is the key behind any church discipline. Every effort must be made to gain him or her back to the Savior. As we look at Matthew 18, we can see that the motivating step even in excommunication is to gain back the fallen sinner. When Paul dealt with the sinner in the Corinthian church, he told them to accept him back after he repented of his sin. Even in Galatians, when dealing with the false teachers, he reminded the people to attempt to restore them gently.

Just look at how some were gained for the Savior in the Corinthian church. Before they came to faith some of them were sexually immoral, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, homosexual offenders, thieves, greedy, drunkards, slanderers and swindlers. Now they were a

new creation. They had been gained back. They were changed. Paul reminds them, “And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and try the Spirit of our God.” (1 Cor. 6:9,10)

When Paul gives his list of sins in Galatians 5:19-21, he then lists the fruit of the spirit. After that, in the next chapter, he writes, “Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should *restore him gently*. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.” We once again are reminded of our love for the sinner, and vary desire to gain him back to the Savior.

Love for the sinner might come easier in some cases than in others. If the called worker is a close friend, it is easy for us to love that brother or sister. It is easy for us to forgive them because love covers up a multitude of sins. If the offense is not too great, it might be easier to forgive them than if the sin offends us.

But what about that called worker with whom we didn’t always see eye to eye? What about that called worker who was a pain in the neck? What about that called worker that we secretly thought was getting what he deserved? God’s command is the same. Love your brother or sister, and try to gain them back. Jesus called Judas a friend even when he was going to betray him. We too want to show that same love and concern for all who fall into sin.

### **Love for Saints**

When considering the sin of the called worker, we must also remember our love for the saints. I am speaking about those against whom the called worker has sinned, if that is the case, the other members of our congregation, our fellow members of Synod, and even those members who are joined with us in a Synodical conference.

Paul reminds us that he wants us to be concerned about all our fellow saints. When a called worker sins, there is the danger that their sin will act as yeast working through the whole congregation. When Paul dealt with the immoral Corinthian, he warned the congregation, “Your boasting is not good. Don’t you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough? Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast—as you really are.” (1 Cor. 5:6,7) Paul quotes the same proverb when dealing with the false teachers in Galatia. “‘A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough.’ I am confident in the Lord that you will take no other view. The one who is throwing you into confusion will pay the penalty, whoever he may be.” (Gal. 5:9,10)

Paul reminds us that we should have special concern for those who are weak in the faith. “We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up.” Romans 15:1,2 Professor Habeck reminds us of this same concern in essay on Church Discipline “If a brother is allowed to go on in his sin without being dealt with, his example will offend others, leading them, at least if they are weak, to conclude that what he does is all right; if he may do it, they may do it too. Those who are on a low level spiritually might reason too that if he can get away with it, so can they...If there is a low level of spiritual life in a congregation, the breakdown of church discipline may well lie at the root.” (*Our Great Heritage* #435, Vol. 3)

God also reminds us that we should be concerned with the littlest saints, the children. Before Jesus gives us his steps for church discipline, he reminds us of the danger in causing one of his little children to sin. “But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.” (Matt. 18:6) This was brought to my attention very vividly when a fifth grade boy came up to me before catechism class, and asked if it was a sin for two people to live

together outside the estate of marriage. He knew two people who were doing this. He wanted the reassurance that this was still a sin. When called workers fall into sin, we do not want one of these little ones to underestimate the seriousness of the sin, especially if it is a public sin. If we as church leaders give the impression that sin is no big deal, it will affect our children, our grandchildren, our nieces and nephews. We want to give them a strong testimony against sins and on behalf of forgiveness.

When the sin is committed, the congregation should carry out their work of discipline against the called worker according to the instructions of Matthew 18. They should carry it out in love and courage, confident that God will be with them.

But what about other situations? Our Synod and District constitutions give their guidance in dealing with the called worker's sin. In case you don't have a copy of our constitution I have included the following lengthy quote which deals with this subject.

“a) In cases of discipline among pastors, teachers and congregations of both self-supporting and mission status, the district in which such pastors, teachers and congregations hold membership shall exercise original jurisdiction. The synod shall exercise appellate jurisdiction.

b) In cases of discipline among the faculties of the synod's schools and of the area high schools and administrators of synodical boards and commissions, the respective board or commission shall exercise original jurisdiction. The district in which the appellant is a member and the synod shall exercise appellate jurisdiction successively.

c) The two vice-presidents with the concurrence of the district circuit pastors may suspend the district president from his office. Within 60 days thereafter a special convention of the district, called by the vice-presidents, shall meet to consider the disciplinary actions. One of the vice-presidents shall preside at the special convention. The president may suspend a vice-president from his office with the concurrence of the remaining vice-president and the district circuit pastor. Within 60 days thereafter a special convention of the district shall meet to consider the disciplinary action. The further conduct of the proceeding shall be governed by Article XXII, Sections 4-8 of the district constitution, except that the district commission of review shall be elected by ballot from a slate of ten candidates submitted by the district nominating committee. The list of candidates shall be ratified by the convention.

d) In cases of discipline among missionaries under the jurisdiction of the Board of World Missions, the respective executive committee shall exercise original jurisdiction. The Board of World Missions and the synod shall exercise appellate jurisdiction successively. In the case of the Apache Indian Mission and the Spanish Mission within the confines of the district, however, jurisdiction over pastor, congregation and teachers shall be exercised as outlined in Section 7.25 (a).

e) In all cases of discipline not covered by the above paragraphs of this section, the synod shall exercise sole jurisdiction. Except as set out below, this decision is not subject to review by any digital or administrative body.

f) All correspondence and documentary evidence relative to a disciplinary action together with a detailed report of the proceedings thereof shall be filed by the acting district, board or commission with the president of the synod within 60 days after such disciplinary, action shall have been concluded.”

See also the following sections: 7.30 - Appeals to the District, Section 7.35 - Appeals to Synod, Section 7:40 - Right of the Disciplined Party, and Section 7:50 - Appeals from Removal from Office. See also the following sections of our District Constitution and Bylaws: Article XXI - Jurisdiction in Disciplinary Actions, Article XXII - Appeals to the District, Article XXIII - Appeals to the Synod, Article XXIV - Right of the Disciplined Party, and Article XXVI - Appeals from Removal from Office.

### **Love for Self**

When dealing with a public sin, we must also remember to love ourselves. No, I'm not following the rest of the world and promoting a new kind of self-love. We don't have to remind our sinful nature that we should love ourselves. Rather, we should be careful of our sinful nature and love our soul. We must take warning that we, too, don't fall into the same sin. As we look at the called worker who has fallen into public sin, we are reminded that it is only by God's grace that we are not in that same place.

Each of us must be warned not to take sin too lightly. Even bold Peter had to be reminded to be careful that he didn't fall. The inner circle of disciples received a similar warning in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus told them, “Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak.” (Matthew 26:41) The same warning went to the Galatians in chapter 6:1,2 “Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. *But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.* Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.”

When speaking about loving ourselves, I am simply reminding myself and each of us that we must be careful that we don't fall into public sin. We can't take sin too lightly. We can't be so confident in our own power that we don't need to be warned. Love yourself enough to be wary of all sin.

### **Surrender and Submission**

You are probably wondering what surrender and submission have to do with this paper. I needed another “S” for my final part, and these were two synonyms which my dictionary gave for resignation. Therefore, in this final section I will deal with whether the called worker should resign from the call when guilty of a public sin.

Should a called worker be asked to submit to resignation or is the call permanent? Luther points out, “If, then, all of them are servants, their priestly, indelible mark also disappears, and the perpetuity of their priestly dignity, or that one must always remain a priest, is also pure fiction, for a servant may justly be deposed if he cannot be induced to be faithful. Again, he may be left in office as long as he serves well and it pleases the congregation, just as anyone in the secular sphere who administers a public office among his equals; yes, there is far more reason to dismiss a servant in the spiritual sphere than in the secular field; for the former, when he becomes unfaithful, is much more insufferable than an unfaithful worldly servant, who can damage merely the temporal goods of this life, while the spiritual servant ruins and destroys also the eternal goods.” (St. L. X:1591 quoted in Christian Dogmatics vol. 3 page 458)



The called worker should be asked to submit to resignation if there is no apparent remorse or repentance for his or her sin. Then forced resignation becomes the last act of love to try and gain the fallen brother or sister back. This would be true if the called worker continues in persistent adherence to false doctrine, or in a scandalous life, or willfully neglects his or her duty. There is no love shown if their impenitence is allowed to continue.

If the worker has clearly repented of the sin, should they be asked to resign? Here is where we must look at each individual case. We have no canon laws which state when a person should remain in office or when they should be dismissed. We must be concerned not only about the sinner, but also others. If his or her sin is such that it could bring harm to others in the future, such as child abuse or sexual abuse, surrendering the call might be the only answer even if that person has sincerely repented. The same thing will be true if the sin is one that will cause offense to the saints or discredit the church in the eyes of the world. The pastor or teacher will have to weigh how remaining in office will affect other people. If it is obvious that continuing in the call will hurt others in body or soul, it would be better for all involved to surrender the call.

Are there times when he or she can continue in the call in spite of the public sin? Again each case must be taken individually. We are reminded of certain cases where the person continued in office even after a public sin. David was certainly guilty. He committed adultery and murder. Yet, God allowed him to continue his reign as king. Moses was guilty of a public sin when he struck the rock at Meribah (Numbers 20). Yet, God allowed him to continue his call as prophet for the people. We must also remember the chastisement that God did bring upon both leaders.

Jesus reminds us of such forgiving love in Matthew 18. After he gives us the steps for church discipline, he tells us the parable of the unforgiving servant. There he reminds Peter and also us of the continued need to forgive those who sin against us. (Matt. 18:22-35) Paul also reminded the Corinthians of accepting the sinner back into their fellowship. In 2 Corinthians 2:6-11 he writes, "The punishment inflicted on him by the majority is sufficient for him. Now instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow...in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes."

If there isn't a resignation, then at least there should be a public rebuke for the public sin. Notice what Paul told Timothy in 1 Tim. 5:19-21. "Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses. Those who sin are to be *rebuked publicly*, so that the others may take warning. I charge you, in the sight of God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels, to keep these instructions without partiality, and to do nothing out of favoritism."

Brothers, the task before us is not an easy one. There are no easy answers to this delicate question. Each case is a very individual one. We must apply the law and the gospel in the proper way in each case. For that we ask God to give us wisdom and guidance. We must also be careful not to pass judgment too quickly on others who are dealing with such situations. If we aren't involved, we probably don't know all the details. We are not to snoop into the ministry of other men but support them. We are not to base our judgment on rumor, but fact. Let us be more eager to encourage our brother dealing with such situations, than condemn him.

As you will notice, I've relied heavily upon the following chapters of Scripture. Please take the time to read through these sections on your own. There is much to be learned in these chapters about not only dealing with a called worker who has sinned, but how to deal with any brother or sister who has fallen into sin. These sections give us a good look at how to apply both the law and the gospel: Matthew 18, Galatians 5 and 6, 1 Corinthians 5, and 2 Corinthians 2.

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