

Does Love Cover Sins?

Rick Railston

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I read the paper every morning with coffee before I start the day. I read the letters to the editor in our hometown paper in Yakima, Washington. It just gives me a clue about what people are thinking. I don't read all of them, but ones that are pertinent to the church or how we believe. This was in the "Letters to the Editor" on June 4th in the Yakima Herald Republic, our local newspaper. It was written by a guy named David Helseth. He is a local minister in our town. It says:

To the Editor:

U.S. Senator Marco Rubio, Republican from Florida, recently proclaimed on the Christian Broadcast Network the movement toward nationwide same-sex marriage is: (now he quotes Senator Rubio) "A threat to Christianity."

David Helseth goes on to say:

Not so. To many Christians, this is another step in moving toward the fullness of the realm of God by celebrating the life and love of all of God's children. They are our sons and daughters, our nieces and nephews, our brothers and sisters whom we have loved as they were made from conception. We are learning to put the Bible and science together and celebrate both. We have outlawed slavery but still struggle with racial injustice. We have moved toward full equality of women and men, including leadership in the church and in the culture. We are on a journey of living into the fullness of God's creative love as experienced in creation, and each person welcoming and including our gay and lesbian family and neighbors is another step into living in the realm that Jesus proclaimed.

The church has often used the Bible and doctrine to shame and condemn people as means of power and control. Let's live out the message of Jesus: love, justice, compassion, equality, reverence for creation, forgiveness, and wholeness. We would be a more healthy community.

Then, of course, there were the headlines in the paper yesterday about what the Supreme Court did. Five people basically overruled the majority and five people declared God's law invalid as far as the nation goes.

There is a movement in modern society and the modern world and in modern religion to be inclusive. You hear that word "inclusive" all over the place. Inclusiveness really defines modern day Christianity. They have open arms for homosexuals, for those who have molested children, open arms for those who have abused or taken advantage of women and open arms for those who really have some strange doctrinal views. They

are welcoming. "Come and celebrate with us on Sunday morning and everything will be fine."

In those groups, many say today that we should welcome them; we should be inclusive because, after all, they are God's children. Therefore they're welcome in their fellowship.

There is an acceptance today, in society as well as in most modern Christianity, of all modes of behavior in the name of openness and inclusiveness, accepting all modes of behavior all in the name of love. We have to love our fellow man. After all, quoting the Bible, they say: "Doesn't love cover a multitude of sins? Love covers all sins so, therefore, if we just love enough, everything will be fine."

That begs a giant question for all of us here and those listening or will watch the DVD or listen to the CD. It begs a giant question. This is the title of the sermon.

Does Love Cover Sins?

Does our love cover the sins of others? We're going to answer that. That's the main title and then I'll add a couple of subtitles. So -

Title 1 is: Does our love cover the Sins of others?

Title 2 is: Is it our duty to love and forgive but no more; nothing beyond that, just to love and forgive?

Title 3 is: Are we to have no boundaries in the church? Are we not to set boundaries on human behavior?

We will look at all of those questions, those three, today. They are pertinent questions for the true church today. We will address those questions through five points.

In the first point we will address the first question about our love covering other people's sins.

Point 1: Our love cannot cover another person's sins.

We're going to see in one limited extent it does, but in the overall view, no. In God's view it does not.

Certainly in the world (and some in God's church), any believe that our love covers other people's sins, that if we just love them enough, everything will be okay. In our church, the following scriptures are cited. We will look at these scriptures under this first point with a microscope and see what they really say. This is the main scripture. There's one in the Old Testament and one in the New Testament. The one in the New Testament from Peter quotes Proverbs 10:12.

Proverbs 10:12. *Hatred stirs up strife (absolutely true), but love covers all sins.*

It's a very dogmatic statement. *Love covers all sins.* We need to look at the word "covers." In the Hebrew, it's Strong's 3680 and it means by implication, *to cover for clothing or secrecy, to conceal*, and it can mean *to overwhelm*. But the basic meaning is to hide or cover something up. So love hides or covers up sins, is what we're being told. Let's look at 1 Peter 4 and see where Peter quotes this very scripture and repeats it for us in the New Testament. Peter is talking about love.

1 Peter 4:8. *And above all things ... (NKJV)*

Put this first, he says.

8b) have fervent love for one another, for ... (NKJV)

Now he quotes Proverbs 10:12.

8 continued) ..."love will cover a multitude of sins."

He quotes it a little differently, but he says that *love will cover a multitude of sins.*

Here the Greek word "cover" is Strong's 2572, and it means to *cover up or to hide*, both literally and figuratively. Peter is saying that love will cover up, will hide a multitude of sins.

If one says our personal love covers or hides sin, in one limited sense, that is true. We're going to talk about that now. In a limited sense that in showing love to someone, we would not gossip about their sins. If we don't gossip about another's sins, in essence, we cover up that sin. When we gossip about someone's sins, we oppose God because what if God has already forgiven them? We watch somebody sin, they went immediately to God and repented and God forgave them and then the next day or the next week we repeat what we saw. Then we perpetuate someone else's sin by our gossip. But if we don't perpetuate the sin, if we don't repeat the sin, then in that limited sense, yes we cover it up.

When somebody sins against us, let's say, then they repent and God has forgiven them and we refuse to forgive them, just adamantly refuse to forgive, our lack of forgiveness then keeps their sin alive. It keeps their sin alive in our head, it keeps their sin alive in their mind. They are right with God, but we refuse to forgive. In those limited senses, you see, our love can cover another's sin when we don't spread gossip about them, when we forgive them after they have repented and gone to God. So in that one sense, that scripture talks about if our love can cover someone else's sin. But that is a very limited in scope understanding. We're talking about a narrow thing. But the overriding

answer comes from scripture. The overriding answer really is talking about God's love and not our love.

Let's allow scripture to explain scripture. Let's go to Psalm 32:1. This answers that question from God's perspective, not a human perspective. Psalm 32 is a Psalm of David. Notice what he starts off with.

Psalm 32:1. Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven ... (NKJV)

The obvious implication is, forgiven by God Almighty. Then he goes on to say:

1b) ... whose sin is covered. (NKJV)

That is Strong's 3860, the same word we read in Proverbs. So this tells us that God's forgiveness is the only thing that completely, truly covers up sin. It puts it as far as the east is from the west. It is remembered no more. This verse tells us very clearly that it's only God's love and mercy and forgiveness that can cover sin totally. Yes, we can in a limited way as I just explained.

Now let's go to James 5:20 and see that James addresses this very same subject in the New Testament. James is talking about one human being in the church, one brother or sister helping another brother or sister who has sinned.

James 5:20. Let him know, that he which converts the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death ... (KJV)

The death penalty, Romans 6.

20b) ... and shall hide a multitude of sins. (KJV)

That's Strong's 2572 which we just read in 1 Peter, chapter 4, the same identical word.

Zodhiates in his Complete Word Study Dictionary of the New Testament says this about James 5:20 and about 1 Peter 4:8 that we just read. James 5:20 and 1 Peter 4:8 means to cause a multitude of sins to be overlooked and not punished. He references Psalms 32:1 that we just read about sins being forgiven by God. So here in James 5:20, it tells us that conversion is the thing that hides sin, our conversion from the old person to the new person. When we are converted and have God's holy spirit and then we repent and we see our sins and God then forgives us, then our sins are covered by whose love? It's God Almighty's love. What covers sin is repentance on the part of the sinner, forgiveness by God and His love, not our love. Therefore our love cannot truly cover a sin in the sense that the sin is put away forever, only in the limited extent that we talked about a minute ago. Our love cannot remove the death penalty for anybody else's sin. It just can't. Only God and His love can completely remove sin, completely cover sin, can completely hide sin because of His mercy and forgiveness.

That's the first point. Our love cannot cover or forgive anyone's sins.

Point 2: There are those among God's people who are not converted.

We want to establish a fact. There are those who sit in seats in the greater Church of God today and have sat in seats all the way back to the time of Christ who fellowship with God's people who are not converted. Or they were baptized and had the grain of a mustard seed of God's spirit planted in them, but they don't exercise it; they don't use it. Frankly, only God knows the difference between the two, whether the baptism never took, He never called them or whether He did give them this tiny bit of His holy spirit but they never used it or exercised it. That is beyond our capability to know and only God does. It is true that, whether they are unconverted or not exercising God's spirit, we should not judge them. It's not our position to judge as the Bible says.

John 5:22. *For the Father judges no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: (KJV)*

That is Christ's responsibility. We don't judge others. We shouldn't judge others. It's hard, I know. It's easy to judge, but we are not to do that.

However, Christ first warned us about the unconverted in some of His first sermons. Christ first warned about them when He referred to them as tares.

Matthew 13:38. *The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; (KJV)*

These are tares that were planted by Satan amongst the good plants in the field. He also talks about them in His very first sermon in Matthew 7. He talked about wolves in sheep's clothing. Clearly these are individuals who are not converted but are there among God's people, wolves and tares.

Then Jude, the half-brother of Jesus Christ, and Peter, the Apostle, warned about clouds without water. In Jude and 2 Peter, chapter 2, we have the description of wolves in sheep's clothing by Christ. We have tares, we have clouds without water described by Jude and Peter, clearly indicating that there are those among God's people who are not converted or who may have been baptized and received a little bit of God's spirit, but certainly aren't exercising it.

Let's see what motivates these tares. Turn to John, chapter 10. These tares could also be called plants, a plant as my good friend and minister who is now deceased described it. It is a plant by Satan. Satan plants someone in a congregation or church to do mischief and trouble.

John 10:1. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that enters not by the door (gate) into the sheepfold ... (KJV)*

Generally it was rectangular. It was built out of rocks painfully with a lot of labor. There was a gate and usually a gate keeper.

1b) ... but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.

They would put bramble bushes and thorns on top of the rock wall like we would today put razor wire to keep wolves and thieves out. We see here that if someone does not come through the door, he is a thief and a robber.

2) But he that enters in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.

3) To him the porter (gate keeper) opens; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calls his own sheep by name, and leads them out.

4) And when he puts forth his own sheep, he goes before them (leads them), and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.

5) And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him ... (KJV)

We're going to see the importance of this later, the sheep fleeing from someone who claims to be a shepherd but is not.

5b) ... for they know not the voice of strangers.

6) This parable spoke Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spoke unto them.

7) Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep.

8) All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers ... (KJV)

They pretend to be false Christs and messiahs.

8b) ... but the sheep did not hear them.

9) I am the door: by me if any man enters in, (this is the promise) he shall be saved ... (KJV)

Only through Christ will we be saved. He is the door to the sheepfold. He lets us in and we get in through repentance, baptism and the indwelling of God's spirit.

9b) ... and shall go in and out, and find pasture.

Pasture meaning to be fed properly with good food, good water, protection and safety. Now here's the motive of the tare, the cloud without water, the thief.

10) The thief comes not, but for to ... (KJV)

Three things:

10b) ... (1) steal, and to (2) kill, and to (3) destroy. ... (KJV)

To steal means to steal from the truth, to steal from the body of Christ and get them to go somewhere else and leave the sheepfold.

To kill means to kill the physical body. Rest assured, Satan wants to have everyone with God's holy spirit dead. If God would allow it, that would happen.

To destroy means to eternally destroy by causing God's spirit to leave that person and then that person goes into the lake of fire.

Notice this: These thieves and wolves as we're going to see in verse 10, are in the same sheepfold as the sheep. It means that they are in the church, the wolves, the clouds without water and the tares. They are all right there. But you see they don't come through the door, through Jesus Christ. They come in some other way, a different way. They climb over the wall or dig a tunnel underneath or whatever it takes, whatever analogy we want to use.

10 continued)... I am come that they might have life ... (KJV)

That's His purpose, not to steal, kill and destroy.

10 continued) ... and that they might have it more abundantly.

11) I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.

12) But he that is a hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep, and flees: and the wolf catches them, and scatters the sheep. (KJV)

This clearly refers to Satan and those who follow Satan, either wittingly or unwittingly.

13) The hireling flees, because he is an hireling, and cares not for the sheep.

14) I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.

15) As the Father knows me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. (KJV)

Assistant shepherds, as all ministers are, should be willing to do the same daily, to lay down one's life for the sheep.

16) And other sheep I have (referring to our day), which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold (there's only one body of Christ), and one shepherd. (KJV)

There's only one true shepherd, Jesus Christ. No one else is the good shepherd. Regardless of what some people claim, there's only one. All the rest of us are just little lowly assistant shepherds trying to help.

Christ is very clear when you understand the scripture. The tares, clouds without water, and wolves in sheep's clothing who would destroy the church and destroy God's people

with it, we know who backs them, Satan the devil. They are in and among God's people. That is just a fact.

Now some of these tares don't realize what they're doing. They think they are doing God's will, but they're deceived. Let's read John 16:2. This happened at the time of Jesus Christ. Christ is talking about how the disciples are going to be put out of the synagogues and the threat of death will be upon them. They didn't know it then, but all but one would die a violent death.

John 16:2. *They shall put you (disciples) out of the synagogues: yea, the time comes, that whosoever kills you will think that he does God service. (KJV)*

There are some of these tares and clouds without water and wolves in sheep's clothing who are deceived, thinking they're serving God, but they are not. They are serving a different spirit. Then others of these tares, clouds without water and wolves in sheep's clothing are simply out to serve themselves. Let's look at Romans 16 and look at the beginning of verse 18. This happened at the time of the apostles where people came into the New Testament Church with agendas and they basically wanted to serve and advance themselves. They wanted to take peoples' money or take advantage of people.

Romans 16:18. *For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly ... (KJV)*

He is referring to people who are among the brethren, God's people. Regardless of whether they know what they're doing or they're deceived, they are serving Satan. The tares, the clouds without water and wolves in sheep's clothing serve Satan regardless of their motivation. Therefore, concluding this second point, it is a chief duty of a shepherd to protect the brethren. Christ used the analogy of the sheepfold for that reason. So it is a minister's responsibility, a chief duty of a shepherd to protect the brethren from those who would want to destroy the church or individuals in the church.

This answers the second question in the beginning. That leads us to the third point.

Point 3: There comes a point where boundaries must be established and maintained for the health and welfare of the brethren.

Contrary to what this letter to the editor said and what Hillary Clinton said in the news last night, love does not mean the tolerance of any type of behavior. It just doesn't. But people think that, "Well, if we don't open up to this or that or something else, we're not showing love." The fact is love does not mean tolerance of all kinds of abhorrent behavior. It just doesn't. Christ set the example when He was here on earth. Turn to Matthew 18. We want to look at it from the standpoint of setting boundaries.

Matthew 18:15. *Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee ... (KJV)*

One brother sins against another brother.

15b) ... go and tell him his fault between you and him alone: if he shall hear thee, you have gained thy brother. (KJV)

Everything is fine and reconciliation occurs.

16) But if he will not hear you, then take with you one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. (KJV)

Notice this.

17) And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto you as an heathen man and a publican. (KJV)

Here is somebody who is obviously guilty of sin. This is the implication. They've been appealed to by an individual, they've been appealed to by a group and the whole church to see the sin, recognize the sin, repent of the sin. It's not going to happen. What is the end result? There is a boundary established. *Let him be unto you as an heathen man and a publican.* The Greek word for "heathen" is Strong's 1482 and it says it's from 1484, the Greek word "ethnos" where we get our English word "ethnic." It means *a race that is a tribe, especially a foreign non-Jewish one* usually by implication, *pagan*. So what Christ is saying is after all of this that happened in Matthew 18 and this person still sins and will not admit guilt in front of all the people and all the evidence, He says treat them as you would a pagan and treat them as you would a tax collector, someone that's after your money. Treat them that way. Therefore, what He is really saying is stay away from them. Put a boundary between you and them, a fence, a wall between you and them.

Let's look at how many times the apostles repeated this admonition and this principle. Turn to Romans 16:17. This was common in the New Testament because Christianity was sweeping the middle east. People were talking about this new religion and this man, Christ. You had all kinds of people with all kinds of agendas and motivations trying to grab the fin of the rocket before it took off from the launching pad for their own gain. Here Paul says:

Romans 16:17. *Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which you have learned; and avoid them.*

Notice he says to avoid them.

The Greek word for "mark" is Strong's 4648 and means *to take aim at as in spying*. Through a telescope or binoculars, you would take aim at somebody and spy on them. That's what it literally means. Figuratively it means *to regard or consider or take heed or to look at*. He is saying to take note of them, look at them, spy on them. He said then, "Avoid them." Why would he say that? Look at verse 18. We were here earlier.

18) For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple. (KJV)

The word “simple” is an unfortunate translation. Simple does not mean stupid. The Greek word for “simple” is Strong’s 172. It’s “akakos” and it means *objectively innocent*. That’s a whole different meaning than stupid. It means *objectively innocent* or *subjectively unsuspecting or harmless*. That’s a whole new meaning. They deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting or innocent. I’ve seen this so many times in the church where good-hearted, if naïve, brethren become deceived or taken advantage of by a predator, someone that is inspired and provoked by Satan, a tare, a cloud without water, a wolf in sheep’s clothing, to take advantage of innocent sweet people for their own good. As we will see, they make merchandise of them.

Paul says of these kind of people to mark them, take note of them and stay away from them. Avoid them. Thereby you set a boundary between you and them.

Now let’s go to a another example, to a different church, in 1 Thessalonians 4 and begin in verse 9. We see that Paul wrote a letter to the Christians in Rome and said, “Hey, watch out.” Now he’s writing to the church in Thessalonica saying, “Watch out again, be careful.” He starts out with love. It’s interesting how these two coincide as the letter to the editor did.

1 Thessalonians 4:9. But as touching brotherly love you need not that I write unto you: for you yourselves are taught of God to love one another. (KJV)

That’s the goal. That’s the second of the two great commandments. Paul says, “You know that.”

10) And indeed you do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia ... (KJV)

He said, “You’ve already shown this love.”

10b) but we beseech you, brethren, that you increase more and more; (KJV)

The more you’re converted, the longer you’re in God’s church, the more experience you have using and exercising God’s holy spirit, you will show love more and more and more.

The minister that wrote that letter said, “Hey, we just have to love everybody. If we have more love, then we’ll love this kind of weird person and that kind of weird person and we’ll let them come and rub elbows with us because we’re supposed to love each other.”

11) And that you study ... (KJV)

Now he's shifting gears, but it's all in the context of love.

11b) ... to be quiet ... (KJV)

What a concept; not creating chaos and confusion.

11 continued) ... and to do your own business ... (KJV)

In other words, not be busybodies and poking one's nose where it doesn't belong. Again, what a concept.

11 continued) ... and to work with your own hands ... (KJV)

That means not to mooch off others or take advantage of others,

11 continued) ... as we commanded you; (KJV)

So we see here that the Apostle Paul commanded the brethren not to take advantage of other brethren and to work with their own hands, provide their own living and, obviously, to love, be quiet, not to create tohu and bohu. However, there were then, and there are today, those who take advantage of the generosity of God's people. It's happened down through the ages and it's happening today from time to time.

I'll mention one instance that occurred in the late 1970s here in the northwest. A family with two or three kids moved in from out of the area and there was a generous family. I was down in the tri-cities. He wanted to find a job. So this very generous family allowed them to come and move into their house. Everything was fine for a week or two, but then the family just took over the house. No rules or regulations; they didn't abide by the will of the husband or wife and just basically did whatever they wanted to do. It was a shock to the husband and wife. Guess what? This family stayed and stayed for months and months. Looking back, the husband really never worked that hard to find a job. He sat around the house watching TV and going here and there, but no effort to find a job. He never got a job. Finally this generous couple said, "We can't do this anymore. We can't live this way. Our lives are being taken over." So they counseled with the minister at the time and this family was told that they had to vacate. When they were asked to leave, they made the generous hosts feel guilty. They claimed that they didn't have enough love. "How can you do this? You're putting us out into the street. Don't you love us? Don't you have enough love? Look at what the Bible says." They even quoted some scriptures.

It was clear to everybody concerned, except the family that moved in that they were preying on this family and trying to prey on other brethren.

What we're being told here to the church in Thessalonica is, "Hey, you can't do that. You have to work with your own hands. You cannot cause problems and we command you so."

There was obviously a problem in that area at that time.

1 Thessalonians 5:14. *Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, ... (KJV)*

Now this is part of the same letter and context.

14b) ... comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men. (KJV)

The Greek word for “unruly” is Strong’s 813 and it means by implication *insubordinate religiously*. In other words, they do what they want to do regardless what the Bible says. They just want their own way. When Paul says to warn them, the warning implies that if you don’t heed the warning, there are going to be sanctions later. There’s going to be some division later. There’s going to be a wall later. There’s going to be a fence later, or we’re going to kick you out of the sheepfold. That’s the implication.

Now let’s go back to the poster child of scripture, 1 Corinthians 5:1 about setting boundaries. This is under the third point that there does come a time when boundaries have to be set for the protection, the benefit, the wellbeing of the brethren. Here Paul is setting boundaries.

1 Corinthians 5:1. *It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles ... (KJV)*

This is beyond the pale. This is over the top.

1b) ... that one should have his father's wife. (KJV)

So there is someone attending church, a young man probably, who is having sexual relations with his step-mother. She is not mentioned, and the implication I think would be that she doesn’t go to church. She isn’t being called. However, this young man does attend church; he does take a seat.

2) And you (the people) are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that has done this deed might be taken away from among you. (KJV)

He said, “You kind of accept it.” Just like the letter to the editor: “Hey, we have to welcome all people, men and men, women and women.” I just cover my eyes when I see them kissing on television. It just drives me crazy.

Paul said, “You can’t do it. You must take this away. We cannot let this go on in the church.” He said, “You’re puffed up,” just like society is puffed up and says, “Oh, we have to accept every kind of behavior.”

3) For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already ... (KJV)

He said, "I've already judged. I don't need to be there. This thing is so gross, I don't need to be there."

3b) ... as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, (KJV)

Notice how strong he gets. He calls on Christ's name.

*4) In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ,
5) To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh ... (KJV)*

Note; the goal is:

*5b) that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.
9) I wrote unto you in an epistle ... (KJV)*

This is an earlier letter that is not recorded, not canonized.

9b) ... not to company with fornicators: (KJV)

In other words, you have to put distance between you and fornicators. Then he modifies it and says:

10) Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world ... (KJV)

He says, "You shouldn't have company with fornicators that sit with you in the church, but I didn't mean you're not rubbing elbows with fornicators in the world because you have to go to the market and go to your job and walk on the street, etc."

10b) ... or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. (KJV)

This was the perfect time for Paul to say that we should have a commune and live on a hilltop or in a cave and separate ourselves from the world, and he said that we can't do that.

11) But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother ... (KJV)

Somebody who fellowships with them.

11b) ... be a fornicator, or covetous ... (KJV)

Wanting to take for themselves at the expense of others.

11 continued) ... or an idolator, or a railer (Greek means abusive), or a drunkard, or an extortioner ... (KJV)

To take money or property from other people.

11 continued) ... with such an one no not to eat. (KJV)

Paul is establishing a boundary. He is putting a barrier between people that would do this and God's people in the church. There is a boundary there.

Notice what he says to Timothy. He is warning Timothy because Timothy is a very young man. As I said before, there were obviously people in the church old enough to be his grandparents and maybe even great grandparents. He had a tough job to do.

1 Timothy 6:3. *If any man teach otherwise (what Paul has already said), and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; (KJV)*

That's the standard. If someone is teaching otherwise:

4) He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strife of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings,

He is proud and wants to elevate the self, but he doesn't know anything. He's not motivated by God's spirit. He is doting about questions; tiny insignificant twig-of-the-tree kind of questions resulting in envy, strife, railings and evil surmisings.

5) Perverse disputes of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth ... (KJV)

Notice the motivation supposing that gain (Greek means *money getting*)

5b) ... supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself. (KJV)

Put a boundary between you and people like this. This is what Paul plainly says.

Now notice what he wrote to Titus. Christ set the standard and the apostles said over and over again, "Hey, there are tares, clouds without water, there are wolves among you and once those are identified, you have to distance yourself. You have to put space between you and them.

Titus 3:9. *But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain. (KJV)*

You know, questions like: How many angels can fit on the head of a pin?

10) A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject; (KJV)

The Greek word for “heretic” literally means *schismatic*. Schism is division. A schismatic is one who causes division. A man that causes division, after the first and second admonition reject. The Greek word for “reject” simply means to *avoid or shun*.

11) Knowing that he that is such is subverted (meaning by Satan), and sins, being condemned of himself. (KJV)

Paul is writing to Titus to tell him the same thing. Now finally, John gets involved.

We’ve seen that this is serious stuff because it happens over and over in the Bible, warning after warning.

2 John 10: If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine ... (KJV)

John saw it with his own eyes from Jesus Christ.

10b) ... receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: (KJV)

Why would he say that?

11) For he that bids him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds. (KJV)

Yet today we see brethren listening to all kinds of strange ideas, whether it’s on the internet or through TV or books, pamphlets or DVD’s. They come into our house and we become partakers of their deeds. It is amazing the stuff that’s out there that is just weird and ungodly.

So we see here that setting boundaries was necessary in the New Testament Church. It was addressed by Paul to three different churches plus to Timothy and Titus and plus John to the church in general. It must have been a problem then, and today the same is true. Setting boundaries are occasionally required in order to protect the brethren (the sheep) from wolves, clouds without water and tares.

These examples prove that, yes, there is ministerial responsibility to protect the brethren, but it also affirms that there is ministerial authority in this area to do so.

That leads us to the fourth point. This is something that I see over and over again and it is sad.

Point 4: Guilt belongs to the perpetrator, not to those who set boundaries.

Remember that family I talked about that moved in and then were required to leave. They put a giant guilt trip on these very generous brethren who suffered month after month. They tried to make them feel guilty.

We are guilty of our own sins. It's not our parents' fault. It's not the school's fault. It's not society's fault. It is our fault and all of us need to accept responsibility for our own actions and sins. But a narcissist (we did a whole sermon on narcissism) seeks to blame others for the consequences of their actions. Remember what Paul said.

2 Timothy 3:1. *This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.
2) For men shall be lovers of their own selves ... (KJV)*

That and the Laodicean mentality, you put those two together and you have a narcissist of the first order. It's all about me, what I want, what my perception is, what my desires are, how I see things. A narcissist, when confronted, will deflect blame from himself onto other people. "It's not my fault. It's their fault. There are conditions beyond my control that I couldn't help that made me do this." The list goes on and on and they make the other person, the one who has been preyed upon, or the one who establishes boundaries, they make them feel guilty. Some of them are very good at it. They can turn black into white, good into bad and make people feel guilty for doing a good deed. It is just amazing. They make the ones who set boundaries or who brought up the issue in the first place feel guilty. I've seen it over and over and over from narcissists. Guilt belongs to the perpetrator, not to those who set boundaries. We have to remember that.

Denial of guilt makes repentance impossible. If we deny our guilt, we cannot repent. In order to solve a problem, you must first admit that you have a problem. In order to repent of a sin, one must admit that that they have a sin, have committed a sin. In Acts 2:37, Peter was preaching Jesus Christ and the gospel and he convinced the people that because of their sins, Christ had to die. The Messiah came and He died because of your individual sins.

Acts 2:37. *Now when they heard this ... (KJV)*

The preaching of the gospel and the fact that they were guilty.

37b) ... they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? (KJV)

What is the solution? We're guilty. They admitted it.

38) Then Peter said unto them, Repent ... (KJV)

You can't repent unless you admit you have sinned. So they did. They were just admitting their sin and he said:

38b) Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (KJV)

Through God's love your guilt will be wiped away because your sin is wiped away and the penalty for your sin is wiped away. But you see, the start of it is acknowledging one's sins. If you can't do that then repentance is impossible. Forgiveness is impossible. Putting it away is impossible. Remember James said in chapter 2, verse 10, he said, *Whoever shall keep the whole law and is guilty on one point is guilty* (stressing the word "guilty") *of all*. When we sin, we are guilty. It's on us, no one else. But the narcissist just spreads it out there. It's everybody else's fault but their own. We see attending church today there are too many narcissists. There are too many that don't acknowledge their sins. There are too many that are unrepentant. It is always somebody else's fault.

That leads us to the fifth and final point.

When I say boundaries, I'm talking about distance and separation between us and the wolves and the tares and the clouds without water.

Point 5: The goal of setting boundaries is for their repentance and their restitution to fellowship.

When I say boundaries, I'm talking about distance and separation between us and the wolves and the tares and the clouds without water. By setting boundaries and separation, the goal then is for them to see their sins, accept responsibility, repent and then come back to fellowship. That is the goal. The motivation and goal of separation is not punishment. I run into people all the time who get that mixed up. They say, "Well, you asked somebody to not attend. You're punishing them." No, we're not punishing them. That is not the case. It's not for punishment. It is to get them to see their sins and repent so they can come back. That's the goal. The problem in the scattered condition of the church today is when a narcissist refuses to admit their sins, they blame other people. Then they go shop for another church, or they shop for another minister.

Only God can forgive someone for their sins. Look at Hebrews 10:30. Our job is not for punishment when separation occurs. Setting a boundary is not to punish somebody.

Hebrews 10:30. For we know him that has said ... (KJV)

Here Paul is quoting Deuteronomy 32:35.

30b) ... Vengeance belongs unto me, I will recompense, says the Lord... (KJV)

So when boundaries are set, only God can punish. It's up to God, not us. There are two goals in setting boundaries as I just said.

Point 5.A. The first goal in setting boundaries is to protection of the brethren.

It provides protection from those who might reoffend. In other words, you have someone who is a previous child molester, serial adulterers, swindlers of all types. You see, the brethren need protection from all those when they have not repented, when they have not vomited it up. So distance is there. It's not for punishment. It's for protection from those who would take advantage of others for whatever reason. Let's go to 2 Peter 2. If a former alcoholic falls off the wagon, it hurts them. The worst damage they could do probably is get a DUI or kill someone in a car wreck. However, a serial adulterer, a swindler, a child molester, if they fall off the wagon, it could ruin somebody's life in the church.

Here Peter is warning about those who would take advantage of others.

2 Peter 2:1. *But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you ... (KJV)*

What do these false teachers do?

1b) ... who privately shall bring in damnable heresies (that's a strong word), even denying the Lord that bought them ... (KJV)

He bought them through His sacrifice. We see that today, those who say Christ is a created being. How on earth could you deny Christ more by saying He is not eternal, saying He is not the Word, having no beginning.

*1 continued) ... and bring upon themselves swift destruction.
2) And many shall follow their pernicious ways ... (KJV)*

It has happened. Look at all the people that left Worldwide; a totally different doctrine and teaching, totally false.

*2b) ... by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.
3) And through covetousness (wanting to get for themselves) shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: (KJV)*

Take your money or possession and, frankly, take one's eternal life if it goes far enough. The Greek word for "make merchandise" is Strong's 1710 and it means *to travel in a country as a peddler, or by implication, to trade and buy and sell*. He's warning of those who would take money, mooch or borrow from God's people with no effort to repay or be fair or equitable. They will enter into business transactions with God's people, pretending to be brethren to take advantage of them. You see, the boundaries are there to protect God's people from those who would do such things, to protect our little children, teenagers, widows and single women from those who might prey on them. Boundaries protect God's people from those who would do them evil or would prey on them. That's the first goal: protection.

Point 5.B. The second goal in setting boundaries is Godly repentance of the guilty by separation.

The hope is that they would see their sins and repent. Let's go to 2 Thessalonians 3:6. We were back there earlier. Paul is issuing a command.

2 Thessalonians 3:6. *Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw yourselves from every brother that walks disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us. (KJV)*

Go back now to verse 11.

11) *For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies.*

12) *Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread. (KJV)*

What a concept.

14) *And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, (Here's the goal) that he may be ashamed. (KJV)*

That is the goal of separation, to have the guilty person be ashamed and that shame would then lead to repentance and that repentance would lead to coming back to fellowship, but it's got to be through Godly repentance. We know in 2 Corinthians 7, Paul talks about Godly repentance that allowed not only the people to forgive this guy (they put him out and then had trouble forgiving him) but this guy who was put out came to his senses. He realized his sorrow. Because of that, Paul allowed him to come back. That was the goal. He Godly repented. You can check that out in 2 Corinthians, chapter 7. The goal is that Godly repentance leads to restitution to fellowship.

Let's understand that distance and avoidance are not the same as hating someone, because someone has to be separated from the body for a time in hopes of bringing him back. That does not necessarily make them worthy of our hate or condemnation in that sense. Let's go to 2 Thessalonians 3. We read this earlier.

2 Thessalonians 3:14. *And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. (KJV)*

Notice the attitude we should have in verse 15.

15) *Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother. (KJV)*

So if somebody has to be avoided and separation is necessary, the goal is that they would repent, that God would forgive and that they would come back, not that we hate

them or want evil for them. The overriding goal is to see them back in a right standing with God, back into fellowship with all the brethren.

So with the fifth point, the goal is not punishment. The goal is for their restitution, a right standing with God and back in fellowship.

So let's go back to the beginning:

- Does our love cover the sins of others?
- Is it our duty to love and forgive, but no more beyond that?
- Are we to have no boundaries in the church?

We've addressed these questions and we've learned that:

- Only God's love truly covers sin by blotting it out permanently through His forgiveness, through the blood of Jesus Christ. Our love covers sin only in the limited extent that when we forgive someone, we don't perpetuate the sin and, therefore, cover it. We don't gossip about someone. We don't perpetuate the sin and, therefore, we cover it.
- There are unconverted people in our midst, attending with God's people or, as I said before, might have been given a little bit of God's spirit, but it's still there and hasn't grown at all. They don't exercise God's spirit.
- Boundaries have to be established for the protection of the church and brethren. Those setting the boundaries or those involved in situations like this should not be made to feel guilty because the perpetrator is the one who should feel guilty. We have to sometimes set boundaries with our kids, with neighbors and all manner of human endeavor. We shouldn't feel guilty about it at all, yet the world will make people feel guilty. Satan will make people feel guilty.
 - We've learned the goal of setting boundaries is for the protection of the brethren, repentance of the guilty and ultimately restitution to the fellowship, not punishment.

In a final scripture, let's look at the end result of those who are ungodly, those who perpetrate some of the things we talked about today. Let's go to 2 Thessalonians, chapter 2. There must have been some real problems in Thessalonica because we keep going back there, But it's spread throughout the New Testament. Talking about such people, clouds without water, tares and wolves in sheep's clothing.

2 Thessalonians 2:11. *And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: (KJV)*

Certainly not believing God or God's word.

12) That they all might be damned who believed not the truth ... (KJV)

Notice, this is their motivation.

12b) ...but had pleasure in unrighteousness. (KJV)

There are those who take pleasure in sin, take pleasure in abusing women, take pleasure in fornicating, take pleasure in molesting children, take pleasure in taking money and swindling other people. They take pleasure in it. There are those who manipulate brethren for their own advantage, to serve themselves. It started at the time the New Testament Church started and has been in the church to this very day.

There is a warning for us. What we have to do is right here in verse 14.

14) Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. (KJV)

Thankfully we have been called and we have God's holy spirit and we have the knowledge of God's word.

15) Therefore, brethren, stand fast ... (KJV)

Hold firm. Christ is the chief cornerstone. Put a giant nail into that cornerstone and hang on with all your life.

15b) ... and hold the traditions which you have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle. (KJV)

We have a whole Bible of the truth, of traditions, of warnings of how things should be done. So let's take a lesson from this and understand that only God's love, only repentance and forgiveness by God, due to His love, covers sin. Let us hold fast to the truth that God has so freely revealed to us in His word.