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# 1 Corinthians

**It is actually reported *that there is* sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles—that a man has his father's wife! 1 Corinthians 5:1**

At the end of the previous chapter, Paul noted those who were "puffed up" in their conduct. To close out the chapter he said, "What do you want? Shall I come to you with a rod, or in love and a spirit of gentleness?" This sets the tone for chapter 5 which begins with words that are hard to imagine in any society at any time.

"It is actually reported..." indicates that Paul received word about the matter. But it also indicates that it is a known matter; something not hidden from the outside world. It was probably Chloe who reported this as she was the source of Paul's writing in the first place as was previously seen in chapter 1 -

"For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's *household*, that there are contentions among you." 1 Corinthians 1:11

"That there is sexual immorality among you..." This is the reason for Paul's mentioning of "a rod" as noted above. This is something which is intolerable within the body and which needs to be addressed. Bringing this up here in his epistle, which is recorded in the Bible, indicates that it is an offense for all ages, not something merely cultural within the area of Corinth. The implication then at this point, and throughout the rest of the New Testament, is that sexual immorality is not to be practiced or excused.

But there is more. This wasn't just a case of sexual immorality which occurred through momentary passions. Instead, it was a deliberate act and one which was considered deplorable in the society at that or any time. This can be discerned from the words "and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles..." What was being practiced was reprehensible even among the Gentiles. This wasn't a matter of merely reinserting the law of Moses (see Leviticus 18:8). Rather, it was a matter which is written on the conscience of all people (see Romans 1:28-32).

Because of the offending nature of the act, and because even the Gentiles knew the utter impropriety of the matter, how shameful it was for someone in the church to conduct his affairs in such a way. And more - how shameful it was that the church knew about it and had done nothing to correct it (as will be seen in the verses ahead).

And the offence was "that a man has his father's wife!" This was forbidden by the Law of Moses, which arguably is set aside in Christ, but it was an act which was known to be wrong by all people instinctively. Further, it violated the edict issued by the council in Jerusalem which is recorded in Acts 15 and which stated -

"We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who will also report the same things by word of mouth. For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well." Acts 15:27-29

Life application: Doctrine for the Church Age has been given by Paul for our learning, guidance, adherence, and for our good. What is written there has been given for the sake of the church as well as individuals within the church. To flagrantly ignore mandates and exhortations which are prescriptive in nature can only cause harm to both. When one acts in such a manner, they are bringing disgrace upon the name of Jesus Christ. Be firm in your convictions that you will neither act in such a manner, nor allow it to be tolerated in your church.

**And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you. 1 Corinthians 5:2**

Paul in this verse is referring to the sexual immorality which exists within the church from the previous verse. He now begins with "and" which is used to demonstrate the absurdity of the state of things within their ranks. In essence he says, "You act in this manner, but shouldn't it rather be the opposite!"

And the words are, "And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned." Instead of their "puffed up" attitude which was mentioned in 4:19, they should be in a state of mourning and anguish over what is occurring right there among them. To be fair, they could be "puffed up" in one of two ways.

- 1) They were puffed up and filled with conceit and pride *despite* the wickedness which was among them, or
- 2) They were puffed up and filled with conceit *because* of the wickedness which was among them.

The first is probably the true case. They were acting arrogantly and dividing over petty allegiances even though there were greater issues which needed to be considered. However, the wickedness of the heart (Jeremiah 17:9) is never to be dismissed, even among a group, and so it could be that despite being divided over which leader was best, they were united in an antinomian attitude towards sin; accepting that which was forbidden.

Which is the case cannot be determined, but both show a negligence towards proper conduct within the church. Instead of accepting how things were with this person, Paul notes "that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you." Instead of fellowshiping with such a person, they should have already excommunicated him. But rather than facing the problem from this perspective, they have either avoided it or openly condoned it. Paul shows them that this is the wrong attitude; mourning, not acceptance, was needed.

Life application: It sure is easy to overlook things which might otherwise cause us to have to act in a manner which seems "judgmental" or "intolerant." However, in such cases, it is not we who actually decide the course of action to take, it is God who has given His word for our Christian walk. If we can remember this, then we will remember that we are honoring Him by adhering to His word.

**For I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged (as though I were present) him who has so done this deed. 1 Corinthians 5:3**

In this verse, Paul writes in broken thoughts as if he were mourning over his words and contemplating each one carefully, even through tears of sadness. Each is a separate heartfelt consideration of what must occur in order for the situation to be resolved. Beginning with "For I indeed..." He is stressing the importance of the issue which is being considered in connection with the previous words "that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you."

"As absent in body but present in spirit" is a way of saying that his physical absence from the congregation doesn't negate his spiritual tie to them. He is, in his heart and affections, right there worshipping with them. He is attuned to their situation, feeling their emotions, and sharing in their highs and lows. In this case, it is as a father with his beloved children discussing a matter which will ultimately adversely affect them unless they get it resolved.

In this he shares that [I] "have already judged (as though I were present)..." In his deliberations over the matter, which began the moment that they were relayed to him, and probably through much prayer and reflection, he came to a judgment as to what needed to be done. However, he isn't present and so he can only relay his judgment from afar. The broken sentences then are explained in this. He is conveying emotion and a profound determination through them. We do this with exclamation points and other punctuation which was lacking in the Greek. Therefore, sentence structure was important in this manner.

And Paul's judgment is against, "him who has so done this deed." The matter of sexual immorality needed to be handled and it didn't matter who it was. He has been singled out in Paul's letter indirectly and it is now incumbent on those around that person to take the necessary action that Paul will recommend in the coming verses.

Life application: The reason why so many churches have no moral base is because of compromise over moral issues. Friendships arise that may preclude harsh judgment. Wealthy donors may have their transgressions overlooked because of the supposed need for their money. The same may be true with the politically connected. Eventually, such examples will become the standard. When this occurs, the church is doomed. Jesus has been left outside the door for the sake of tolerance and compromise. The lampstand will be removed and Judgment Day will be a day of regret, not rejoicing.

**In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ,... 1 Corinthians 5:4**

This verse introduces the sentence which Paul recommends to be executed on the offender he has been speaking about since verse 1. The next verse will be the pronouncement of the sentence. His words give us insights into the apostolic authority and also its limitations. Although there are no true apostles today, we can discern proper church discipline from his words.

"In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" indicates the ultimate authority of church matters. It is the Lord's church and He is the head of it. When actions of this nature are taken, they are done so in His name. No other authority would make sense. Stating that a judgment is made in the name of the pope would be to supplant the authority of Christ Himself. That, or any other such title of power, would be less than the ultimate authority and thus no true authority at all.

"When you are gathered together" indicates that the church is to be kept informed of such decisions and actions and, although not necessarily involved

directly in the decision, they are to be witnesses of it. Elsewhere, the authority of elders is noted and explained. They have a proper position within the church and they have been selected to make the final judgments.

This goes all the way back to the first such established church recording which is the Council in Jerusalem in Acts 15. There at that meeting, the apostles were gathered and they spoke. However, the final decision was rendered not by them, but by James, the Lord's brother, who wasn't even a named apostle. As it's leader, it was his judgment which was accepted and acted upon.

Paul then notes, "along with my spirit." This is like saying, "This is my decision on the matter. Act on it as if I were there speaking at this council." Those in the church had the right to reject his words, but they would be rejecting God's appointed counselor if they did. Now his words, and those of the other apostles chosen to write portions of the Bible, are recorded for us. We should always go to the Bible for our instruction and then render our decisions based on it.

To reject it would be comparable to those in Corinth rejecting Paul's words here. It would be a decision not rendered according to the will of Jesus Christ and thus it would be devoid of "the power of our Lord Jesus Christ." This final section of the verse shows that this "power" was in fact granted to Paul for such matters. Rejecting his determination (which they could do) would be to reject the determination of Christ Himself. We stand in the same position now because God's word is complete and ready for our use in such matters.

Today, rather than the apostles, we have the Bible which was given under divine inspiration for our guidance in all matters. From this source, and in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we are to allow our elders to render their decisions concerning such related church matters.

Life application: What authority is your church relying upon for their doctrine, practice, and judgments? If it is claimed to be "Holy Ghost power," then it had better line up with what the Bible states (because the Bible was given under

inspiration of the Holy Ghost) or it isn't "Holy Ghost Power." If it is claimed to be formal Council decisions of the past or some type of catechisms, then they need to line up with the Bible as well. If they don't, then there is no true power from the Lord in them. No matter what authority is claimed, it must be in accord with the words of Scripture or it is false authority for such matters.

**...deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. 1 Corinthians 5:5**

In Christianity, doctrine is often thought of as an obstacle to a right relationship with the Lord. Instead, emotions rule theology and it rules the hearts of worshippers to the exclusion of doctrine. This only leads to ineffective Christianity, unsteadiness in a right walk with the Lord, and eventually churches becoming merely social gatherings with no true grounding in what it means to be "Christian."

However, doctrine is actually of paramount importance as we can learn from the verse under consideration. Paul has established doctrine on several levels here. First, he has shown what is right and proper to do in the case of such a heinous sin as was being committed within the church. The reasons for taking this action are long and detailed, but above all, it was to keep purity within the faith, a right perception of Jesus Christ to those within and without the faith, and to keep the church from devolving into a pattern of abuse which would eventually mean its right to even be called a "church" would be removed by the Lord (see Revelation 2:5).

Besides these and other considerations, there is another point of doctrine which can be discerned from this verse, especially when taken in context with other such verses within Paul's writings. It is the doctrine of "eternal salvation." Christians debate whether one can "lose" their salvation or not. The debate is unnecessary if one understands the nature of God and properly handles the word of God. The answer is "no."

If one believes in Christ, they are sealed with the Holy Spirit at that moment. This is a deposit (also called a guarantee) of their new state. Ephesians 1:13, 14 (among other verses) shows this is so. As God cannot err, and as God has placed His seal upon the believer, then the sealing (and thus the salvation) must be eternal in nature.

This is confirmed by verses such as 1 Corinthians 5:5. In this verse, Paul is speaking to the body of believers about a believer. In his direct way of handling the case before him, he makes his judgment which he anticipates they will obediently follow by stating for them to "deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh."

Satan is the ruler of this world, but he is defeated before Christ. He has no power over a believer, but can only afflict them as they continue in their earthly walk. The choice is each believers as to whether they will follow the flesh or follow the leading of the Spirit and it is a constant battle (see Romans 7:13-25). This believer had decided to follow the flesh. Paul instructs them to deliver him over completely to the flesh then by delivering him to Satan.

If one is an alcoholic and comes to Christ, they are saved. The deal is done and they have moved from Adam to Christ. However, if they fall back on their old ways, they will eventually have their flesh destroyed through alcohol. The same is true with drugs, sexual immorality, or any other such carnal sin which affects the flesh of the believer. Whatever perversion lays hold of a believer, the result will be exactly the same as a non-believer; they will eventually have their flesh destroyed by that sin.

However, there is a difference between the two. In the case of the non-believer, they were never united to God spiritually by calling on Christ and their spirit will be lost for all eternity. On the other hand, a believer remains saved regardless of whether they return to earthly lusts or not. The spiritual connection has been guaranteed by God (again, see Ephesians 1:13, 14) and it remains for eternity. For such a person, his flesh will be destroyed. He will suffer all the hardships of any other person following that path.



But Paul says there is a difference in his final end when he completes his thought. Instead, he is handed over to Satan so that "his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." Though his rewards will be lost (see 1 Corinthians 3:12-15), though his body may be tormented and afflicted (1 Corinthians 5:5), and though he will suffer much in this life (see 1 Timothy 1:18-20), he still retains the promise of God; the surety of the sealing of the Spirit unto eternal life.

In this, and for a jillion other reasons, doctrine does matter. To believe otherwise concerning this issue is to believe that God will not keep His promises. Instead, our salvation would be up to us, not Him. Further, the one to decide such "eternal" matters would then be the pastor or preacher who teaches this aberrant doctrine in the first place. Talk about bondage! If your position is based on your faults and those faults are decided by another human, then these two things have happened -

- 1) The human teacher has elevated himself to an untouchable level and has obtained complete control over the actions (which are still earthly and failing) of those under him. He becomes the ruler of the prize and the one to decide any and every facet of the spiritual life of those under him.
- 2) The person who so believes this concept has subordinated themselves not to Christ, but to the decisions of another fallen soul. They now place their trust in the decisions of a lesser, not the Greater. And this is exactly what Paul has been speaking about for four full chapters - unhealthy divisions!

It is the word of God which establishes our doctrine, nothing more, nothing less. Be approved, stand approved, and hold fast to the truth of the message God has given.

Life application: Once saved means always saved. Jesus Christ doesn't make mistakes.

**Your glorying *is* not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?** 1 Corinthians 5:6

The words "your glorying" indicates boasting. It refers back to the words he used in 1 Corinthians 4:19 -

"But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord wills, and I will know, not the word of those who are puffed up, but the power."

As noted then, this was a metaphor of bread being puffed up from the use of yeast. Throughout the Bible this is seen as a picture of sin, and specifically in this case, pride. The symbolism permeates the pages of Scripture and it all points to sin in our lives. In contrast is Jesus who knew no sin and thus He is pictured by unleavened bread, such as that used at the Passover. The boasting of the Corinthians was, in picture and in reality, un-Christlike. Paul says that it "is not good."

In order for them to understand, he reverts back to that Old Testament symbolism and shows them exactly what he means by saying, "Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?" That is all it takes, just a little pinch of yeast will permeate the entire lump of dough. It, like sin in a person, will affect everything around it. In other words, the sin in the man whom Paul recommended to be expelled, if not expelled, will affect the whole congregation.

Jesus explained this to His own apostles during His ministry, trying to get them to realize that adding to the word of God with man-instituted traditions could only infect the purity of the word of God in our lives. In Matthew 16:6, He said this to them -

"Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees."

And in his consistent way of writing, Paul will use the same terminology when speaking to the Galatians about their attempts to reintroduce the law into their church-age theology (such as the rite of circumcision). Such actions merely set aside the grace of Christ that they had received and made them debtors to the whole law. Here are his words from Galatians 5:9 - "A little leaven leavens the whole lump."

To see how potent the true effects of yeast are, we can look at the process of making San Francisco sourdough bread. It is the most famous sourdough bread made in the U.S. today; probably in the whole world. Unlike sourdough which is made in other areas of the country, what San Francisco produces has remained in continuous production for nearly 150 years. Some bakeries, for example the Boudin Bakery, are able to trace their starters back to California's territorial period.

A starter is a piece of the bread dough which is cut off and left out of the baking process. The next day, when they make the new batch of dough, they throw in the piece from the previous day – the starter. This piece of dough contains the yeast for the entire batch of new dough. In the case of Boudin Bakery, they have used the same initial yeast, without any addition, for over 150 years, day by day. Cut off a piece, save it for tomorrow. Cut off a piece, save it for tomorrow. Cut off a piece... this one's for tomorrow.

One pinch of yeast, from over 150 years ago, still affects dough in the exact same way. Now think of this in the context of the church. Bad doctrine, introduced by the heretic Joseph Smith (Mormonism) has affected the entire group known as the Mormons to such an extent that they cannot be called "Christians" in any true sense. Likewise, the yeast of "tradition" has crept into almost every major denomination in Christianity. The very thing that Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for permeates almost the entire spectrum of the faith in varying degrees. Such is the nature of just a little bit of yeast.

Life application: Our doctrine is to be based on the word of God. Anything which is practiced in a church which doesn't adhere to the word of God is to be rejected.

Paul's warning to the Corinthians is a principle which must be held onto even now.

**Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.**

1 Corinthians 5:7

Contained within the New Testament are extraordinary hints of the fulfillment of Old Testament shadows and pictures of Christ. This verse contains two of them which could be overlooked so easily and yet they are immensely deep in their theological significance. In chapter 23 of Leviticus, there is a list of the Feasts of the Lord. In order, they are:

Sabbath

Passover

Unleavened Bread

Firstfruits (Bikkurim)

Weeks (Shavuot/Pentecost)

Trumpets (Yom Teruah)

Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur)

Tabernacles (Sukkoth)

Paul notes in Colossians 2:16, 17 that these find their fulfillment in Christ -

"So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ."

As a validation of this, each and every one of them is found to be fulfilled in His work during His first advent. Today's verse from 1 Corinthians gives us verification

that two of them are fulfilled - Passover and Unleavened Bread. A detailed study of the other six feasts will demonstrate their fulfillment as well. Christ is the focus of all of Scripture. And all of Scripture testifies to His work.

Understanding this, we can now look at Paul's words in how they pertain to the context of his surrounding thoughts. He begins by saying "therefore." It is a term which asks us to contemplate what has thus far been said. In the previous verse, he said "a little leaven leavens the whole lump." In order to ensure that the church isn't tainted with bad doctrine or sinful practice, he now builds on that by saying "purge out the old leaven." This is exactly what the Israelites were told to do at the Passover each year -

"For seven days no leaven shall be found in your houses, since whoever eats what is leavened, that same person shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether *he is* a stranger or a native of the land. You shall eat nothing leavened; in all your dwellings you shall eat unleavened bread." Exodus 12:19, 20

The Old Testament body was given as physical examples which present spiritual truths. Leaven, picturing sin, is to be removed. This was to be practiced for the entire week of Unleavened Bread. The picture is thus fulfilled in Christ who was sinless and now we, who are in Him, are to purge out the leaven of sin in our lives so, as Paul says, "that you may be a new lump." And he then explains why by saying, "since you truly are unleavened."

In Christ, we are deemed as "sinless." We are declared "not guilty" despite the reality of our fallen state. Paul explains this in 2 Corinthians 5:18, 19 -

"Now all things *are* of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation."

Though we are still fallen and sin, those sins are not imputed because of Christ. But Paul would go further and ask us to live in the manner which is reflected by our status. We are to purge out the old leaven and to be a new lump. Along with Unleavened Bread, the symbolism from the Passover also finds its true fulfillment in Jesus Christ. This is noted as Paul continues by saying, "For indeed Christ our Passover, was sacrificed for us."

The celebration of these two feasts, Passover and Unleavened Bread were mere shadows of the greater work of Christ. In Him we find the fulfillment of all types and pictures from the Old Testament, including the fulfillment of all of the Feasts of the Lord.

Life application: Jesus claimed that all Scripture testifies to Him. By studying our Bible, we find this is true. He is the entire focus of the word of God. Be sure to read the Bible through the lens of Christ. When you do, it all makes sense.