

A Little Leaven, a Proud Church, and the Passover Lamb

¹Cor 5:1 It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife.

² And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be **removed from among you**.

³ For though absent in body, I am present in spirit; and as if present, I have already **pronounced judgment** on the one who did such a thing.

⁴ When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus,

⁵ you are to **deliver this man to Satan** for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.

⁶ Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that **a little leaven** leavens the whole lump?

⁷ Cleanse out the **old leaven** that you may be a new lump, as you really are **unleavened**.

For Christ, our **Passover lamb**, has been **sacrificed**.

⁸ Let us therefore celebrate **the festival**,

not with the **old leaven**,

the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

⁹ I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with **sexually immoral people**—

¹⁰ not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world.

¹¹ But now I am writing to **you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed**, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one.

¹² For what have I to do with **judging** outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to **judge**? ¹³ God judges those outside.

“Purge the evil person from among you.”

1 Corinthians 4:1-21

Two Questions

How does a church planted by an Apostle of Jesus himself get to the point where they will tolerate sin that even the pagans won't tolerate? And what does God's word tell them that they must do to correct it? These are the two most important questions I can think of to ask of our passage today.

What is perhaps the most remarkable feature of the first question is that we are not talking about centuries or generations or even decades of slow corruption seeping in. We are talking less than a half-dozen years since its founding by the Apostle Paul to the point where he now says they tolerate things that even pagans won't tolerate amongst themselves (1Cor 5:1). Paul is writing this letter from Ephesus around 55 AD. He likely planted it around 50 AD and stayed there 18 months afterward. That gives them all of about three years to become this kind of church. That's less time for us than we were dealing with all things Covid related.

What is vital about **the second question** is that we answer it according to God's word, for this is *his* church we are dealing with, not our country club, sorority, or especially gentlemen's club. Christ is making his church spotless and pure so that she might be fit for her perfect husband who came to take her as his own. We do not have the right to do whatever we want with her, for she does not belong to us.

1 Cor 5: Context and Structure

Outlines have 1 Corinthians 5 continuing the first main section dealing with oral reports about the Corinthian church (**1:10-6:20**) as opposed to their own questions that they wrote to him in a letter,¹ or perhaps beginning **the second main movement** of the letter (**Chs. 5-7**).² These are not mutually exclusive.

This is highlighted by the transitional nature of the end of the last chapter (**4:17-21**). While it **finishes the content of the factionalism** that was so dividing the church, it also sets the stage for the “judgment” sections to come, the first of

¹ E.g. **Craig Blomberg**, *1 Corinthians*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 29.

² E.g. **Mark Taylor**, *1 Corinthians*, ed. E. Ray Clendenen, vol. 28, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2014), 30.

which begins in Ch. 5 with this clear case of an almost inconceivable toleration of sin. Kenneth Bailey, who spent much of his ministry in Lebanon, saw this as so important that he points out that “no ancient Middle Eastern paragraph system divided the text at 1 Corinthians 5:1. However, there is widespread early evidence for a break at the end of 4:15.”³ Why does this matter? Because the transition ends with Paul coming with the rod followed immediately by his bringing up this wicked sin in their midst followed by what they must do about it.

There is a lot we could say about repeating structures on more micro-levels,⁴ but to me, three chiastic elevations are important to note. First, Ch. 5 is clearly related to ch. 6:

A — Sexual immorality (5)

B — Court litigation (6:1–11)

A' — Sexual immorality (6:12–20)⁵

This is so important that I seriously considered preaching them together. There's too much in Ch. 5 to do it justice if

³ Kenneth Bailey, *Paul Through Mediterranean Eyes: Cultural Studies in 1 Corinthians* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011), 156. He points out that in 867 AD, Ibn al-Sari of the Syrian Orthodox church placed his first chapter division between vv. 16 and 17.

⁴ Bailey has an ABA' at 4:18-20, 21, 5:1-2 (Arrogance, Coming, Arrogance); 2-3, 4, 5-6a (Remove him, Name of Jesus, Remove him—each with their own ABB'A' mini-structure); 6b-7a, 7b-8a, 8b (Old Leaven, Christ/Lamb, Old Leaven). See p. 159, 167. He will tie vs. 12 chiastically to 6:5.

⁵ Mark J. Keown, *Discovering the New Testament: An Introduction to Its Background, Theology, and Themes: The Pauline Letters*, vol. II (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2021), 149.

we did that, so I'll be calling it to our attention in more specific ways next time.

Second, on the macro-chiasm of the book, these two chapters stand as parallel to one verse near the end of **1Cor 15:50**, “I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.”⁶

Finally, and also significant for why we will only look at ch. 5 today is that it clearly forms a tight, beautiful chiasm of its own:

- A Sexual immorality *among you*; he should be **taken away from among you** (5:1–2)
- B Paul has already **judged**; assembled in the name and power of the Lord Jesus (5:3–4)
- C **Deliver such a one to Satan** for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved (5:5)
- D Your boasting is not good. A little **leaven** leavens the whole lump (5:6)
- E Purge out the **old leaven**, that you may be a new lump, as you are unleavened (5:7a)
- F **For even Christ our Passover has been sacrificed** (5:7b)
- F' **Therefore let us keep the feast,**
- E' not with **old leaven** (5:8a)
- D' nor with the **leaven** of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth (5:8b)
- C' **Do not associate / keep company** with a so-called brother who is a fornicator... with such a one do not even eat (5:9–11)
- B' What have I to do with **judging** outsiders? Do you not **judge** those inside? God judges those outside (5:12–13a)
- A' **Put away from among yourselves** that wicked person (5:13b)⁷

⁶ This macro-chiasm is found at the end of our original PDF “Reading” of the book.

⁷ Similar are JLB, “**1 Corinthians 5:1–12**,” *Biblical Chiasm Exchange* (Dept 23, 2016); **Christine Miller**, “**1 Corinthians 5, Standards within the Church**,” *Christine’s Bible Study* (May 9, 2012).

This gives us the **fascinating double-center** focusing our on **the Lord's Supper**! And that is deeply theological as the Supper is True Union with Christ as opposed to the wicked union of the sin they are tolerating.

A Sin Even Pagan's Won't Tolerate (5:1-2 / 13b)

Immediately after asking them if they want him to come with the **rod** or with **gentleness** (1Cor 4:21), he starts his new topic. “It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife” (1Cor 5:1). He follows this up with **vs. 2**. “And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you.” Now, the chapter concludes with the final sentence, “Purge the evil person from among you” (13b), showing the chiastic bookends. There is *a lot* to talk about here. These include: **What is the sin(s)** in mind (hint: there is more than one); **what's this about pagans**; how should they be **responding**; what does it mean to remove them or **purge** the evil person? Let's go in order.

First, **what is the sin(s) in mind?** He calls it “**sexual immorality**.” What is sexual immorality? In a world where pretty much any sexual activity is fine, many young people

have never even heard of this concept. To older people, “sexual immorality” might feel like a lessening of the seriousness of the sin compared to these other, stronger words that people don’t say in polite Victorian company.

Other translations read, “whoredom” (YLT) or “fornication” (VUL, KJV). A “whore” is Middle English (*hore*) for a prostitute, while whoredom is probably Old Norse (*hordomr*) for adultery. But those are both very specific sexual sins committed with at least one married person. “Fornication” comes from the Latin (*fornix*) “brothel” (originally, “arch, vaulted chamber, vaulted opening, covered way,” likely because Roman prostitutes commonly solicited from under the arches of certain buildings). Strictly speaking, it is “voluntary sex between an unmarried man and an unmarried woman.”⁸ Sleeping with someone you are not married to is sin.

Because this is so foreign to a new generation and sounds so judgmental to people today, let me explain why. Sex is not dirty. It is holy and sacred. It is a great gift God has given, but only in the proper context. That context is a covenantal marriage agreement between a man and a woman. Why? Several reasons. First, it creates one flesh where there was

⁸ See “[Fornication](#),” *Etymology Online*.

two. This is why it is so devastating when the relationship doesn't work out. We will see this more in Ch. 6. Second, and related, it is an extremely powerful gift capable of **destroying lives** as people use it as a weapon against one another to dominate, discard, and lie. Finally, its chief purpose is the creation of new human life which can be raised in the image of God in the context of a strong, secure, safe family unit. God gave this gift to us as a means of propagating our race and carrying out dominion over the earth. None of this is discussed in today's anything goes culture.

So are the ESV and other modern translations trying to soften the sin? I don't think so. This is the common Greek word: **porneia**. You can hear in it that we get words like *pornography* or *pornographic* from it. The word **covers a broad range of sins** that include whoredom and fornication, but goes beyond them.⁹ While the Greeks tolerated a host of sexual activities—*though not all* as we will soon see, Jews and Scripture use it to refer to **any sexual outward sin against another person** in violation of Torah.¹⁰ It basically represents

⁹ It is true that in classical Greek the word *pornē* originally often meant a “prostitute” derived from “bought, purchased” as in a female slave sold for prostitution. *Porneia* is therefore “**to prostitute oneself**” or “**the practice of selling access to one’s body**.” But words change meaning over time. See **Kyle Harper**, “*Porneia: The Making of a Christian Sexual Norm*,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 131:2 (2012): 369. A good short summary of this article is **Peter J. Leithart**, “*Porneia*,” *First Things* (Jan 14, 2015).

¹⁰ Ibid., 377. Jesus, of course, takes this outwardness and applies it inwardly, as he combines the seventh and tenth commandments (against adultery and coveting) to reveal what “lust” truly is.

sexual chaos. As Clement said, “The whole world is full of *porneia* and disorder” (*Instructor* 3.3.22). The Testament of Simeon 5:3 calls it “the mother of all evils” and would include adultery, sleeping around, incest, pedophilia, homosexuality, rape, and on and on it goes.

Into this, consider how it next says, “And of a kind...” This is a real word in Greek (*toiautē*), it is not being supplied by the translators. Paul is aware that there are *kinds* of sexual immorality. What kind is he talking about here? The kind “that is not tolerated even among pagans (*ethnos*).” What’s this about pagans?

Greeks, Romans, even “barbarians” do not tolerate *every form of sexual sin*. Even our nation, once slouching, as Justice Bork put it, now hurtling hell-bent brakes-off-the-rales at light-speed into Gomorrah still has *some* sexual sins it deems intolerable. *First-tier* sins of desire—cultivated lust, porn, immodesty, crude talk, flirtation—are shrugged off. *Second-tier* sins that detach sex from marriage—fornication, cohabitation, casual sex, easy remarriage—are normal; even prostitution barely registers. *Third-tier* violations of an existing covenant (adultery, mistresses, open marriage, polygamy) are often excused or admired. *Fourth-tier* sins against male and female themselves—homosexual acts, same-sex

“marriage,” transgender self-creation, drag—are celebrated. Only *fifth-* and *sixth-tier* acts against kin or the defenseless (incest, rape, trafficking, pedophilia, bestiality, necrophilia) remain widely condemned, and even some of those now find defenders. The scale is not arbitrary: each tier is objectively graver than the one above it.¹¹

It’s breathtaking that it has taken 200 years of “slouching” in America to get to where we are now hypersonically speeding as fast as we can to tolerate any and all sexual sins. No place on earth tells you this more than the city of Boulder. But there are no objective breaks here, and unless there is [true repentance and revival](#), we will soon have not even a single one of these viewed as evil. How much more incredible then is it that a church of Jesus Christ founded by an Apostle himself slide to tolerating sin that even pagans won’t tolerate within *just three years* of his leaving?

[What is that sin?](#) “[A man has his father’s wife](#)” ([1Cor 5:1](#)). This is almost certainly [not referring to his own mother](#). Paul could have said his mother had he wanted to. So at least that’s good. Nevertheless, it refers to his father’s *second wife*—[his step-mother](#). And this comes straight from the Torah: “[You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father’s](#)

¹¹ **Note:** These six tiers come from a conversation I had with Grok AI about giving me an objective scale of increasingly deviant sexual sins. I thought it was rather insightful.

wife; it is your father's nakedness" (Lev 18:8); "A man shall not take his father's wife" (Deut 22:30; 27:20), as they once more go "beyond what is written" (1Cor 4:6). That this is found in the Holy Scripture is all the more astonishing since the Corinthians had to have known it and the pagans themselves know this is wrong!

But this is not the only sin Paul is uncovering. We've only looked at the first verse. There is a second in the next verse. "And you are arrogant" (1Cor 5:2). The first takes place among two people. The second is taking place throughout the entire church at Corinth.

We've seen this word (*physioō*) before. Twice in the last chapter (4:6, 18). Both times it was translated "puffed-up." Previously, they were puffed-up in favor of one pastor-celebrity over another. Or they were puffed-up thinking that Paul wasn't going to come back to them. Both of those now directly contribute to their behavior of arrogance in how they treat this sin.

I want to stop here and give a present day illustration of being puffed-up regarding pride in other people's sexual deviance. The modern liberal church is personified better by no one in the present climate than Rep. James Talarico of

Texas. This man, who is running as the Democratic candidate for Senate in 2026, received his MDiv at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary. He is active at St. Andrew's Presbyterian "Church" in Austin. Though both are part of the extremely liberal PCUSA denomination, according to his *Wikipedia*, "he objects to the phrase 'progressive Christianity,' saying, 'I don't believe in a progressive or conservative Christianity; I believe in a biblical Christianity.'" He "cited his faith and the teachings of Jesus as the reason for launching his political career."¹²

Why bring up Talarico here? Because he exemplifies precisely what the Corinthians were doing, just with different sexual sins. He blurs male and female and openly promotes the trans-lifestyle. The man stood on the floor of the US House, opposing a sex-based sports bill (2021) and said, "God is both masculine and feminine and everything in between. God is non-binary ... There's nothing wrong with

¹² "James Talarico," *Wikipedia*, last accessed Sept 8, 2026. He is also a "critic of Christian nationalism, and has called it 'a cancer on our religion,'" adding that it is "the worship of power—social power, economic power, political power, in the name of Christ" who have turned Jesus "into a gun-toting, gay-bashing, science-denying, money-living, fear-mongering fascist." I add this with last week's (1Cor 4) context of our Paul-hating men at the beginning of that sermon and how they basically said exactly the same thing about the Apostle who in his power-play stole Christianity from Jesus. In fact, in an article from the NYT that interviewed his pastor, it discusses how when asked what the people in the room thought of Paul, they answered "Villain!" "Homophobic!" and "He's a jerk." Ruth Graham and J. David Goodman, "Are Texans Ready for Talarico's Kind of Christianity?" *The New York Times* (June 1, 2026).

[trans-children]. Nothing at all.”¹³ He proudly says that the Bible doesn’t even mention homosexuality.¹⁴ He is for the redefinition of marriage which until 15 years ago was unheard of in all human history in all cultures that have ever existed on planet earth. If you name worldly sexual talking point, this “Christian” is leading the charge.

What may be the most astonishing thing about this is that when you watch him speak, he has this nauseating air of condescending spiritual superiority about him. With this head always slightly raised and his nose slightly up, pride drips out of every pore of his being. He and others like him who have introduced so many sins into the church under the guise that it isn’t actually a sin at all is the definition of what the Corinthians were doing.

But a question occurs to me. Why were they tolerating it? We actually can’t say for sure, but I think this is an important question to ask because of what most default readings of this sin implies. Is the idea that this man was a Christian and just decided that he fell into lust with his mother-in-law and so he took her and the Corinthians were boasting about it? That is theoretically possible, especially in light of

¹³ Jon Brown, “[Top 6 Theological Takes from Senate Candidate James Talarico: ‘Dumb and Blasphemous’](#),” *Christian Post* (Mar 7, 2026).

¹⁴ For example, on Stephen Colbert’s show, “[For 50 Years...](#),” Team Talarico [@TeamTalaricoHQ], X (Feb 17, 2026).

6:12's, "All things are lawful for me." But it doesn't really make a lot of sense when you think about it. What's there to be prideful about if that's the root of the sin?

It may be, and I think likely is, that there was *politics* involved, just like there is today when sin creeps into the church under the name of "this is what Jesus would do," as we just saw with a US Congressman. For example, it isn't hard to think that this man was quite well known, perhaps even powerful and rich in the community and then he became a Christian. Perhaps he already had taken his father's wife and the church, not wanting to lose the credibility that came with his presence (not to mention money) just let it slide? It's easier to boast than to mourn over his sin. Or, perhaps, if his father had died, he was taking the widow as a means of securing the estate. This would be shrewd, similar to what Absalom did when David was forced to flee Jerusalem. Maybe they just redefined "marriage" as between a man and his mother-in-law. I mean, no one's redefined marriage in our day, right? Anyone who objects is a bigot and a fascist, right? Why speculate about why they are being puffed up about this? Because it makes it easier to understand just how subtle the temptations can be to justify sin in your midst, which is something we all have the ability to do.

Instead, Paul tells them how to respond. **First**, “**Ought you not rather to mourn?**” His point is grounded on the truth that no matter how you justify the sin, no matter how much the world may or may not tolerate a thing, God’s word on objective morality must be the thing that the church loves more than that. The first way to fight the drift is to humble yourself. Stop being arrogant and mourn over what has happened. Mourn the fact that a holy God is being openly mocked by those who call themselves by his very Name. That’s the first step. There is actually good news in this. Because what it means is that **God’s forgiveness is always possible**, whether the sin is sexual among individuals or corporate pride and arrogance in a church.

But if the man will not repent, the **second** response takes it much further. “**Let him who has done this be removed from among you.**” The **parallel** (and key to seeing the chiasm) is the last sentence of the chapter. “**Purge the evil person from among you.**” What’s going on here? Some of that answer will unfold as we continue, but what we need to look at here, is that Paul is not making this up. That last sentence is a citation from **Deut 17:7 LXX**.

ESV 1Cor 5:13	ἐξάρατε τὸν πονηρὸν ἐξ ὑμῶν αὐτῶν. (<i>exarate ton ponēron ex hymōn autōn</i>)	Purge the evil person from among you.
LXX (Dt 17:17)	ἐξαρεῖς τὸν πονηρὸν ἐξ ὑμῶν αὐτῶν (<i>exareis ton ponēron ex hymōn autōn</i>)	Remove the evil one from among yourselves.

It's important to understand that **Paul is applying a civil law of the OT** regarding national Israel carrying out a sentence upon a violation of the moral law *in the church*. How and why can he even do that unless he thought that the church was somehow organically related to Israel? It wouldn't even make sense. But he does it.

He *does not* say, “**The civil law has been abrogated and is no longer in effect for the church.**” However, he *also does not apply the law one-to-one* as if he were still living in the theocracy of Israel. And that is equally important. The violation, according to **Lev 20:11**, for committing this sin, was putting both people to death! Paul does not apply that standard, but he nevertheless does apply the casting out standard. Why?

At the root, it has to do with the fact that this sin, as with the older law, is **a violation of covenant**.¹⁵ **Deut 17:2** begins,

¹⁵ See **Roy E. Ciampa** and Brian S. Rosner, “1 Corinthians,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, UK: Baker Academic; Apollos, 2007), 709.

“If there is found among you, within any of your towns that the LORD your God is giving you, a man or woman who does what is evil in the sight of the LORD your God, *in transgressing his covenant...*” Paul is going to show us once we get to the center of this chapter how this act is likewise a violation of the new covenant in a most extraordinary way. More reasons unfold as we continue reading.

Judge the One Inside – Not the World (5:3-5 / 9-12)

As he begins to unfold these, he returns to the end of Ch. 4. “For though absent in body, I am present in spirit; and as if present, I have already pronounced judgment on the one who did such a thing.” (1Cor 5:3). This has a direct parallel in 12-13a, “For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? God judges those outside.” As with much of what we’ve seen in the first four chapters, including some of the very same ideas, it is vital that we stop here and understand this properly.

Notice, Paul speaks openly about judging others. Again, as we saw last week, so many people take Jesus’ “Judge not lest you be judged” (Matt 7:1) completely out of context.

When you are trying to justify sin, that simply goes with the territory. Of course you don't want someone judging you, then you would have to repent.

So what is Paul saying vs. what is he not saying? **He is not saying**, never judge anyone ever. Frankly, such a thing is impossible. Those who tell you not to judge them are judging you for supposedly judging them. **He is not saying**, “**Bully people with sins *you* don't commit,**” or “**This sin (fill in the blank) is worse than all other sins.**” Of course, sometimes, Christians do act like that. Paul and Jesus know that we all have enough planks in our own eyes to not be *hypocritically* judging others. Hypocritical judging is when you refuse to look at your own heart while judging others of theirs. That's what made Jesus so upset about the religious authorities of his day. This is precisely why we try to teach one another to confess our own sins in the liturgy before we judge anyone else.

But **be careful** on another front. In saying that Paul is not judging outsiders—that is, those outside the church—he is not saying that he never tells them that anything they ever do is wrong. That's the liberal move. That's *not* the Bible's move. Instead, he says, **God judges those outside**. He's already talked much about Judgment Day and he returns to

it here. Christians must know that God isn't going to let sin go unpunished. His job is to judge it—that is hold a trial and carry out a sentence. It isn't wrong to tell people that what they are doing is a sin. That's actually the necessary to bringing about repentance. How can they repent if they haven't done anything wrong? But God will judge them. We don't need to do that. All we do when we do that is sound like hypocrites, not even necessarily because we are, but simply because that's how it is taken. Sometimes, rightly so! So leave the sentencing to God who alone is perfect in all that he does. He will deal with the rot in society.

Finally, *what he says* is that it is our job to *judge those inside the church*. That's one of the reasons why *membership* is so important. How can you do that if no one actually is formally part of a church? Membership is a voluntary submission of the member to be held accountable, and of the eldership to likewise be held accountable by the membership. It is for our mutual benefit.

But *why would he say we are to judge those inside*? The church is a voluntary people—yet not only that. Jesus chose us; then we come. He puts us in his body, and we take our place. No magistrate forces anyone to belong, and anyone may walk away; still, those who stay have been claimed, and

they are expected to live as Christ lived, because the world is watching what kind of people we are. He isn't saying cast everyone out for every private sin—we'd all be cast out if that was the case. But for gross public sin that stains Christ's bride. And Paul is not picking on this sin alone—he rebukes the Corinthians for many things—but this one is the kind even pagans still refuse to tolerate. That is why their pride in keeping the man is so grotesque, and why the church must act.

Judging those inside the church is what we call **church discipline**. This is what removing or purging means. Jesus speaks about this in Matthew 18.

If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they

ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.

(Matthew 18:15-20)

Importantly, “where two or three are gathered” is found in Deuteronomy 17, the same place Paul is quoting from! It says that if a sin

is told you and you hear of it, then you shall inquire diligently, and if it is true and certain that such an abomination has been done in Israel, then you shall bring out to your gates that man or woman who has done this evil thing, and you shall stone that man or woman to death with stones. On the evidence of *two witnesses or of three witnesses* the one who is to die shall be put to death; a person shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness. The hand of the witnesses shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people. So *you shall purge the evil from your midst.*

(Deut 17:4-7)

That this is church discipline is reinforced by vs. 4, “*When you are assembled in the Name of the Lord Jesus and*

my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus...” **Assembling** means gathering for worship as a church with elders and deacons, if they have them (Paul appointed them in all the churches; **Acts 14:23**), and the fullness of what it means to be a local church. That is why Paul adds that word about his presence in spirit. He will be present in spirit when they assemble for this, or, when he sends Timothy to them—if they don’t take care of this before that. **How that happened in the OT** was for the Torah and the courts to determine. How it happens in the NT is not for lawcourts, but the local church to determine.

But **why** purge it? What did that even matter? It’s because the covenant community is *a holy community* and that holiness is quickly contaminated by sin. Corporately speaking, **discipline dissuades** others from joining in the sin themselves, as the parallel in **Deut 19:19-20** says, “*So you shall purge the evil from your midst. And the rest shall hear and fear, and shall never again commit any such evil among you.*” Joining includes not only doing the same thing, but approving of those who practice it (**Rom 1:32**), i.e. being arrogant about it, *ala* the Corinthians.

Paul starts to get at this in **vs. 6**, but **not before he explains how** they (in this NT church) are **to purge this evil**

from their midst. Vs. 5 has the very confusing, “You are to deliver this man to Satan...” What does this mean? It isn’t the only time Paul uses this language. He says that he handed Hymenaeus and Alexander over to Satan in 1Tim 1:20. I had no category for it until I learned about the Divine Council Worldview. The idea is put forth in John’s Gospel that Satan is the “prince of this world” (John 12:31). In this worldview, the heavenly princes of the nations were each given a nation to rule as punishment for the Tower of Babel (Deut 32:7-8). Satan becomes the prince of this world because he was by that day, according to the Jews, the Prince of Rome and Rome ruled the world. Therefore, to hand the man over to Satan is to put him back into the kingdom in which he originated before claiming Christ and the kingdom of God.¹⁶

Why do this? “For the destruction of his flesh.” Before you try to understand what that means, keep reading, “so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord” (1Cor

¹⁶ You don’t need the DCW to explain this, but I do think it puts the whole thing in color. Nevertheless, Albert Barnes explains, *Unto Satan*. Beza, and the Latin fathers, suppose that this is only an expression of excommunication. They say, that in the Scriptures there are but two kingdoms recognised—the kingdom of God, or the church, and the kingdom of the world, which is regarded as under the control of Satan; and that to exclude a man from one is to subject him to the dominion of the other. There is some foundation for this opinion; and there can be no doubt that *excommunication* is here intended, and that, *by* excommunication, the offender was in some sense placed under the control of Satan. (Albert Barnes, *Notes on the New Testament: I Corinthians*, ed. Robert Frew [London: Blackie & Son, 1884–1885], 85–86).

5:5). It is clear that whatever the destruction of his flesh means, it *doesn't mean* that in doing this, he dies. In fact, if the man in **2Cor 2:7** is this man—and that is highly likely—then Paul told the Corinthians to *forgive him and bring him back* into fellowship since he was tearfully repentant.

The purpose is not to kill the man. The purpose is that he might return to the world which he loves so much—the realm and kingdom of Satan—and *suffer the consequences* of that world with all of its severity and harshness, so that he might realize how good he had it in God's kingdom of love and forgiveness. You can easily imagine that since even Rome had laws against this “*evil and incestuous*” sin (called *incestum*), the punishment of which could be banishment to an island, handing him over means at the very least a return to all those people who would now despise him for doing this in his family, and perhaps even being punished by Roman law itself.¹⁷

I think it is tremendously helpful to now read **vv. 9-11** with **vv. 3-5**, because they are a pair. To deliver the man over to Satan parallels “*I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people*” (**9**), and then he gives a

¹⁷ **Paul Hartog**, “Not Even Among the Pagans’ (1 Cor 5:1): Paul and Seneca on Incest,” *The New Testament and Early Christian Literature in Greco-Roman Context: Studies in Honor of David E. Aune*, ed. John Fotopoulos (Boston: Brill, 2006): 51-64.

list, 10-11). Not to associate is parallel to deliver him to Satan. But this was confusing to the Corinthians who had already been told about this in a previous letter (the true “1 Corinthians”) which we no longer possess.

Apparently, they took Paul as meaning that they were not to associate with the sexually immoral *of this world*, including also the greedy and swindlers, idolaters, and the like. That’s precisely how vs. 10 reads. But that’s absurd, Paul says. If you did that “Then you would need to go out of the world,” taking us directly back to Jesus’ high priestly prayer in John 17. “I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one” (John 17:15). This is that famous phrase that Christians are in the world, but not of the world.

Jesus and Paul agree. The Lord didn’t keep us here to create little Christian communities, Christian bubbles, cloisters and monasteries, our own poles in the desert that we live on that isolate us from the rest of the world. That’s a deeply flawed theology which at its heart fails to realize that it is *you* that is the real problem. Apparently, the church of Corinth was hearing the same thing. “Ah, so you want us not to associate with *thoooooose* kinds of people.” Of course he isn’t

saying that. In fact, that very problem has led to their inability to judge correctly in the first place.

Vs. 11, “But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one.”¹⁸ See the difference? The one bearing the name “brother” or “Christian” is different from the pagan. Precisely because he bears the name of Christ. So why would Paul say this and what does it mean by “do not even eat” with them? Is he talking about shunning them in the world, not even allowing yourself to grab a bite to eat? Ah, the minefield that is 1 Corinthians. Let’s go to the center of the chapter.

Christ Our Passover – Therefore Keep the Feast (5:6-8)

¹⁸ There is beautiful symmetry here (for the chart below see Bailey, 168).

1.a	⁹ <i>I wrote you</i> in my letter	
b.	<i>not</i> to associate with <i>immoral men</i> ;	
c.	¹⁰ not meaning the <i>immoral of this world</i> ,	I WROTE:
d.	or the <i>greedy</i> or robbers or <i>idolaters</i> ,	Not Meaning
e.	since then you would need to go out of this world.	
2. a.	¹¹ But now I am writing to you ²	
b.	<i>not</i> to associate with <i>any one</i>	I WROTE:
c.	who bears the name of <i>brother</i> who is <i>immoral</i>	Meaning
d.	or <i>greedy</i> , or is an <i>idolater, reviler, drunkard</i> or <i>robber</i> —	
e.	especially <i>not to eat</i> with such a person.	

Figure 2.2(2). The second roadblock: The church and the world (1 Cor 5:9-11)

It begins in vs. 6, “Your boasting is not good.” That takes us back to their arrogance of vs. 2. Why isn’t it good? “Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?” This has a parallel at the end of vs. 8, and that parallel explains the metaphor of the leaven. “The leaven of malice and evil.” Perhaps you don’t understand the metaphor though. Let’s try to change that.

The picture is one of making bread, something many have never done, because of grocery stores. Bread starts as flour and water mixed into a paste. Left alone, that paste stays flat. To make it rise you need something alive in it that eats the sugars and makes gas, so the dough balloons. That something is *leaven*. In Paul’s world it is not a tinfoil packet you buy at the store. It is a lump of *last week’s dough* that has already fermented — a sour starter. It consists of the flour, water, yeast (a fungus), and bacteria. Together, they eat and multiply. You pinch off a bit of the old risen dough and knead it into the new flour and water. The old life multiplies until the new lump is the same as the old, a virtual clone.

The metaphor then becomes theological. “Your leaven” in this church is malice and evil. That’s what their toleration of this sin actually is! They thought keeping him in their midst made them large. Paul says it made them leaven. And

leaven spreads through the entire lump of dough. That's what sin does. It never stays self-contained.

Instead, they must **stop behaving this way** and in turn be filled with “**the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth**” (8). Face reality. Sin is real. Stop being puffed up. Face it sincerely. This basic ethic pushes on when he says, “**Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened**” (7a). Do this “**not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil...**” (8b). He's telling about not just what to do, but *who they are*. **They are unleavened.**

But what does *this* mean? Paul's point is not that yeast is evil or that leavened bread is a sin to eat. It's an analogy. And that analogy will now be applied in the most amazing of ways. Remember, bread is something you eat and we've seen that Paul says do not “eat” with such people. Why? **Vv. 7b-8a**, the twin pair center. “**For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Let us therefore celebrate the festival.**” This is doing something much more profound than just restating objective morality.

Paul did not choose this metaphor on accident. He went, again, **to the OT. This time to the Passover**, which was made in haste and did not have time to rise with leaven. Therefore, it was commanded to be unleavened (**Ex 12:8**), because you

don't have time for the dough to rise. Importantly, the one who would later celebrate Passover with leavened bread was considered an [apostate](#), because he failed to honor the haste (11, 17) in which God brought Israel out of Egypt. For this, if anyone eats what is leavened, that person “[shall be cut off from Israel](#)” (15). It's the same idea Paul now tells the Corinthians when they are to hand the man over to Satan.

Why in the world does he bring the Lord's Supper and Passover into this? Perhaps it has to do with the “[sword](#)” the church possesses. Remember, I told you that the penalty in the Torah for this particular sin is the [death penalty](#). But the church is not Israel and Paul does not do a one-to-one application like some Theonomists might want him to do. Instead, he applies this to the Supper and not eating with such a person, that is [not taking the Supper with them](#).

The supper is our sign of the Kingdom. It is our covenant meal. Covenant violation is in fact at the heart of this sin and the Supper proves it. In it, Christ “[communes](#)” with his people as they partake of the bread and wine. It comes directly as a fulfillment of what the Passover was always pointing to, which is why Jesus deliberately gave his disciples the Supper at the Passover on the night he was betrayed. The next day, he then became the very lamb of sacrifice, the

blood of which was put on the doors of the covenant people so that the destroying angel might pass over them!

Beloved, the church bears no sword. Instead, it has the table. The table of fellowship with Christ and one another, the table that teaches you of God's direct love for you in Christ, the table that is Christ's death for you, the table that is God's victory covenant fellowship meal with you showing you that the war is over. This is the table that **identifies who you are**. Take that away from the Christian and he has nothing. For it is the very sign of our covenant that Jesus is with us and has not forsaken us, for we do this until he comes, in honor of what he has already done.

So **our two questions** at the beginning **have their answer**. How does an apostolic church get here in three years? Not by a long slide only. **By pride**—a very fast spreading form of leaven. It is pride that tolerates and boasts in sin, justifies it, says God never said it was wrong or that it isn't wrong in the new covenant or whatever. It is a desire to look like the world rather than look holy. Keep the man and call it freedom, or tolerance, or love as the pinch of old dough does what old dough always does.

What must they do? Mourn. Humble themselves. Repent. Then, assemble in Christ's Name. Put the man outside

the feast. Hand him to the realm he has chosen, not as a death sentence, but so his flesh might break and his spirit might still be saved when the Lord appears. God judges those outside. You judge the one who wears the Name and will not put the sin down.

That is why the chapter [centers at the table](#). Christ our Passover has been sacrificed to bring you the new covenant. You now *are* unleavened. Act like it. Do not eat the covenant meal as if malice and immorality can sit there with the Lamb. The church has no sword. She has a table. Keep the feast with sincerity and truth. Purge the evil person from among you. The Lamb has already been slain. Now make sure the house is clean.

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