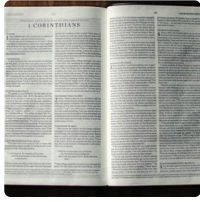


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1 Corinthians 5:1-13



1 Corinthians - Steve Gregg

In 1 Corinthians 5:1-13, Steve Gregg addresses the issue of morality and litigation in the Corinthian church, particularly the case of a form of incest. He highlights the need for the church to purge itself of immoral behavior and maintain holiness and discipline. Gregg stresses the importance of the church's role in disciplining and converting individuals, rather than attempting to directly change the world. The ultimate goal is the spiritual health and protection of its members and the removal of "leaven" from the church.

Transcript

Today we're beginning with 1 Corinthians chapter 5, which is not a very long chapter. I hope to get beyond the end of chapter 5 into chapter 6 in this session. Although if we get only partially through chapter 6, it will not be very advantageous, because that means that in all likelihood the next session after that will get partially into chapter 7. And it would be much nicer since these chapters divide into discrete subject matters.

5, 6, 7, 8. Each chapter introduces an entirely different subject. Each of them apparently responding to something Paul has learned from the Corinthian church about their circumstances. In chapter 5, a notable case of fornication has come to his attention.

In chapter 6, he is shocked to learn that some Christians have legal disputes with one another, and worse yet, they are taking them to court before unbelieving judges. Paul is aghast at such things. These chapters 5 and 6 apparently represent Paul's reaction to news that has come to him, possibly since the writing of chapter 4. Although it is not at all certain, as I said in our last session, certain manners in which Paul expresses himself at the end of chapter 4 and the beginning of chapter 5 have given some scholars the impression that Paul might have been intending to close the letter at the end of chapter 4, but having received it just about the time that he was finishing the letter, news of these moral outrages that were currently taking place in Corinth, he had to affix some more chapters.

Along with the news of immorality and of litigation among members, which he addresses in chapters 5 and 6, he probably also received a letter from Corinth in which certain

questions were asked of him. In chapter 7, verse 1, he says, Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me, and he begins to discuss things which probably were the contents of the letter that he may have received at this time, which means that 1 Corinthians would have been very possibly a much shorter book, four chapters maybe only, had not about the time he was finishing it up, news and a letter from the Corinthians come to him. I'm awfully glad really that he got this news, although it was bad news, but had he not received it, he would have never written these chapters.

It seems to me that both chapters 5 and 6, and not excluding chapters 7 and 8 and the others too, have relevance to Christians of all time. And they address problems that exist in the Christian community that need to still be solved and which we might not be altogether clear, had not Paul written on the subject, what the Christians' response to them should be. So let's have a look here.

Chapter 5, verse 1 says, And you are puffed up, and have not mourned that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you. For I indeed, as absent in the body, but present in spirit, have already judged as though I were present concerning him who has done this deed. 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, deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of our Lord Jesus.

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

Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people. Yet I certainly did not mean with sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world.

But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is a fornicator, or a covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, not even to eat with such a person. For what have I to do with judging those who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside? But those who are outside God judges. Therefore put away from yourselves that wicked person.

All right. From beginning to end, Paul is dealing with a particular case of immorality, of fornication in the church. We would call this particular kind of fornication incest.

The word fornication, which is here translated sexual immorality, is sort of a generic word for sexual sin. It would, as near as I can tell from what I've studied the word, have a wider range of meaning than just what we often would think. We would say that illicit sex

between parties who are married to someone else is adultery, but if neither party is married to anyone else, then it's fornication.

We think of fornication principally as sexual relations between two parties not married to each other and not married to anyone else either, both of them unmarried parties. And that is fornication. Fornication certainly includes that.

That is illicit. That is unlawful sex. But as near as I can tell, the Greek word *porneia*, which you might immediately recognize is the root of an English word that's familiar to us, pornography, *porneia*, which is translated sexual immorality or fornication, has a broader meaning than just the way that I described, but refers to all illicit sexuality, sexual conduct.

It would presumably include homosexuality and bestiality and adultery and who knows what else. I mean just anything that is twisted or unnatural or unlawful in sexual conduct. Now, this particular kind of immorality that he refers to would be subtitled, we would call it incest, because it is between persons of a near family relationship.

Now, he does not say that the man is cohabiting with his mother. It says he's cohabiting with his father's wife, which of course could be his mother. His father's wife could well be his mother, though that would raise questions of why Paul is the simpler and more exact term, because a man's father's wife might not be his mother, it might be a stepmother.

And so the suggestion is that maybe this wasn't his mother, or else Paul would have been more precise and said so. Now, if it were his mother, Paul might still have referred to her as his father's wife, emphasizing that he's not his wife, he's the wife of another man, and that to sleep with one's mother would be to violate his father in a way which would create moral indignation even among the heathen. A man's respect for his father is something that goes without saying in almost all cultures.

A son is to honor his father. And in the Levitical laws, as for instance in chapter 18 of Leviticus, where a great number of deviant sexual sins are described and forbidden, sleeping with your father's wife is one of them, sleeping with your mother is also one of them. But in either case, if you're sleeping with a woman who is married to your father, you are uncovering your father's nakedness, as the way it's described in the law.

In other words, it is a sin against your father. And again, when you understand the reverence that was due a father by a son, then whether the woman was his actual mother or stepmother, Paul might emphasize this is his father's wife. But as I said, Paul could have raised probably an equal amount of indignation simply by saying mother, his mother.

After all, that could be far more shocking than leaving open the possibility that she was a stepmother in its own way. I mean, a stepmother at least is not a blood relation,

although the law also forbade a man to have relations with a stepmother. Now, you might say, well, why did the Bible even go in all those designations that you shouldn't sleep with your father's wife, or your brother's wife, or this wife, or that your aunt, or whatever? Well, it could just say don't sleep with anyone who's not your wife.

I think we have to assume, and that would cover all those bases, don't sleep with anyone else's wife. I think we have to assume that this would include a woman who had formerly been your father's wife and your father now deceased. You see, there's nothing unlawful about a widow remarrying.

And a man, presumably, there'd be nothing immoral about marrying a woman who was a widow, unless she was your father's widow. That is to say, unless she had previously been married to your father. There is something twisted, something kinky and immoral and perverted, something outrageous about a man and his son having the same woman.

In fact, that is distinctly forbidden in the law, that a man and his son would have the same woman. We know of a case in the Bible where that actually happened. Judah, he did not deliberately do so, but he, not recognizing his daughter-in-law, actually slept with her.

She was impersonating a prostitute. She had been married to two of his sons and was actually engaged to his third son, and not recognizing her because she was veiled and so forth, he actually slept with her and when he learned that he had done so, he realized that his sin was greater than hers. He had actually done something outrageous.

And although the law had not yet been given to say so, the point was that for one woman in serial marriages or whatever, to have had a man and his son was just something that nature itself, even before the law gave to forbade it, nature itself would consider outrageous. Well, the Levite marriage, you could not even marry your brother's wife unless you were obliged by law to do so. And there was a very specialized situation.

If your brother had died childless, it was considered the greatest disaster to your brother would be that he have no offspring to carry on his name. And therefore, the next brother in line, not just any brother, but the next one was to marry his spouse or his widow, I should say, and the first child of that union, if a male, would be named after the deceased brother. And that was in order to do justice to the brother deceased.

It would not be an insult to the brother or the younger brother to marry his wife, but it was a service performed to his brother. In fact, it was referred to as such. Whereas for a man to have his father's wife, even if his father was deceased, would be something of an insult.

You might recall that Absalom, in order to show that he had in fact conquered his father's domain, one of his first public acts was to take his father's concubines up on the

roof and in broad daylight to go and sleep with his father's concubines. This was done as an act of insulting his father. For obvious reasons, it would be an insult to his father.

Reuben did the same kind of thing, sleeping with his father's concubine, but we don't read that he did it in any sense to try to insult his father. It appears to have been simply an act of lust on his part and very poor choice of partners. It cost him his birthright.

But the point is, this is considered outrageous in the law. It's interesting that there's nothing in the teachings of Jesus, and really nothing in the law that explains why it would be particularly offensive for, for instance, a man to marry his stepmother if his father was now dead, and she was now a widow and eligible to marry someone else, but he couldn't marry her because she'd been his stepmother. It is assumed that one would know that is wrong.

There's no explanation of why that is wrong, and to the degree that we can't understand why that would be wrong, I'm afraid it bespeaks on our part a dulling of our moral sensitivity. And I think all of us would have to agree that we are susceptible to such a dulling in a corrupt society like our own where we're subjected to sexual perversions on the screen and in advertising and in the news all the time. I mean, we hear about things so much we get numb to it.

And eventually, I think we have to say we cannot trust our own sensitivities, our own selves to be outraged at things that should be outrageous. I mean, someone might say, well, really, what's wrong with, I mean, suppose the stepmother was actually younger than the son. It's not impossible that the guy's father, after the death or divorce of his mother, the father married a young girl, maybe even as young as the son himself.

And then after the father died, the son finds her attractive, and they move in together or are even married. Why would that be so wrong? Well, the fact that any of us would ask that kind of a question, I think, suggests that we have lost our sense of what is morally outrageous. Paul assumes that the church itself should be amazed and aghast and astonished.

And even the heathen, he says, don't do such things. Now, I'm not sure that I could give you a reasoned explanation for why that particular thing would be more outrageous than marrying anyone else's widow. But it just seems to be a violation of one's father.

I mean, that's how it struck society that a boy would do that. Now, of course, we aren't told whether this man had married his father's wife or whether they were just cohabiting. Presumably, Paul would consider either arrangement immorality.

Maybe an unlawful marriage. Or he could be just jacked up. Now, of course, the possibility is also there that his father's not dead.

His father, as in the case of Absalom, sleeping with his father's concubine, David, wasn't

dead. Absalom had run him out of town. Or it's possible that this man's father went on long business trips and was gone for periods of time, like the husband of the prostitute in Proverbs, who's out seducing a man in the streets saying, my husband's gone on a long trip, he took a lot of money, he's not going to be back for a long time, come on in.

And there were people who did make these kinds of trips. And it's possible that the church was aware of a case where one of the members was taking advantage of his father's absence and having an affair with his wife. We are not given the specifics.

We don't need them. We don't need them. I think that obviously the church was not in the dark about what was going on.

Paul assumes that the church was well aware of it and even proud of it. So they were puffed up. He doesn't have to explain in detail what was going on.

We are left to guess if we want to dwell on such unedifying matters. We don't need to. So I think what we can assume from this is Paul would be outraged, regardless of the situation, if we found a man married to or living with a woman who had formerly been married to his father.

So I don't think we need to know the specifics of this case, but to say this is something the law would have forbidden, and Paul considers that the law was simply embodying those principles that any slightly enlightened heathen would even be aware of. Because he says, this is something that's not even named among the Gentiles. This kind of behavior, they would be astonished by it.

And this is of course making the church susceptible to the charge that Christianity makes people worse than they were before they were heathens. And unfortunately, some perversions of Christian teaching do make people worse than they were before they were heathens. There are people who misinterpret the doctrine of grace in such a way as to feel like that releases them to do anything they want, anything their perverted heart desires, which they would not have considered themselves able to do before they were Christians.

Because they simply had a conscience or whatever, that a perverted, twisted teaching of grace, which is not the true teaching of scripture on the subject, can be transferred into license in the thinking of the person. And apparently, the Greeks were really susceptible to this kind of error. First of all, remember that Corinth is one of the most sexually immoral cities in the empire.

In the Roman plays, Corinthians were frequently depicted as characters in some of the plays, but they were always depicted as drunkards and immoral people. Corinth had a temple to Aphrodite in its precincts, which had a thousand prostitutes serving as priestesses. I mean, we're talking here fornication as a means of worship, not only

culturally accepted, but a culturally elevated behavior.

And so when people would get saved in a culture like that, it's quite obvious they have to reorient their entire thinking about sexual conduct. It's not like us, who if you got saved as an adult or as a teenager, the years you were unsaved, you probably still lived with an awareness that sexual immorality was in fact immoral. You might not have been as sensitive to it as you should have been, but we live in a culture that has had enough Christian influence to know that you don't just go out and sleep with every woman that's attracted to you like a dog would.

I mean, humans are not dogs. Human sexuality is not just biological urges to relieve. There's something spiritual about human sexuality.

And I think people in our society, because we've had the benefit of Christian teaching for so many centuries, our society, although it appears to endorse fornication, because of course the movie stars and politicians and so forth are more and more brazen about the fact that they commit fornication and they don't seem to be ashamed of it, yet I think the average person still, if they're involved in fornication, feels like this is something they more or less want to not talk much about. They just assume people didn't know, it's a private thing, a little bit shameful. Certainly there are heathen that have gotten to a place where their consciences are seared against it, but our society has not officially said fornication is good.

But Corinth did. Corinthian Greek society saw fornication as good, it was a religious act. And so if you think you've got problems overcoming the moral laxity of our culture and adopting Christian ideals of sexual purity as over against the influence of our culture, which is loose in this matter, consider the problems the Corinthians must have faced along the same lines when their culture was actually embracing fornication as a virtue.

And presumably before they were saved, they probably were totally unrestrained in those areas of life. But now as Christians, they have an entirely different attitude to adopt on the subject. Now, not all fornication was embraced, of course.

Paul is saying that the Gentiles, though they are loose, though they are immoral, even they would not approve of a man having his mother's wife. So this, arguably, this Christianity, or the form of Christianity that this man has embraced, if that's what he views it to be, has made him worse than he would be as a mere Gentile. But the thing here is that you've got incipient Gnosticism probably in the church.

Now, historians say that Gnosticism didn't really become a full-blown heresy until the second century. Gnosticism being a heresy that became very problematic in the church in the second century. And it was a mixture of Greek philosophy with Christian ideas.

It also mixed itself with Jewish ideas. In the Jewish community, there was Jewish

Gnosticism. In the Christian community, there was Christian Gnosticism.

But in either case, it was an intrusion of Greek ideas into Jewish, on the one hand, or Christian, on the other hand, ideas. It was a syncretism of culturally different philosophies. And the particular Greek ideas were sort of a platonic dualism that saw matter as evil and spirit, anything non-material, as good.

Which, I hope we understand, is totally unbiblical. There are non-material entities that are not good. The devil, for example, and demons.

They are non-material entities, but they're not good. But to the Greek mind, anything non-material is good. Spirit is good.

Matter is evil. Now, if you've wrestled with fleshly urges and so forth, you might be inclined to say, yeah, it seems to me like my body is evil. That matter is evil.

But, you see, the Bible doesn't teach that matter or your body are evil. God made Adam and Eve out of matter, out of dust. They had bodies.

They had sex organs. They had urges. They had drives.

They had all the things we have, except for a fallen nature. They were not yet fallen when God created them, but they were physical and they were not bad. God said it is good when He made them.

God is not opposed to material things, per se. Material things can be as good as spiritual things. In fact, they can be better than some spiritual things.

A body that is rendered to God as a temple of the Holy Spirit is better than an evil spirit. But the Greeks thought anything matter is evil, just because it's matter. Anything spirit is good.

And that's what Gnosticism brought into the church. And, of course, along with that came a tremendous difficulty with accepting the doctrine of the resurrection of the body. We find in 1 Corinthians 15, Paul has to deal with that.

The Greek Christians were having trouble with the doctrine of the resurrection. Why? Because the belief was that if you die, your spirit is free from your body. While living in this body, your body is evil.

Your spirit is good. But when you die, your good spirit gets released from the prison of your evil body. That's good.

And the highest thing the Greeks hoped for was to be released from the prison of the body and to be ethereal, disembodied spirits forever floating around without the hindrance of material reality. But the resurrection of the dead suggested that the

physical body is going to arise in an immortal state and that we are going to live forever in physical bodies that have been glorified and rendered immortal. And the Greeks really didn't like that doctrine because it basically gave a positive, put in a positive light, the body which is going to be our eternal home in the resurrection, in our body.

Anyway, that's one of the problems Gnosticism had. It denied resurrection. And that's because the Greeks had trouble with that and Gnosticism was the introduction of Greek sympathies into the church.

And then Gnostic doctrine eventually got developed, fully blown into the ethics of Gnosticism took two different directions. There were those who felt that since the body is evil and can't be made any better than it is because it is matter and matters irremotably evil, it doesn't really matter whether you do good or bad with the body. The body is bad even if you don't do bad things.

So you might as well do bad things, it doesn't make any difference. It's your spirit that matters. And as long as your spirit is saved by faith, it doesn't matter what your body does.

And this led to a spirit of what we call Libertine Christianity. Libertine meaning stressing liberty to an unhealthy degree. To the point where because the body can't be made good anyway, it's just bad because it's matter.

And it's always going to be matter, it's always going to be bad. It doesn't make a difference if you go out and do evil things or if you try to be good. Whether you're being good or bad, you're bad.

Your body is never going to be any better. So you might as well not put yourself under the stress of trying to make it good. You might as well just let it all hang out and enjoy your liberty and just concentrate on the fact that your spirit is saved by faith.

And that was what one branch of Gnosticism taught. Another branch said, no, because the body is evil, you have to beat your body and you have to discipline your body and you have to deny your body. And it led to a form of asceticism.

Because your body is evil, you can't do anything to gratify it. You have to show your contempt for it. And that is a form of asceticism.

Now, these two things, these two branches of Gnosticism have always been in the church. They're not always attached to all the other doctrines of Gnosticism, but this libertinism, which takes Christian liberty to an unhealthy extent where it actually just denies that it even matters what you do with your body. Just do whatever you want, you're saved by grace anyway.

This antinomianism is the one heresy. And the other is asceticism, where you feel like,

well, your body is evil and you need to deny your body and you need to not do anything that's pleasing to your body and you need to go on long fasts and sleep on a bed of nails and whatever. These kinds of things are both heresies.

First of all, the Bible does not teach that the body is evil. And that's an important departure from truth that gets these Greek thinkers off. Now, even though Gnosticism is full-blown theological systems, weren't really developed until the second century, we can see quite plainly in what Paul had to write to some of the Greek churches that early Christians in the Greek culture were struggling with some of those very Greek ideas that later became part of the Gnostic heresy as a system of thinking.

And it does appear when he says, and you are puffed up in verse two, that is, you're proud. What are they proud about? They're proud that they are tolerant. They're proud that they are so liberated in their spiritual outlook that this man can do something that's a moral outrage even to heathen.

And we're so loving. We're so tolerant. We're so grace-oriented.

We're so liberty-oriented that look how much liberty we have that we allow this kind of behavior. There was actually some arrogance on the part of some libertine Corinthians that this was a sign of their enlightened view of grace, that they would not be shocked. They would not be appalled.

They would not fall into the legalistic condemning spirit of this kind of behavior. It's a little bit like those who say, let us do evil that good may come, or let us sin that grace may abound. See how much we understand grace, that we allow sin to happen and it doesn't shock us.

How far we've come in our deep understanding of salvation by grace and of liberty. Well, Paul indicated that that was not his understanding of grace and liberty. He says you're puffed up and you have not rather mourned, which is what you should have done.

That he who has done this deed might be taken away from you. Now, it's very clear Paul does not think that sin like this should be tolerated in the church. He goes off on an excursus about this and comes back to it in verse 13 where he says at the end of verse 13, therefore put away from yourselves that wicked person.

You might notice if you're looking at the New King James, where it says put away from yourselves that wicked person, it's in quotes and in italics. And that's the way the New King James editors or translators have indicated that they're quoting something from the Old Testament. Scholars believe that Paul is quoting from the Old Testament.

Of course, there are no quotation marks in the original Greek, so it's up to translators sometimes to decide whether he's quoting something. But there are a lot of times in the book of Deuteronomy where this refrain comes up. Therefore put away that wicked

person from among you.

Remember that? If you look back at Deuteronomy chapter 13, I think it's there. It's in 17. There's a lot of times in Deuteronomy it's a refrain that comes up again and again.

For instance, in Deuteronomy 17.7 it says, So you shall put away the evil person from among you. Chapter 13, or actually 17.12 also has it. Deuteronomy 17.12 says, So shall you put away the evil person from Israel.

And chapter 13.5 says, So you shall put away evil from your midst. This is usually the closing line of the verses I'm giving you. Deuteronomy 13.11 says, So all Israel shall hear and fear and not again do such wickedness among you.

The idea being that it's in chapter 19, chapter 21, chapter 22, chapter 24 of Deuteronomy. Again and again it's a refrain, You shall put the evil person away from among you. And it is believed by commentators and apparently by translators too, that Paul is quoting that Deuteronomy refrain here at the end of verse 13.

So, I'm going to quote the Deuteronomy refrain, say the church should be concerned about this too. Now, the putting away of wicked people from the church has always been controversial. And I think the church has tended toward two mistakes with reference to this practice.

One is that the church has neglected it on the one hand. The church has allowed sin to go rampant in the church. And even though pastors may prefer that there was no sin in the church, they have not really had the guts or the desire to invoke the anger against themselves that they would certainly bring if they would take a strong enough stand against sin as to actually excommunicate or withdraw fellowship from people who were living in unrepentant sin.

That's one problem in the church, and of course churches where that is the approach usually end up being greatly compromised and any preacher who preaches against sin in such a church it sounds pretty hollow since it's quite obvious that sin is being permitted on a daily basis and nothing is being done about it by the church. The other mistake I think churches make with reference to this is that they not only are interested in putting sin out of the church, but they consider it their duty to put sin out of the world. That is out of the society at large.

Now it seems to me that Paul addresses both of these things. If people would just follow Paul's teachings, even in this short chapter he covers enough ground to make it clear that we must clean the church out, but we're not called upon to clean out the world. That's what God does, he says at the end of the chapter.

He says what do I have to do, verse 12, with judging those who are outside, and that means outside the church. Don't you judge those who are inside? You should, but those

who are outside God judges. That's his business.

It is not our place to try to rid the world that is the unrepentant, unregenerate, non-Christian world of evil conduct. And this is something that I think Christians have missed the point on too, especially in our society and in European society sometimes, where it has been, the mistake has been made that Christianity is sort of synonymous with America or with Europe or parts of Germany or England or something like that. Countries that are regarded in the popular mind as Christian countries, we get the impression that we should get rid of all the sin in our country and we should punish immoral people and so forth and put them out of society.

I do think that secular rulers should make moral laws and enforce them, but it's another question as to whether the church has it as its task to clean up society in that manner. We are to be judging those who are inside and we should be doing all we can to bring more people inside from outside. I mean there's two societies.

There's the world and there's the church, and they are definitely different kingdoms. They are alternative societies dwelling side by side. Christians' concern are to make sure the church is learning to observe all things that Jesus commanded and holiness needs to be enforced in the church, enforced the same way that laws are enforced in the world.

Persons who are moral criminals in the church need to be disciplined by the church, just like civil criminals are disciplined by the laws and the courts and so forth. Paul does not consider it his place as a Christian or an apostle to exert moral discipline upon the world. There's another agency for that and that is of course in the state.

He deals with that in chapter 6. It makes it very clear that Christians in dealing with their problems should deal with them internally and should not go to the world. And it's very clear that in Paul's mind, the sphere of the church and the sphere of the world are very different spheres and in terms of dealing with moral problems and relational wrongs that the church is a self-contained circle where we are obliged to maintain justice and morality and holiness and so forth. Outside that, the world has its own problems.

Its main problem is that everyone in it is going to hell. And our task for the world is not to go out and try to clean up the world but to convert the world. But once we've converted people from the world, they're now in the church.

And now that they're in the church, they are part of our concern to disciple them. And to take an example of what I think should be done, I would be very happy to tell you the truth if the laws of our land forbade homosexuality. I'd be quite happy to live in a land where the laws forbade homosexuals from practicing homosexuality and even punish them.

I believe that would be just law and that would be righteous legislation. However, I don't

think it's the church's task to go out and try through the force of law to inhibit homosexual behavior. Now, of course, I have a much clearer, in my mind, a much clearer distinction between church and state than most American Christians do.

Most Christians think that it's the task of Christians to get into the government, get in there and make the laws, enforce the laws and so forth. I don't think Paul had any ideas about that that would be similar to that of many modern Christians. Certainly Jesus didn't.

By the way, people tried to get Jesus involved in those very kinds of issues and he shunned them. He refused to get concerned about them. Let me show you a couple of places where that is the case.

Now, someone could say, but Jesus had a different mission. We are not all itinerant preachers like Jesus. Most of us are just average citizens and our responsibility of citizenship is different than that of Jesus.

Well, maybe so, but it's still good to let Jesus, who is our example, to examine what he said and did in these kinds of issues. In Luke chapter 12, it says, in verse 13, Then one of the crowds said to Jesus, Teacher, tell my brother to divide his inheritance with me. The assumption is their father apparently has died and inheritance was left to two brothers, but one brother has taken both shares.

There's been a rip-off here. His brother has ripped him off of his share. Now, this is a matter that should be settled in the courts, but the guy comes to Jesus and says, settle this for me.

But Jesus said to him, man, who made me a judge or an arbiter over you? In this kind of matter, in other words. I mean, Jesus certainly is the judge of the world and the judge of the universe, but this is an issue that can be settled in the courts. It's a civil issue and the man and his brother probably aren't even Christians.

The man is just a man in the crowd and his brother is no doubt not a disciple of Jesus. Jesus said, You know, I think this is out of my range. This is not what I've come to arbitrate in this kind of thing.

And he says, you need to take heed and beware of covetousness. Let's get down to the spiritual needs here. You need to get over your overvaluing of your possessions.

You and your brother's relationship is more important than whether you get your share of the inheritance or not. You're putting these possessions too high in your thinking, too important to you. But I'm not here to judge.

I'm not here to sit like Moses at the tent door all day long and have people bring their civil matters to me. And the reason is that Moses was overseeing a civil government as

well as a religious system. Jesus didn't come to start a civil government, but strictly a spiritual kingdom.

And he told that to Pilate. And Pilate said, Well, are you a king then? And Jesus said, Sure, but my kingdom isn't of this world. If it were, my servants would have fought.

That's what civil governments do. They fight to defend their king. I'm a king, but my servants are not to fight because we're not this kind of kingdom.

We've got an alternative spiritual kind of kingdom. Look at Luke 13. In Luke 13, verse 1, it says, They were present at the season.

Some who told Jesus about Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. Now, there is a, you know, we hear of atrocities that are attributed to President Clinton. We hear of immoral lifestyle.

We hear of illegal drug dealings and so forth. When he was governor of Arkansas, I mean, whether all these are true or not would be something for the courts to decide. We hear of whitewater scandals and so forth.

I'm not saying he did all these things, but I don't want to say he didn't either. I mean, he may well be guilty of all these things. And we want to be scandalized by this.

But consider if you're living in a society where the governor, Pilate, just walked into the church and slaughtered people in cold blood and walked away with impunity. I mean, what an outrage that would be compared to anything we have ever known in our society. There would be, you know, local militias rising up to march against Washington, D.C. and to hang the president if that kind of thing happened very much.

But here, Pilate does that kind of thing to the Jews and he's their civil ruler. And people come to Jesus about this. What are you going to do about this, Jesus? What do you think about this? Pilate, you know, slaughtered these Galileans while they were just worshipping in the temple, unarmed.

And Jesus, no doubt, they were hoping would say, this is intolerable. We've taken enough of this kind of stuff from these Roman overlords. We need to oust these guys.

We can't just sit around and watch all of our citizens killed in cold blood. Let's rise up against this. And that's no doubt what they thought Jesus would say, hoping he would say at least.

But Jesus said to them, do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans because they suffered such things? I tell you, no. But unless you repent, you will all likewise perish, which again put the focus on the spiritual needs of the individuals who were coming to him. These were people who were the wronged ones.

And yet he didn't say, go up and stand for your rights. He said, well, the issue is, are you right with God? We're all going to die, whether it's by the hands of Pilate or someone else. Everyone's going to perish.

If you don't repent, you're going to perish unprepared. And maybe your brother's ripping you off for your inheritance, but if you're not covetous, it won't make that much difference to you. I mean, Jesus definitely had a different agenda than what a lot of Christians I think today think they should have.

And maybe they should. Maybe Jesus. I mean, I don't want to condemn other Christians who are doing things different than what I do.

But Paul said, what do I have to do to judge those who are outside the church? We've got a sphere in which we do have the responsibility to maintain the standards of Christ, and that is the body of Christ, those who name the name of Christ. Paul says in a passage we haven't quite come to yet, but it's in this chapter, that I didn't tell you to disassociate with sexually immoral people in the world. You can't do that.

What, are you supposed to never go shopping if the butcher and the baker and the grocer happens to be living an immoral lifestyle? How could you ever do business in the world? You'd have to go out of the world to avoid all immoral people. But he says those who are called brothers, those who are in the church that are that way, well, this cannot be tolerated. So, Paul is not concerning himself with the sinful lifestyles of people who aren't in the church.

The reason is, their sinful lifestyle isn't the issue and their serious problem. Their problem is that they're going to hell. What they need to do is become Christians and then their lifestyle can be dealt with.

They can be disciplined with it as members of the church and even disciplined if they don't change. But those who are outside the church, we don't just sit in judgment of all their peccadillos and all their sinful behaviors. That's kind of majoring on minors.

Now, the reason I think that Christians are strongly tempted to judge and try to bring disciplinary measures on unsaved people in the society is because we want to live in a society that is fairly Christianized. And I can't blame us for wanting that. Anyone who's raising kids, especially, would particularly wish to raise kids in a society where they're not going to see perversion everywhere they turn around.

And my parents and their parents and so forth did raise their children in a society that more or less upheld the Christian standards. And I think we've become a bit used to it, as if we deserve it. And as if somehow Christianity can't survive in a culture that doesn't uphold Christian standards.

And so when we see the unsaved becoming increasingly brazen in homosexuality and

perversion and other areas of vice, we think, oh my goodness, we've got to save our country. We've got to turn this around or else all is lost for the kingdom of God. And we forget that the Corinthian church and the Philippian church and the Thessalonian church and the Roman church and the Galatian churches were all churches that were in societies that had nothing of Christian conscience in the pagan society around them.

They were absolutely committed to total idolatry, immorality, drunkenness, and so forth, and didn't even have any feelings that those things were bad, for the most part. Unless it was excessive and began to ruin people's lives. Then the heathen knew that that was wrong.

But the point is, the church doesn't need a clean world to live in. In fact, the church sometimes shines brighter in a world that isn't very clean, but we do, we would prefer the world to be cleaned up, but we get self-serving. When we say, I don't want my kids being raised in a world that thinks homosexuality is okay, well, I don't.

I really don't want my kids in a world like that, but that's the world we have. And the question is, what am I supposed to do? Am I supposed to go out and clean up the world? Or am I supposed to identify not with the world and society and America and whatever, but identify with Christ and the kingdom of God and the body of Christ and teach my children? There are two worlds. The real world, which is the kingdom of God, and the illusory world, which is passing away and is like vanity fair.

It's just totally corrupt, and we belong to this one, not that one. And we follow these standards, and don't be surprised if people out there follow entirely different standards, because they're in a different world. They're in a different kingdom.

And our job is to make forays into their world and try to bring some of them back alive into ours. And then we can work on them. But you see, again, Christians have just taken it for granted that the world is going to educate their children.

Send your kid to public school and, you know. Most people don't even hold out for having Christian teachers of their children at public school. As long as their teacher is tolerant of their Christianity or isn't doing anything too outrageous.

It's just taken for granted. Sure, the world is going to educate our children. Sure, our kids' best friends are going to be pagans.

I mean, that's the kids in the neighborhood. And what we're facing now is a world that is becoming less and less pretentious of being Christian. The world, our world, the world never was Christian.

But it had much more of the imagery or the pretension of being Christian a few generations ago, which it doesn't have any of those pretensions anymore. And now we have to deal with the world the same way the church had to deal with it in biblical times.

It's, that's them and we're us.

And we need to keep our noses clean. We've got to make sure that we're not tolerating sin in our society, this alternate society, which is the kingdom of God, which lives inside the larger society of the world, which is pagan. And what do I have to do with judging their behavior? What they need is not to clean up their act, but they need to get saved.

My task is not to go out there and tell homosexuals they've got to stop being homosexuals and remain unsaved. They need to get saved and then there's hope for them to stop being homosexuals. You know, for me to try to impose restrictions on their homosexual behavior without them being saved is to ask the impossible, really.

Because they're slaves. They're slaves of sin and only Jesus can set people free from that slavery. And so, I mean, we need to really get refocused and say, wait a minute, what is the task of the church? The task of the church is to be holy and to win more people into it so that they can be holy too.

But not to reshape society at large, unconverted pagan society at large, through carnal means. You know, all means are carnal except conversion of sinners. If you convert sinners to Christ, then you can change them.

God will change them. But if they're not converted and you try to change them through some other means, you're fighting a losing battle. Our task is to recognize that the church is called to walk a holy walk and to be a holy society, a city on a hill, a light to the world.

And the church, as I say, makes both mistakes. On the one hand, it neglects to discipline its own. On the other hand, it tries to discipline those who aren't its own.

Like me going over and disciplining my neighbor's children. My children are running wild and undisciplined. We've got our backyard and the world has its backyard and we're supposed to sometimes make trips into their backyard and invite them into ours.

But not to go clean up theirs. And that's what I see as Paul's underlying presuppositions here. And by the way, I think those were the presuppositions of the early church for several centuries.

And what confused that was the conversion of Constantine, who was the pagan emperor who professed belief in Christianity and made Christianity official. And until that time, the emperors were perjuring the church. The church had no problem seeing the difference between themselves and the world.

The world was feeding them to the lions. But when the world stopped doing that and the world said, now we're Christian too, when they really weren't. When the whole Roman Empire was declared Christian, even though the vast majority of people were never

converted in it, suddenly and ever since then, even to this present day, Christians have had a harder time seeing that the church and the world are not the same thing.

And that the church's task is not to make a pretty world to live in. But to rescue people out of this world and fit them for another one. So here we have Paul saying this person, this evil deed should be taken away from you.

The person who has done it should be taken away from you. In verse 3 he says, for I indeed is absent in body, but present in spirit, have already judged. Remember I said that frequently in Corinthians, Paul advocates making judgments and says people have to do that.

He's a little amazed that they haven't made judgments about this. He says in verse 12, don't you judge those who are inside the church? You shouldn't be doing it. I have.

He says, I have already judged even though I'm absent in body, I'm present in spirit. I don't think that needs to be understood mystically. Like, you know, somehow when they were there, his ghost was lingering around there, even though he was physically somewhere else.

He's not talking about soul travel, astral projection or anything like that. What he's talking about is that I'm with you in heart. My heart is with you.

My spirit is with you, as it were. You're on my mind. Your concerns are on my heart.

It's just a figure of speech to say I'm with you in spirit. I've judged already as though I were present concerning him who has done this deed. Verse 4, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, which means acting as Christ himself, which the church is supposed to do when it does things, when you are gathered together, this is a corporate action of the whole church, along with my spirit, which is simply referring back to the fact that he said he was present with them in spirit.

Verse 3. In other words, you've got my endorsement. My heart's with you in this. I can't be there to do it, but in spirit, I'm cheering you on as you do the right thing here.

With the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, 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. People have often wondered what this means to deliver someone over to Satan. For the destruction of the flesh.

This is not the only place the Bible refers to doing that kind of a thing. Paul says in First Timothy, chapter one, that he had done that very thing with Hymenaeus and Alexander, a couple of heretics. Apparently, who had been in the church.

It says in First Timothy, chapter one. Verse 19 and 20. Having faith and a good

conscience, which some, having rejected concerning the faith, have suffered shipwreck, of whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I delivered to Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme.

That's another case where someone's delivered to Satan. This man in Corinth and now Hymenaeus and Alexander, both are cases where we read Paul sees them as to be delivered to Satan. Here, the church is supposed to this man.

Paul did it himself to the other two guys, Hymenaeus and Alexander. Guess the question is, what's that mean? Well, bottom line is, it means kick him out of the church. That's clear from what he says in verse two, that you should have had this one who has done as he believes should be taken from among you.

And also in verse 13, put that away from yourselves, that wicked person. Or another place, he says, you need to purge out the leaven out of the church. What he's talking about when he talks about delivering some of the saints is putting them out of the church, kicking them out, not fellowshiping with them.

Now, why is this described as delivering them over to Satan? The assumption seems to be that as long as a person is in fellowship in the church, in good standing, a communicant at the Lord's table, participant in the love feasts and accepted as one of the brethren, that that person has spiritual protection from Satan to a degree that they would not possess if they were not in the church. Satan is malicious and hostile, wants to hurt people. Not just Christians.

He's just against everybody. He wants to rob, kill and destroy. That's what he's into.

But when a person comes into the protective fellowship of the saints, there's a degree of immunity that is gained from satanic attacks. Now, this doesn't mean you don't experience any temptation. It doesn't mean you don't experience any trials when you're in the church.

But there is certainly a degree of protection there from the worst things that Satan could do to you if you were not protected in the church. Some people refer to this as a covering, although I kind of have problems with that term just because it's not a biblical term and because it became used in the shepherding movement to an extreme sense that I don't think is biblical. But people who don't use it in an extreme sense still use the word to be covered by a local fellowship or to be involved in a network of Christians who are, you know, keeping you accountable, who are praying for you, who are encouraging you on a regular basis.

This is what fellowship affords us and all of those things are safeguards. Against many of the things the devil would like to do to us. And in addition to those natural things, and we can see how people praying for me, people encouraging me, people keeping me

accountable.

All of those things would help me, for example, to escape temptations that I might not escape if I didn't have the support of a Christian community. But there's also something more mystical there. Apparently, there's a sense in which you are if you're in the fellowship of the saints, there is a protective covering that Satan cannot destroy your flesh in the way that Paul indicates will happen to a person if he's delivered over to Satan and is put out of the church, taken out of that protective custody of the church and delivered over into a totally vulnerable position where Satan can destroy him, his flesh.

Now, it sounds like an awfully mean and unloving thing to do, to deliver someone over to Satan for the destruction of flesh. But notice Paul says, so that his spirit will be saved in the day of Jesus Christ. And so, Paul obviously has this man's spiritual good in mind.

The idea I understand to mean, put the guy out of the church, let the devil beat him up a little bit, and the guy come running home in repentance. Come running back to the church when he realizes he can't have the world and the church both. You can't have your sinful lifestyle and salvation too.

And this is the reason it's so important. One of the reasons it's so important to exercise this kind of a church discipline and not allow unrepentant sinners to stay in the church. Because it communicates the wrong message to them.

It gives them a false assurance and it also communicates the wrong message in general to the other Christians. And that is that you can have Jesus and sin. You can have your sinful lifestyle all you want and still be saved.

That's not a true message. It gives people a false assurance. Now, the idea of putting people out of the church is from Jesus himself.

He came up with it. And therefore, Paul's not originating something that is harsher than what Jesus would do. Some people think that Paul is harder, that in some ways he brought more ecclesiastical authoritarianism into the church than Jesus ever intended there to be.

However, in Matthew 18, Jesus certainly taught what must be the basis for what Paul was saying here. Matthew 18, from verse 15 on, says, Moreover, if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you've gained your brother.

But if he will not hear you, take with you one or two more that by the mouth of two or three witnesses, every word may be established. And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen or a tax collector.

Now, we're talking initially about a person who's regarded as a brother. At the beginning of this sequence, the guy is a brother. He sins.

You approach him about it. You confront him. You say, you've got to repent.

He repents, end of story. He doesn't repent, you bring more witnesses. If he repents then, end of story.

But if he doesn't repent, then you make it a public matter. And if he doesn't repent, then you put him out of the church. Jesus doesn't say put him out of the church, but he says, let him be to you like a heathen or a tax collector.

In other words, a person that you shun, a person that you do not consider a brother, a person who is not regarded as having access to the privileges of church membership. In the early days of the church, I don't mean necessarily in the apostolic age, though it may have been so then as well, but certainly in the second century, in the first few generations after the apostles, excommunication was the word that was used for this. And it was so called because it was ex means out of in Greek, ex is out of.

Communication means being in communion. They were out of communion and it was particularly demonstrated by a person being excluded from the communion meal. You see, in the early church, communion or what the Catholics call Eucharist, although it was certainly different, I think, in meaning to the early church than it is to Catholics, what we would call taking communion or the Lord's Supper or whatever.

That was done every week by the early church. And it was symbolic of being as long as you had access to communion, you were had an ongoing relationship with Christ in the church. But if you were excommunicated, you were cut off from the communion table.

You could not eat this Lord's Supper with the saints. And it was considered that you were no longer saved. If you were cut off from the table, you were cut off from Christ.

And this, of course, would cause some people who would be sloppy in their moral life to wake up a little bit. You know, I mean, if they could still dabble in sin and still every week participate with full privileges of the saints at the Lord's table, it makes them sloppy in their moral life. But if they suddenly said, OK, you cannot come to this table anymore.

You are not, you have no access to salvation anymore, which is how they really understood it in those days, whether that was correct or not. That's how it was understood in the first three centuries or so of the church. And that would be like a splash of cold water in the face.

Whoa, you know, I'm going to have to make a choice here between my sin and my salvation. And that's what Paul's saying. You've got to do if you do this and deliver this man over to Satan for the devil beat his flesh up a little bit.

This at least potentially can result in his spirit being saved in the day of Christ. It's not the destruction of his flesh that causes his spirit to be saved. It's rather that the suffering he endures outside the church causes him to repent so that this results in his spirit being saved.

That's how I understand it. And I think that's how most would understand this particular expression. Now, notice that even in the verses we read in First Timothy one, where Paul delivered Hymenaeus and Alexander over to Satan, it was not a vindictive thing, but a disciplinary thing.

He says so that they might learn not to blaspheme. These men were heretics. Their heresy was so so great that Paul considered blasphemy, a blasphemy that could not be tolerated in the church.

He put them out of the church, but not because he just want to be vindictive, but because he wanted them to learn not to do that, learn not to blaspheme. So discipline is for, you know, for the good of the person being disciplined. It might seem unloving, just like it often seems unloving to spank a child.

And our sentimentality may revolt against it, but realize that if discipline of a child is done in a proper way, it is for their good. It's not done because the parent is angry and has to ventilate his wrath. It's done because the child, if never disciplined, will go away of error and foolishness that will result in his destruction and damnation.

So Solomon says, discipline your child and save his soul from hell. He that does not discipline his child hates his child, the Bible says. And so this is also true corporately on the part of the church, the family of God.

If there is sin that is addressed, but not repented of in the church, then discipline is necessary. And Paul advocates it here. Now, verse six, your glorying is not good.

Now, he makes it plain that they are actually puffed up their glorying and their libertine attitude toward the sin. He says, don't you know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? This is apparently a proverbial expression, not just like from Christian sources, but it seems to be something that was in the culture, a saying, a little leaven leavens the whole lump. Obviously, bread making was a part of every person's, every household's daily chores and time consuming too in the old days, more than today when you can just plug in one of these electric bread makers and it makes it for you.

But, you know, everyone was familiar with bread making. Bread was a staple of everyone's diet and every woman had to make it in the morning and spend a lot of time with it. And so it was very common for people to find analogies to these daily mundane chores and you know, larger principles and the expression a little leaven leavens a lump, obviously, is taken from the fact that you can take a little pinch of yeast or leaven and

put it into a much larger quantity of dough.

And once kneaded in there, it is sufficient, even though it's only a little bit of leaven to start out with, it is sufficient to cause the whole lump to rise. Now, leaven and its ability to affect its environment, as it were, disproportionate to its own volume, was seen as metaphorical for many different things in the Bible. It's used as a metaphor for evil, but it's also used as a metaphor for good.

Jesus said, beware of the leaven of the scribes and Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. Here also, it's very clear that Paul is speaking of leaven as sin in the church. You don't let the sin in the church, because even though it's one little incident, it only takes a very little pinch of evil to be intruded into the lump to defile the entire thing.

A little leaven leavens the whole lump. On the other hand, Jesus used leaven as a metaphor for the kingdom of God. In Matthew 13, he said the kingdom of God is like leaven, which a woman put into three measures of meal and it leavened the whole lump so that both the kingdom of God, which is good, and sin, which is bad, both of them are like leaven in this respect.

If they once gain entrance into an environment, they will permeate it. Now, that's good for the kingdom of God, because the kingdom of God started out very small, like a pinch of leaven, just a few disciples initially, but eventually it spread and through the preaching of the gospel has, of course, permeated the whole of the world and is continuing to do so. Tremendous.

But once a little leaven of evil is permitted and tolerated in the church, it has a similar ability to spread and permeate and corrupt the whole church. And it's easy to see why this would be so. If a man living in immorality is tolerated, no one speaks to him about it in the church, or they do speak about it and he doesn't repent, so they just stop talking about it, they just tolerate it.

It communicates to him wrongfully that he can still be okay, still be a good Christian, still be in the church and live in sin, but it doesn't just communicate to him. Communicates to everyone else, too. Everyone else says, well, if he can get away with it and the elders don't say anything to him about it, well, I sure can get away with it, too.

I mean, this guy seems to have all the benefits. He prophesies and speaks in tongues like the rest of us. You know, he goes to church and takes communion.

The elders seem to be accepting him. I guess maybe moral standards aren't that important. And then everyone else begins to, you know, the standards begin to lower by stages.

A few other people begin to do it. And then the number of people who are compromising in this area increases and increases until the whole church is corrupted. And that is what

I think Paul means by quoting this proverb, a little leaven.

Leaven's a whole lump. By allowing this man to remain in the church, you're endangering the church to utter total corruption. Therefore, he says in verse seven, purge out the old leaven that you may be, you as a church, may be a new lump, like an unleavened lump of dough.

Since you truly are unleavened, that is, you are called to be unleavened in God's sight. The church is pure, but you're going to bring leaven and evil into it if you tolerate a little leaven in it. For indeed, Christ, our Passover was sacrificed for us.

Now, the reason he brings this up here is his progressive thought is quite natural. He sees sin as like leaven in the lump. He says, now you've got to get the leaven of sin out of the church or else it's going to destroy the whole church.

And then, of course, that has brought up to the mind of an unleavened church, an unleavened loaf or lump of dough, which calls to mind, of course, a very major Jewish festival, which is the Feast of Unleavened Bread. I mean, now that we're talking about being unleavened, I see in this the antitype of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which started with the Passover. You see, the Jewish festival was a week long and it was this, just before Passover.

They purge all the leaven out of their houses. They sweep all the corners, make sure all the leaven, all the yeast was out of the house. Then they'd have the Passover meal.

And then for seven days following that, they would eat bread only that was unleavened. So there was the Passover, which was a given day, a special meal, a Paschal meal on a given day, probably in April most of the time. And then for the following seven days, they just didn't eat bread with leaven.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread was the seven days following Passover. Now, Paul's been talking about getting the leaven of sin out of the church, and it naturally calls to his mind this festival and its meaning to us. Now, we don't keep the Jewish festivals, not the way they did, because they were typed in shadows of spiritual realities.

And here we find out what the spiritual reality, as Paul understood it, was behind the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. He said, well, Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Now, we can take a long time, which wouldn't be profitable right now for us to do because of our time limits, talking about the parallels between the Passover and Christ.

The lamb that was slain in Egypt, which affected the deliverance of the children of Israel out of that bondage, was a type of Christ whose death affected our deliverance out of the bondage of sin and from the power of Satan. And that parallel is drawn many times and many ways, both in the prophets of the Old Testament and in some of the epistles of

the New. Christ is the Passover.

But what does that mean? OK, I have eaten his flesh and drunk his blood. I have participated in the Paschal meal, as it were. I have partaken of Christ.

But the Jews, after they partook of the Paschal lamb, then they spent the next seven days eating no leaven. And Paul says, now, the counterpart to that, once you've partaken of Christ, the rest of your life, which is what the symbol of seven days in the festival, I think, represents the rest of your life, seven being the number of wholeness, completeness. The seven days represented forever afterwards, your whole life after this, you are to not eat leaven, but not literal leaven, but the leaven of malice and wickedness.

And this is how Paul explains it in verse eight. Therefore, let us keep the feast, meaning the piece of unleavened bread, not with the old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. What Paul's saying is, now, he's not advocating that we keep the Jewish feast.

Although he says, let us keep the feast, he means that in the sense of, let's keep the feast in the sense that it spiritually applies to our faith. We're not Jews, we're Christians. But the spiritual meaning of the Passover and unleavened bread is this.

We have partaken of Christ, our Passover. And, of course, what immediately follows that is a life without leaven. And the leaven, he sees as malice and wickedness.

Let's have a life without this malice, without wickedness, and live an unleavened life, characterized by sincerity and truth. Now, verse nine, he says, I wrote to you in my epistle. And in this, he's referring to a previous epistle now lost.

We don't know if it was anywhere near as long as this one. It may have been a brief note or it may have been a full-fledged epistle. Might have been one of Paul's major epistles, which we could kick ourselves for having lost it.

A number of epistles Paul wrote probably have not survived. And this is apparently one of them that he's referring to here. A previous epistle to this one that he wrote to them, where the main subject matter was that they should avoid fellowship with immoral people.

Now, we don't have an epistle to the Corinthians where that's the main theme of his thing. So we know it's a different epistle than either first or second Corinthians he's referring to. Why he had to write such an epistle to them, we can only deduce.

Now, we know that Paul had ministered among them for 18 months before he wrote any epistles. He founded the church and stayed with them for 18 months. He certainly must have taught them against immorality during that 18 months.

I mean, you go to a town like Corinth where everyone's immoral and you make converts and disciples for a year and a half. You're sure not going to leave out important discussions about moral purity in the process of discipling them. So why did Paul later have to write a letter to them not to associate with immoral people? Well, apparently he must have heard of some case.

Apparently not this one. This is a new one that brings new occasion for shock to him. But there must have been other rumors coming to him that there was some immorality being tolerated in the church.

And so he says, I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people. Yet I certainly did not mean with the sexually immoral people of the world or with the covetous or extortioners or idolaters, since you would need to go out of the world. But now I've written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother who is a fornicator or covetous or an idolater or reviler or drunkard or an extortioner, not even to eat with such a person.

Now, why is Paul saying this now? Why is he clarifying this? It seems clear that his previous epistle said don't associate with immoral people. And he meant by that professing Christians who are immoral people. He has to clarify that because someone misunderstood him.

He clarifies, I didn't mean, you know, immoral people who aren't saved. I mean, how could you how could you avoid them? You have to go out of the world to avoid them. Don't let's not be unreasonable here.

I'm not saying you have to go live in a monastery somewhere. Paul did not recommend monastic life. He intended for Christians to live right among the unbelievers, but to be an alternative society there in their midst, but not to run off and leave the world geographically so that they wouldn't have to touch any sinners.

We're supposed to be touching sinners. We're supposed to be touching their lives. We're supposed to be involved in their lives to bring them into Christ.

How would we ever evangelize the world if we wouldn't allow ourselves any contact with people who are sinners? And Paul's letter, which is now lost, apparently intended to make this point, but was misunderstood. My my take on this is that Paul had written this letter intending it to mean don't associate with people called brothers who are immoral, but some who had received the letter misunderstood him, said just don't associate with anyone immoral. And judging from what happened here in the church, they probably just figured, well, this is impossible.

Paul's making stupid and unreasonable requests. Doesn't he realize that immorality is everywhere around us? We'd have to leave the world for that. So let's just ignore what

he said about not associating with immoral people.

Now, Paul's trying to clarify. I didn't make an unreasonable request. Yes, it would be unreasonable if I told you not to associate with anyone immoral, even people in the world.

I didn't mean that, though. What I did mean was something eminently reasonable and which I still would hold you to. And that is that if someone is a brother anymore, you don't have to associate with him as a brother.

You don't have to eat with a person like that. Eating with each other is what Christians did in regular fellowship. When they came together for their meetings, they had a love feast.

And at the love feast, they'd take communion and he said, no, don't allow someone who's calling himself a Christian and trying to be identified with the church, but is living in these immoral ways. Don't allow him to the table. Excommunicate him.

Do not eat with that person. This isn't a disciplinary action for his own good and for the good of the church, not being corrupted by the leaven of sin gone unchecked in it. Now, he gives a list of things that a brother is not supposed to be able to do and still be in fellowship with us in verse 11.

Some of them are things that we would understand to be really serious things. Fornication. I hope we understand to be a very serious sin.

Idolatry. I mean, if we knew of someone in the church who was going home and burning incense to image of Buddha or something, we'd be very seriously alarmed, I think. A drunkard, likewise.

If we knew someone was going out and getting drunk every weekend and coming to church, we'd be concerned. But some of these other things like covetous, revilers. I think there's a lot of that in the church and it doesn't even shock us.

Rich people who are greedy for money and their whole life is devoted to getting rich and so forth. Church is full of those in this part of the world. Revilers.

It's hard to know what he means by reviler. Does that mean a slanderer or just someone who loses his temper and speaks abusively? Reviling is a verbal sin. It's something you do.

It's a type of speaking, scoffing, slandering, perhaps just harsh and abusive language. I'm not really sure all that would be involved in that. But I think that we do have a lot of people in the church who in their private lives, they're very undisciplined in their speech and speak very uncharitably in certain times.

But we don't get shocked by that if we would, if they were burning incense to Buddha or living in fornication. We have to realize that they're in every culture, in every church. There are certain sins that we become numb to and we just don't get shocked by them anymore.

But we should be. And these are the kinds of things which if a person is claimed to be a Christian, they should have renounced all of these behaviors. Extortioner.

An extortioner is a person who uses threats to get his way. Do it my way or you'll be sorry and I'll make you sorry. Now, I mean, whether this is saying, you know, I'm going to blackmail you or I'm going to shoot you, I'm going to kidnap your kid and dismember them or if you don't do it, or if it's something more like a rich person saying, if you don't get the color of carpets for the church I want, then I'm leaving the church and taking my money somewhere else.

You know, I mean, that's a milder form of extortion, I suppose. Basically, threatening, trying to get your way through threats is basically what extortion is. Trying to control people and get what you want by making threats.

Don't even eat with people who claim to be Christians who do that. Now, those who are outside the church, we expect that kind of behavior from them. Paul implies.

We don't judge those who are outside the church in these areas. They got worse problems. Being a fornicator, being an idolater, being an extortioner, those are bad things, but they're not anywhere near as bad as thumbing their nose at Jesus Christ and saying, I don't need you, which is what every unbeliever is doing or else they would be Christians.

And the real need of the unbelievers to get saved and then they can be disciplined. We're not here to disciple the world. We're here to disciple converts, to disciple disciples.

Now, it is our desire to convert the world and once having done so to disciple them. But we don't disciple them first and then convert them later. Or worse yet, disciple them first and never convert them because now it doesn't look like they need to be converted.

They've cleaned up their act. We're just happy that the world is clean now. We've made the world safe for our children, safe for our Christian lives.

We don't have to confront sin in the marketplace anymore because we've cleaned up the society. Discipling the world without getting them saved is missing the point entirely. Getting them saved and then discipling them will change the world as truly and even more truly than any other method.

It's just the way that the church doesn't prefer. The church would rather use politics and other kinds of influence rather than the spiritual weapons of our warfare that we've been

given which are prepared to bring thoughts into captivity to the obedience of Jesus Christ, as Paul said elsewhere. So he says, for what have I do to judge those who are outside? Don't you judge those who are inside? But those who are outside God judges.

Therefore, put away from yourselves that wicked person. So this stands as, I think, a very applicable, very easily transferable concept to any age, to our own age as well. Our society outside is not anywhere near as corrupt in behavior as that to which Paul was writing.

The Corinthian society was much more morally corrupt than our own, though we are alarmed by what we see happening in our own. Because, again, we've become used to the fact that our society used to be somewhat Christianized and it's alarming to see it, to see heathens begin to act like heathens. We're so used to heathens acting like Christians that we don't know what to do with them when they start acting like what they are.

And I'll tell you what we're supposed to do with them. Convert them, reach them, not become alarmed and distressed and say, oh, no, the heathens are acting like heathens all of a sudden. But to realize heathens will be heathens, but heathens can be Christians.

They can become Christians. And once they become Christians, they become part of the lump that is to be unleavened and where there is the task then of working on their lives, working on their moral behavior. And there's more hope of success if they're Christians, because they have the Holy Spirit and they have Jesus and they have some inclination to change.

So it might seem like a fine line of difference, but it's a major, a major difference in philosophy of how the of what the church's task is. It's not it's not our task to unleaven the world directly, but indirectly by by recruiting people out of the world into the kingdom of God and then getting the leaven out because we are the church is to be an unleavened lump. But first, Christ, our Passover.

See, first it's the Passover, then the unleavened bread. Having a society that is an unleavened lump is represented by the feast of unleavened bread, but that society has first come to Christ, the Passover, and had Christ, our Passover died for them and having received the atonement of Christ. Then they can then we can talk about purging out the leaven and being an unleavened lump.

All right, well, we didn't get past chapter five. I guess it's not too surprising, but I hoped we would. We'll stop there because we're essentially out of time.