

## “How to Handle a Scandal” (1 Corinthians 5:1-13)

What is the primary purpose of hospitals? Put simply: to help sick people get better. Therefore, the most important measure of a hospital is not its beauty, the friendliness of the staff, or its sophisticated equipment. The measure of a hospital is its ability to make hurting people better. If a hospital doesn't do that, everything else is a waste of time. I don't know anyone who goes to a hospital for fun and games or to admire the architecture. Everyone I know who goes to a hospital has only one question: “Can you fix what's wrong?”

Likewise, the church is God's spiritual hospital. It is called to open its doors to people who are sick with sin, addictions, burdens, and hurts. They are welcome to come into the church because it is God's hospital. That means the pastors and other spiritual leaders God has appointed are physicians of the soul, under the direction of the Great Physician. If a physician diagnoses disease in your body, if the tests show that you are suffering from a malignant tumor, don't get mad at the physician if he has to operate. That is what physicians are supposed to do. Similarly, some people who come to church don't want to be operated on. They want to hear the music come over the speakers. They want to hear the doctors talk about the situation, but they don't want to go into surgery.<sup>1</sup>

This is ludicrous! If you have cancer you want a doctor who's going to take your condition seriously. You don't want a doctor who says, “You've got a lump... I've got a lump...all God's people have lumps. Don't let it get you down. You're okay, I'm okay.” You want your doctor to operate...and quickly!

In 1 Cor 5:1-13,<sup>2</sup> Paul writes a timeless message to a church that is on the operating table. Although the apostle Paul is not a medical doctor, he understands the need to remove spiritual cancer. Paul believes sin is a cancer that infects the church. So he urges us to *purge the church of sin for the church stands or falls together*. In this passage, Paul will show you a patient's chart that reveals the disease he is suffering from and the prescribed cure.

**1. Refuse to tolerate rebellion in the church (5:1-8).** In the first eight verses, Paul presents two problems. There is a problem with an immoral man. But secondly, and even more importantly, there is the failure of the church to take sin seriously. In 5:1, Paul writes, **“It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father's wife.”** The phrase, “It is actually reported” means that the immorality is well known, notorious, and public.<sup>3</sup> This is no secret scandal; it is on the front page of the *Corinthian Times*. To make matters worse, the “immorality”<sup>4</sup> (repeated twice in 5:1) is that of a son having sex with his stepmother.<sup>5</sup> Notice, Paul does not call the woman the man's “mother;” instead, he uses the phrase “father's wife,” which in its Old Testament usage means “stepmother” (e.g., Lev 18:8).<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, the word “has” denotes an *ongoing* sexual relationship.<sup>7</sup> This man and woman are “living together” (“cohabiting,” NET), despite the Old Testament prohibitions of a man having sexual relations with his father's wife.<sup>8</sup> What makes this sin so abhorrent is this type of behavior was not even tolerated among unbelievers!<sup>9</sup> Talk about a black eye to the cause of Christ!

This wicked report must have been incredibly humbling for Paul.<sup>10</sup> Paul planted the church at Corinth and invested 18 months in the lives of these people. Once Paul left, Apollos came and followed up his work. The church was without excuse! They had been privileged to sit under the preaching of two of the greatest preachers in world history. Yet, the sad reality is: Christians continue to sin regardless of who is preaching and leading. Frequently, biblical preachers can unwittingly breed pride in the congregations they serve. The people proclaim, “Our preacher preaches the Word!” “We know the Word.” “We eat meat, not broth.” Consequently, these church members assume they are spiritually mature when in reality they are not.

Let me ask a tough question: Are you involved in some sin that, if revealed, would devastate your loved ones and destroy any ministry you have? Okay, maybe you haven't done what this man did, but are you involved in Internet pornography, or an emotional affair at work, or abuse of prescription drugs, or the greedy pursuit of wealth. Whatever it is, stop today! Get into an accountability relationship. Begin practicing the spiritual disciplines of prayer and Bible study. God will grant you plenty of grace if you come clean with Him and others.

[Obviously, the sin that we have been discussing should have been an outrage to the Corinthians. In fact, your stomach is probably turning right now. So how did the Corinthians respond to this scandal?]

In 5:2, we will see that the Corinthians responded with pride and disobedience. Paul writes, **“You have become arrogant<sup>11</sup> and have not mourned instead, so that the one who had done this deed would be removed<sup>12</sup> from your midst.”** First, it is important to see that Paul does not attack the man who is guilty of this atrocity. Instead, he rebukes *the church* for allowing the “immorality” to go on unchecked. Apart from 5:5 where Paul instructs the church “to turn this man over to Satan,” he says nothing else about the man. However, four times he charges the community to remove the man (5:2b, 5, 7, 13).<sup>13</sup> Indeed, both the man and the church are guilty of sin before God—the former for the act of incest and the latter for its failure to impose discipline.

It is likely that the Corinthians were boasting *despite* the immorality, rather than because of it. They were boasting in the social status of the son while ignoring his offense.<sup>14</sup> However, this is utter nonsense! When you go to a hospital and find out you have cancer, anything else you can brag about doesn't matter. You don't want to brag about your bank account anymore. You don't want to brag about the neighborhood you live in anymore. You don't want to brag about the car you drive anymore. You don't want to brag about your looks anymore, because all of that is irrelevant now. When you have cancer there is only one issue on your mind, and that is, “Get this mess out of my body!”<sup>15</sup> What is true of the individual is true of the church. If a man or woman in our church is in sin, it doesn't matter how much money they make, where they work, where they live, or what they drive. The only thing that is relevant is they have a spiritual cancer.

Paul is ticked because the church has not “mourned.” The question is, “What should they have mourned?” Paul expected them to grieve over the shame brought on the church by the incest.<sup>16</sup> Instead of dismissing the sin or boasting in the person, God expects the church of Jesus Christ to deal with sin. God calls us to *purge the church of sin for the church stands or falls together.*

[The Corinthians responded poorly to this church scandal. So how does Paul expect them to respond? What is the right course of action in a case of blatant, rebellious sin?]

In 5:3, Paul writes, **“For I, on my part, though absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged him who has so committed this, as though I were present.”** Paul may be small, but he carries a big stick—a “rod” to be exact (4:21). He is able to make the judgment while absent because he has sufficient facts. He doesn't need to call the immoral couple in for extensive marriage counseling. The couple is having sex outside of marriage—that is all the information he needs. Paul has already judged the man, but notice he does not say anything about the woman because she is not a part of the church at Corinth. This principle of not judging those outside the church will be brought up later in 5:9-13.

Paul expects Christians to judge one another. Of course, at this point you may be recalling Matt 7:1 where Jesus said, “Do not judge so that you will not be judged.” This is the most quoted verses in the world today. Yet, very few people read Jesus' words in context. Jesus says that we can judge, but first we must judge ourselves. Before we can take a speck of dust out of our brother's eye, we must first take the Redwood tree out of our own eye. Jesus doesn't want hypocritical judging.

In 5:4-5, Paul now specifies what the appropriate judgment on the immoral man should entail. He puts it like this: **“In the name [i.e., the authority] of our Lord Jesus, when you are assembled, and I with you in spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus, I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.”**<sup>17</sup> To “deliver” (NASB, ESV), “turn” (NET, HSB), or “hand” (NRSV, NIV) a person over to Satan means to dismiss that person from the church into the world (i.e., the realm of Satan).<sup>18</sup> The primary meaning of the “destruction<sup>19</sup> of the flesh” is the purging of the man’s sinful propensity. This phrase does not necessarily refer to his physical body being destroyed.<sup>20</sup> The goal is this man’s repentance and restoration to the church family. Now, if he refuses to repent, the Lord may bring financial, emotional, and physical problems. Eventually, the Lord may have to take his physical life. Yet Paul typically designates “flesh” and “spirit” as the whole person, as viewed from different angles. “Spirit” means the whole person as oriented towards God, while “flesh” means the whole person as oriented away from God. The “destruction of one’s flesh” would thus belong to the same kind of imagery as in “crucify” it (Gal 5:24; cf. Rom 7:5-6).<sup>21</sup> By putting this man outside of the church community, Paul is seeking to “destroy” what is “fleshly” in him, with the purpose of having the “spiritual” in him come out.<sup>22</sup> The goal, then, is for this man to be “delivered/restored” or be found “healthy” and “whole”<sup>23</sup> “in the day of the Lord Jesus.” Probably it saved him from a worse verdict when Christ would evaluate his stewardship of his life at the judgment seat.

I recently talked with a couple who told me that the wife’s mother and grandfather had committed adultery. This wife said, “I will not repeat this sin and pass the sin of adultery down to my children.” I said, “Good, because we won’t let you!” The impressive thing to me about this couple is that they *welcome* church discipline. Both the husband and the wife want the church to discipline them if they were to grievously sin against the Lord. My prayer is that this couple will be typical of other members in our church family. We’ve got to quit seeing church discipline as a negative. We’ve got to see it as a loving act of confrontation.

But you may be saying, “What he does is his business.” This may be true in our world, but it is not true in the Word! When a Christian sins, it’s not just his business. It’s *our* business. Would you say to a loved one who has cancer, “Well, that’s your business? It’s up to you whether you want to go to the hospital or not?” If someone is hit by a car, would you say to him while he’s lying in the ditch, “This is your business? I don’t want to interfere?” That’s not how families work. When one member of our family is in pain, all of us share the pain. That’s how the church is supposed to work.<sup>24</sup>

Yet, an important question remains: Why should a church practice church discipline?<sup>25</sup> There are a number of critical reasons.

- ***To glorify God.*** God commands His children to be holy as He is holy (1 Pet 1:16). Consequently, the Lord disciplines us so that we can share in His holiness (Heb 12:5-11). As a father delegates part of the discipline of the children to the mother, so the Lord has delegated the discipline of the church family to the church itself (1 Cor 5:12-13; 2 Cor 2:6).
- ***To purify the church.*** Sin is a spiritual cancer that cannot be allowed to grow. Sin that is not dealt with can corrupt the entire church. The health of the church requires its removal through repentance or excommunication.
- ***To restore the sinning believer.*** Church discipline should focus on restoration, not judgment and condemnation (Matt 18:15; 2 Cor 2:5-8). We are not to be vultures, preying on fallen Christians. We should, however, be like divine physicians restoring those members who are out of joint with the body of Christ (Gal 6:1).

- **To deter the church from sin.** The discipline of an individual reminds everyone that sin and righteousness are serious matters. Discipline instills godly fear, which is a significant deterrent to sin (1 Tim 5:20). Deterrence was the result of the discipline of Ananias and Sapphira, for “great fear came over all who heard of it.”
- **To maintain a credible witness before the world.** The world observes the behavior and life of the church. When the church acts no differently than the world it loses its credibility (1 Pet 2:11-18; 3:8-16; 4:1-4). Moreover, on a practical note, church discipline is a powerful tool in evangelism. People notice when our lives are different, especially when there’s a whole community of people whose lives are different. When churches are seen as conforming to the world, it makes our evangelistic task all the more difficult. We become so much like unbelievers they have no questions they want to ask us. May we so live that people are made constructively curious.<sup>26</sup>

Now that we have considered the rationale for church discipline, we need to address the question that you may be asking: “What sins warrant church discipline?” Am I going to be disciplined for doing 40 in a 35 MPH zone? Briefly, church discipline focuses on those things that clearly affect the whole body. The New Testament mentions some guidelines in specific areas of sin in the church that call for discipline.

- **Divisiveness.**<sup>27</sup> A self-centered individual who brings division within the church is to be warned twice and then removed. He or she is turning aside from the command to strive for unity in the body. Divisiveness can come from many sources, including misuse of the time and propagating wrong doctrine in nonessential areas.
- **Conflict between believers.**<sup>28</sup> When two believers do not settle a dispute privately and it spills over into the church, the leadership must become involved. The goal must always be to follow the steps of Matt 18:15-17 and preserve the bond of unity (Eph 4:3).
- **Doctrinal deviation.**<sup>29</sup> If false teaching is not swiftly dealt with the entire body will be adversely affected (Titus 1:10-11). It is critical that the church be purged of false teaching. A little false teaching can lead to a church split.
- **Undisciplined living.**<sup>30</sup> If a man does not work, he should not eat (2 Thess 3:10). God has very little patience for lazy Christians.

[The notion of church discipline goes against our modern grain. We tend to think, “Now let’s be patient and understanding. What about grace and compassion? Why do we have to put him out? Why do we need to take action in her case?” Verses 6-13 will explain.]

Paul writes, “**Your boasting is not good. Do you not know<sup>31</sup> that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough?**” Paul informs the Corinthian church that the primary problem is not the sin of the immoral man; rather, it is the pride of the church. He uses the illustration of a piece of leaven. Leaven is a little lump of bread dough that is saved out of the batch. It is allowed to ferment or sour, and then it’s used in the next batch of bread so that it will rise. A little bit of yeast can make a whole loaf rise. The Jews associated fermenting with rotting, so leaven became a symbol of corrosive evil.<sup>32</sup>

Most interpreters assume that the leaven is the incestuous man. But this is not what the context says. Rather, what is infecting the congregation is their boasting about their toleration of this man.<sup>33</sup> *That* is what Paul wants to get rid of among the believers in Corinth. If to accomplish this the sinful man has to be expelled (cf. 5:13), so be it. But Paul does not see the sin of this man’s immorality infecting the congregation, as though that is the rottenness; rather, what is affecting the church is the sin of their pride.<sup>34</sup> If they can get rid of *that* sin, which is eating its way through the congregation, then they stand a chance of being a “new batch without yeast.”<sup>35</sup>

I am not the best Math student, and there is a reason for that. When I was in middle school, I had a Math teacher that my class drove into retirement. During class periods several students smoked weed, rode bicycles in the classroom, and used the teacher's answer guide to complete work assignments and tests. It was absolute chaos! I never recovered from that year. The spirit of rebellion in my class affected my ability to learn and grow.

Paul continues his leaven illustration in 5:7-8, with this exhortation: **“Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are *in fact* unleavened. For Christ our Passover<sup>36</sup> also has been sacrificed.<sup>37</sup> Therefore<sup>38</sup> let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”** In these two verses, Paul couples the imperative to the indicative: Clean out the leaven so that you can start over unleavened bread, because that is what you are.<sup>39</sup> The imperative to clean out the old leaven is predicated on the indicative: they *are* unleavened. In other words, Paul tells them to be who they are, to live like Christians. Who they are is revealed in what they do. What they do comes from who they are.<sup>40</sup> Paul's point is clear: Sin spreads in the church as leaven does in dough (cf. Gal 5:9; Mark 8:15). Sin always spreads and contaminates if left alone, just as poison, weeds, and cancer do. Eventually the whole moral fabric of the congregation would suffer if the believers did not expunge this sin. Thus, we must *purge the church of sin for the church stands or falls together*.

[Paul has warned us to refuse to tolerate rebellion in the church. But how should we live in this world with people who are rebellious and sinful? Should we judge them too? Paul answers these questions in the next five verses.]

**2. Refuse to stop reaching out to the world (5:9-13).** In this section, Paul informs us that church discipline is for believers. In 5:9-11, Paul writes, **“I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; I *did* not at all *mean* with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world. But actually, I wrote<sup>41</sup> to you not to associate with any so-called brother [lit. “one who bears the name brother”]<sup>42</sup> if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler<sup>43</sup>-- not even to eat with such a one.”<sup>44</sup>** It is widely accepted that Paul wrote four different letters to the church at Corinth. However, only 1-2 Corinthians have been included in the Bible. In one of his previous letters, the Corinthians apparently misunderstood Paul. They thought he didn't want them to have any association with *any* immoral person. Paul clarifies and explains that this ban only pertained to Christians. When sinners sin, they are merely doing what they are supposed to do. Sin is a part of a sinner's job description! The difference between a sinner and a saint is that a saint doesn't have to sin anymore.

This means that our ministry is not to spend our time judging the world. That's left to God. It's none of our business. Too often we preach against the wrong sin. It's easy to stand in the pulpit and talk about what's going on in Washington and with the National Organization of Women and the ACLU. But we are not to judge those. Don't ever get mad at the world for acting like the world. What else are they going to do? We need to confront the sin that is within the walls of our churches, within the lives of our people. That is our ministry.

Our ministry is to be one of influence. In 1 Corinthians 9, we will see that Paul was willing to become all things to all people in order to save some. Thus, he would never recommend leaving the world. He was an influencer of his society. Likewise, Paul expects us to lead the world. We must always be careful that we don't find ourselves in a “holy huddle,” insulated from the world. We must get out of our “Christian bubble.” Jesus ate with tax collectors and sinners and He calls us to be “salt and light” (Matt 5:13-16). We need to stop cursing the darkness and instead extend the light and bless our community.

By the way, the word “associate” means “to keep intimate company with.” It doesn’t mean you don’t speak. It doesn’t mean when you see that rebellious Christian that you walk away. It doesn’t mean you become cruel and hard. But it means there is no intimate fellowship with this person. When you do talk with this wayward child, it must always be with the goal of restoring him or her.

Paul concludes chapter 5 with two pointed verses: **“For what have I<sup>45</sup> to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within *the church*? But those who are outside, God judges. REMOVE<sup>46</sup> THE WICKED MAN FROM AMONG YOURSELVES”** (5:12-13).<sup>47</sup> Christians have no jurisdiction over outsiders and have no business usurping a task that belongs to God alone. Those outside are left in God’s hands, and the church has the responsibility to seek to win them over, not to nag, browbeat, or seek to control them.<sup>48</sup> Many of us are trying to clean up the world’s fishbowl when all God asks us to do is fish. Jesus says, “Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men” (Matt 4:19). If you’ve been spending your time trying to scour the world, put down your scrub brush, pick up your fishing pole, and go for the fish!<sup>49</sup>

Now that the dust has settled and we’re done looking at this passage, you may be asking the question: “But who cares? Church discipline never really works anyway.” When many people are removed from the church, they just move down the street to another church. Or worse yet, the person may discover he or she has more time on his or her hands. After all, Sunday morning is a wonderful time for golf or shopping.<sup>50</sup>

On the other hand, for those who have come to experience the church as their true home—a haven in the storm, a sanctuary of rest, a source of life and strength—exclusion would bring terrible pain. To exclude a Christian from this circle of fellowship would have made a strong statement. Garland notes: Converts to Christianity already placed themselves on the fringes of society as religious misfits. Persons expelled from the Christian community might find it difficult to be integrated into society. Unlike today, when an expelled member can join another church down the street, expelled Christians in this era could find themselves in social limbo—neither fish nor fowl.<sup>51</sup>

My heart is that our church would be a church that people would miss if they were ever asked to leave. If we are truly the family of God we need to cultivate this type of community, so that if anyone is asked to leave, the person will yearn to return and be welcomed back with open arms. We can begin to foster this type of family today.

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**Scripture Reference**

1 Corinthians 5:1-13

1 Corinthians 3:16-17

Job 2:6-7

1 Thessalonians 4:11-12; 5:14

1 Timothy 1:19-20

Hebrews 12:5-11

Revelation 3:19

**Study Questions**

1. How do I view sin? Like the Corinthians, do I shrug it off arrogantly? Or do I see it as God sees it? Do I let it break my heart? Why or why not? Read Jeremiah 23:9-10; Ezekiel 6:9; and Psalm 78:40. Commentator William Barclay writes, "Our security against sin lies in our being shocked at it." Do I agree with this? Why or why not? How can I become more shocked and repulsed by sin, particularly my own sin?
2. Is there a habit, thought pattern, or attitude in my life that I would be touchy about if someone tried to bring it to my attention? How can I cultivate teachability in my life? Who am I currently accountable to? Have I stopped to consider the frightening consequences that my sin has on the life of my entire church?
3. Who am I currently associating with? Are these individuals better off spiritually because of my influence on them, or am I worse off spiritually because of their influence on me? What do I need to do to ensure that the former is true and not the latter?
4. What is my current understanding of church discipline? How would I explain the doctrine of church discipline to an immature Christian or an unbeliever? Do I possess a balanced understanding of God's holiness and His grace? Am I willing to carry out the steps of discipline listed by Jesus in Matthew 18:15-17? Why or why not?
5. Have I come to grips with the need to be firm with rebellious believers and gracious to unbelieving sinners? Why is the Christian community intolerant with unbelievers and tolerant with believers? Do I agree with Paul's conclusion that it should be just the opposite? If so, how can this practically be fleshed out at work, in the neighborhood, and at church?

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> This has been revised from Tony Evans, *Returning to Your First Love* (Chicago: Moody, 1995), 121-122, 125.

<sup>2</sup> Numerous scholars concur that 1 Cor 5:1-13 is one of the more exegetically, linguistically, and theologically challenging passages of the NT. E.g., Barrett 1968:123; Collins 1980:251; Fee 1987:196.

<sup>3</sup> Clark 1991:77. BDAG renders the phrase, “It’s bandied about everywhere = it’s a matter of general knowledge, it’s the talk of the town.” See BDAG s.v. *holos* 1a. The New Jerusalem Bible renders Paul’s words, “I have been told as an undoubted fact...”

<sup>4</sup> The word “immorality” is the Greek word *porneia* from which we get our word “pornography.” The word *porneia* covers “every kind of unlawful sexual intercourse.” See BDAG s.v. *porneia* 1. Elsewhere the term covers a range of misdeeds (cf. 6:13, 18; 7:2; 2 Cor 12:21; Gal 5:19; Eph 5:3; Col 3:5; 1 Thess 4:3). From God’s perspective, any sexual relationship outside the sanctity of marriage is pornographic.

<sup>5</sup> In this context, the word “has” (*echo*) means to have sexual intercourse with another person (see also 1 Cor 7:2; cf. its use in the LXX of Exod 2:1; Deut 28:30; Isa 16:13).

<sup>6</sup> Deming 1996:294.

<sup>7</sup> Garland 2003:157 notes this relationship may entail marriage (cf. Mark 6:17-18) or an ongoing love affair (cf. John 4:18). Chow 1992:132 argues that whatever form the relationship took “it would be safe to assume it was a long-term one.”

<sup>8</sup> See Lev 18:8; 20:11; Deut 22:30; 27:20.

<sup>9</sup> According to rabbinic tradition, such an immoral man was liable to stoning. Additionally, Roman law ruled against a man marrying his father’s widow or divorced wife. Parent-child incest was abhorred throughout the Roman world. From the revulsion against the idea exhibited in the Greek Oedipus stories to slanders leveled against emperors, the practice was consistently loathed by classical cultures. Its legal Roman punishment was banishment to an island. For other Greco-Roman material see Conzelmann 1975:96, n. 29; Fee 1987:200, n. 24; Talbert 1987:13-14; Winter 2001:46-51.

Bruce Winter 2001:44-57 argues persuasively that the father was indeed still living. Paul describes the incestuous relationship as “of such a kind that is not even found among the Gentiles.” The missing verb seems to imply that the immorality was “of a kind that is not found even among pagans” (NRSV, see also NAS95; NIV; NJB). Winter 2001:47 points out that the implied verb “is” and the variant *onomazetai* (“named”) are illegitimate renderings because the sin of incest between a stepson and stepmother is named in the law. Contra KJV and NKJV. If the father had died and the relationship was an illicit marriage, it is unlikely that Paul would have said this, for then in the law the offense would probably have been excused. “Sometimes, however, even in the case of males, charges of incest, although they are naturally more serious, are by custom treated more leniently than [those of] adultery, provided only that incest was by way of an unlawful marriage.” (*The Digest* 48.39.3); quoted by Winter 2001:46-47. Elsewhere *The Digest* declared, “incest which was committed by way of an illicit marital union was customarily excused” (*The Digest* 49.39.7). It is unlikely that Paul, a Roman citizen, was ignorant of the Roman law and custom. See Winter, 48 n. 18. However, there was a particular crime labeled adultery/incest, which occurred when a son or an adopted son had or was having intercourse with his stepmother while his father was still alive. Winter’s argument is based on this important distinction observed in Roman law on incest. The above case of incest combined with adultery was a serious offense, and it is unlikely that leniency would have been shown. Thus, Winter 2001:48 concludes, “The reason for exclusion from table fellowship and contact with the community include *porneia*, which is further defined as “fornicators” and “adulterers” (*pornoi...moichoi*) in 6:9. Those who committed incest with adultery fell within the category of the adulterers (*moichoi*) in Roman law.

<sup>10</sup> Obviously, the above scenario would have severely troubled Paul because he was concerned about the purity and reputation of the Corinthian church (cf. 5:6-8) and did not want to give unbelievers any excuse for their unbelief. Rather, he wanted to “give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks...so that they may be saved” (10:32-33; see also 9:19-23; Phil 2:14-15; 1 Thess 4:12). See Talbert 1987:19. Bruce notes that many Gentiles were already prone to believe the worst about Christians (cf. Suetonius, *Nero* 16, “a group of people belonging to a new and malevolent fanaticism [*superstitionis*]).” Bruce 1971:54.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Barclay, 45: “Our security against sin lies in our being shocked at it.”

<sup>12</sup> The verb “removed” (*airo*) is also used in Lev 10:4-5 (LXX) where the word is used to denote the carrying out of the dead bodies of the two laymen who had been destroyed for bringing impurity into the sanctuary by acting as priests. See Rosner 1994:88. Most English versions take the phrase “so that the one who had done this deed would be removed from your midst” as a result or purpose clause. However, the aorist active imperative *exarate* (“remove”) in 5:13 serves as an inclusio that marks off this unit and conveys the essence of what Paul expects the

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Corinthians to do. Thus, this phrase is best understood as an imperatival *hina* (“Remove the one who has done this deed from your midst!”).

<sup>13</sup> Paul S. Minear, “Christ and the Congregation: 1 Corinthians 5-6,” *RevExp* 80 (1983), 343, observes that “in chapter 5, one verse deals with the incestuous person and twelve verses deal with the culpability of the congregation.”

<sup>14</sup> See Clarke 1993:76-77; Garland 2003:161. Winter 2001:53 writes, “If this was the case [the above suggestion], then it points to yet another example of the importance the church attached to social status and their deference to the rich. Paul had already pointed out the dichotomy that existed between the class of the wise, the powerful, and the well-born, and the “underclass” of the foolish, the weak, and the despised (1:26-28). This possibility may be supported by his rebuke—“your glorying” or “boasting.” It would seem that their boasting was more than a general attitude and may have had a specific focus, i.e., the son’s social status.” Gill 2002:127 agrees, “The arrogance may be explained if the man in the incestuous relationship has high status within the colony, perhaps a Roman citizen of high standing. Indeed, he may well have been the patron of the church. Such patron-client relationships were important mechanisms of control within Roman society, and members of the church may have felt it inappropriate to question the sexual morals of such a high standing individual. But rather than being proud that such a high profile individual was a member of their Christian community, Paul insists they should be ashamed at tolerating such activity.” Since Paul does not give details, the above views are held loosely, but the suggestion that this man possessed some social standing seems to best explain the church’s incriminating silence. The notion of a wealthy class seems to be further confirmed in 1 Cor 11:17-34.

<sup>15</sup> Evans, *Returning to Your First Love*, 125.

<sup>16</sup> The only other use of the verb by Paul (2 Cor 12:21) also deals with *porneia* and seems to confirm this understanding. Furthermore, *pentheo* in the LXX often refers to “godly sorrow” or “repentance” (e.g., Exod 33:4; Num 14:39; Jer 4:28; 12:4; 14:2; 23:10-11; Amos 8:8; 1 Macc 2:14). In all six occurrences of the verb in the LXX in relation to sin, the sense is “mourning over sin,” and in five of these cases (Ezra 10:6; Neh 1:4; 1 Esdr 8:72; 9:2; Dan 10:2. See BDAG s.v. *pentheo*1; cf. 1 Esdr 8:69; 9:2; 2 Esdr 10:6; TestReub 1:10), mourning over the sin of others. The exception is Neh 8:9, but even there, as Rosner points out, the verb is used in a corporate context. Rosner 1994:71-72. This sense is exemplified in the example of Ezra, who mourned over the unfaithfulness of the exiles (Ezra 10:6). These exiles had returned to Jerusalem and rebuilt the temple. But they had married foreign women belonging to the people around them (Ezra 10:1-6). Ezra expressed grief and sorrow for the laxity these Jewish exiles displayed with regard to marriage. Rosner writes, “It is also noteworthy that both taking wives from pagan peoples (Exod 34:16; Deut 7:1-3; cf. Josh 23:12-13), the sin which Ezra dealt, and incest (Lev 18:8; Deut 22:30; 27:20), the problem in 1 Cor 5, are prohibited by the Torah. The critical sin in Nehemiah was likewise illicit marriage (10:30; 13:27).” Rosner 1992:473 n. 15. Thus, in this context *pentheo* refers to the Corinthians confessing the sin of the erring brother as if it was their own.

<sup>17</sup> It should be noted that 1 Cor 5:4-5 are capable of various punctuations. Leon Morris 84-85, lists seven possibilities:

1. We could take “in the name” with “when you are assembled,” and “with the power” with “hand over” (“assembled in the name...and hand over with the power...”).
2. Both could go with “are assembled” (“assembled in the name and with the power”).
3. Both could go with “hand over” (“hand over in the name and with the power”).
4. Both could go with both.
5. “In the name” could go with “hand over” and “with the power” with the participial clause “when you are assembled” (“when you are assembled with the power...to hand over in the name...”).
6. “In the name” could go with “passed judgment” and “with the power” with “you are assembled” (“I have passed judgment in the name...when you are assembled with the power...”).
7. “In the name” could go with “passed judgment” and “with the power” with “hand over” (“I have passed judgment in the name...with the power you are to hand over...”).

While each of these options is grammatically feasible, it seems probable that the fifth option is best. The solemn formula “in the name of the Lord Jesus” is more likely to go with the main verb “turn over” than with the subordinate participle “when you are assembled.” In passing the following judgment, Paul was acting in Jesus’ name, with His authority. Morris 1990:85. See Fee 1987:206-208 for supporting argumentation.

<sup>18</sup> The NLT provides this helpful rendering, “Then you must throw this man out and hand him over to Satan so that his sinful nature will be destroyed and he himself will be saved on the day the Lord returns.”

<sup>19</sup> That a strong term like “destruction” can be employed metaphorically, especially in reference to “flesh,” is clear from Romans 8:13 (do not “live according to the flesh” but instead “put to death the misdeeds of the body”),

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Galatians 5:24 (“crucify the flesh”) and Colossians 3:5 (“put to death whatever belongs to the flesh”). See Brian S. Rosner, *1 Corinthians: Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008).

<sup>20</sup> Vander Broek 50-51.

<sup>21</sup> Fee, 212.

<sup>22</sup> Contra 2 Cor 7:1 where both “flesh” (*sarkos*) and “spirit” (*pneuma*) appear as two parts of the whole person that needs cleansing, i.e., purification.

<sup>23</sup> This insight comes from a phone conversation with René Lopez. See also Louw & Nida, 21:32, 4 who note, “Meanings of terms in this subdomain are essentially figurative extensions of meaning of the alternative stems *swz-* and *swt-*, meaning either ‘to rescue from physical danger’ (see 21.18) or ‘to heal, to make whole’ (see 23.136). In most instances translators have preferred to employ a figurative equivalent based on the concept of ‘to rescue’ or ‘to deliver.’ Increasingly, however, translators are employing figurative meanings based on the concept of ‘healing’ or ‘making whole’ and thus have used such expressions as ‘to give new life to’ or ‘to cause to have a new heart.’ These latter equivalences attempt to combine both the physical and the moral implications. Some translators, however, have employed highly generic equivalents meaning essentially ‘to restore’ or ‘to re-create.’”

<sup>24</sup> Evans, *Returning to Your First Love*, 127.

<sup>25</sup> All evangelical churches in the past tended to practice biblical church discipline. For an excellent study on church discipline see Mark Dever, “Biblical Church Discipline” (pp. 167-193) in *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, new expanded addition (Wheaton: Crossway, 2004).

<sup>26</sup> Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, 190.

<sup>27</sup> See Rom 16:17-20; 2 Thess 3:11; Titus 3:10.

<sup>28</sup> See Matt 18:15-18; 1 Cor 6:5; Phil 4:2-3.

<sup>29</sup> See Acts 20:28-30; Gal 1:6-8; cf. 1 Tim 1:18-20 with 2 Tim 2:17-18.

<sup>30</sup> See 1 Thess 5:14; 2 Thess 3:6, 11, 14.

<sup>31</sup> “Do you not know” (*ouk oidate*) is a phrase which Paul often used in reminding his readers of what they had already been taught (3:16; 6:2, 3, 9, 15, 16, 19; 9:13, 24). It is worth noting that seven of the 12 occurrences of *ouk oidate* appear in this section (5:1-6:20).

<sup>32</sup> “Leaven” is associated with sexual immorality in Hos 7:4.

<sup>33</sup> In 2 Corinthians 12, Paul is concerned about “the many” who have sinned in impurity, sexual sin, and debauchery. That is the leavening influence of sin in the body of Christ.

<sup>34</sup> Naturally, the most obvious characteristic of leaven is that it permeates the dough, making the whole batch of dough rise when baked. In this context, leaven is forbidden because of the rising that it produces which is symbolic of being puffed up and arrogant.

<sup>35</sup> Verlyn D. Verbrugge, “1 Corinthians” in the *Revised Expositors Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, awaiting publication), 115.

<sup>36</sup> The feast of Unleavened Bread began the day after Passover. The Jews regarded both Passover and the feast of Unleavened Bread as one festival (cf. Exod 23:15; 34:18; Deut 16:6). As believers whose Pascal Lamb had died, it was necessary that the Corinthians keep celebrating the feast and worshipping God free of leaven that symbolically represented sin. The old leaven probably refers to the sins that marked the Corinthians before their conversion. Malice and wickedness probably stand for all sins of motive and action. Sincerity and truth are the proper motive and action with which we should worship God. This verse constitutes a summary exhortation.

<sup>37</sup> Vander Broek makes this helpful observation: “First Corinthians 5:7 is a classic example of what scholars sometimes call the Pauline ‘indicative/imperative.’ The concepts of the indicative and the imperative, two grammatical moods, are helpful in describing Paul’s understanding of the relationship between, on the one hand, what we already are as saved people and, on the other hand, how we need to be motivated to live in a way that is consistent with this saved status. A sentence in the indicative mood makes a statement of fact. The Pauline indicative is a clear declaration of what Christ has done for us and that we are already God’s people. A sentence in the imperative mood issues a command. The Pauline imperative is an exhortation for believers to live the Christian life. This command and the motivation to follow it always have their origin in the indicative; they flow out of the free gift of salvation that is already ours in Christ. The need for the command reflects the paradox of the Christian life, the tension between our new life in Christ and the reality of our fallenness.” Vander Broek 52.

<sup>38</sup> Paul often uses the word *hoste* (“for this reason,” “therefore,” “so”) to complete and summarize his arguments (11:33; 14:39; 15:58). Yet, there are other passages where *hoste* summarizes a section but does not conclude the subject under discussion (3:7, 21; 4:5). Winter 2001:55-56. In this passage, it is likely that Paul is summarizing his thoughts in 5:1-8 but is carrying the theme of incest into 5:9-13. See Fee 1987:220-221; Winter 2001:56.

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<sup>39</sup> Obenhaus 2001:3; Vander Broek 1994:5-13; and Pascuzzi 1997:153 point out that the phrase, “Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump,” makes it clear that Paul’s primary concern is the corporate body and not the individual. The dough rises and falls as one mass. Rosner 1994:71 comments, “The metaphor of cleansing from impurity is applied to the church as a body; they are to become ‘a new lump,’ not ‘new lumps.’”

<sup>40</sup> Garland 2003:179; Blomberg 1994:106; cf. 1 Cor 6:11.

<sup>41</sup> The verb *egrapsa* can be translated either “I wrote”/“I have written” (NAS95, RSV, NKJV, KJV) or “I am writing” (NET, ESV, NIV). The latter seems more likely. See Collins 1999:216; Fee 1987:230 n. 4; Thiselton 2000:413 Contra Conzelmann 1975:102 n. 81; Garland 2003:187.

<sup>42</sup> The translation “so-called brother” implies that the sinner in question was only a professing Christian. However, there is nothing in the Greek text that justifies the rendering “so-called brother.” The Greek verb “to call” (*kaleo*) and the masculine pronoun “himself” (*autos*) are not found in this verse. The key word is *onomazomenos* a participle whose root is the word “name” (*onoma*). The Greek phrase *tis adelphos onomazomenos* literally means, “one who bears the name brother.” The ESV, NRSV, NKJV, and NIDNTT 655 get it right while the KJV is close. Other VSS (e.g., NASB, NIV, and NET) interpret *tis adelphos onomazomenos* (“one who bears the name brother”) for the reader rather than translate it and let the reader come to his own conclusions. Additionally, the context strongly suggests that the man in question is a genuine believer. In 5:1 this person is contrasted with Gentiles and with those in the world (5:12) and outside the church (5:9, 10, 12-13). Furthermore nowhere else the Greek verb (named or called) carries a sense of doubt (see Mark 3:14; Acts 19:13; Rom 15:20; Eph 3:15; 5:3; 2 Tim 2:19). Hence Paul contrasts the immoral believer with unbelievers. The equation of both is in their behavior not identity.

<sup>43</sup> Lest someone think Paul was singling out the sin of immorality for excommunication, he lays that charge to rest in 5:11.

<sup>44</sup> Twenty-three vice lists are found in the NT, all but two of which also occur in epistles: Matt 15:19; Mark 7:21-22; Rom 1:29-31; 13:13; 1 Cor 5:10-11; 6:9-10; 2 Cor 6:9-10; 12:20-21; Gal 5:19-21; Eph 4:31; 5:3-5; Col 3:5, 8; 1 Tim 1:9-10; 2 Tim 3:2-5; Titus 3:3; Jas 3:15; 1 Pet 2:1; 4:3, 15; Rev 9:21; 21:8; 22:15.

<sup>45</sup> The “I” is hortative; that is, Paul intends his readers to apply what he says to themselves. Dodd 1995:47-48.

<sup>46</sup> Helping people obey God and overcome debilitating behavior is just as loving as when a physician removes a cancerous growth and restores a body to health. I often find it interesting how sick people will revere medical doctors who use painful treatments to solve a great problem. But the same people turn around and castigate a counselor or a pastor for doing the same. A medical doctor can poke around on a person, creating a great deal of discomfort, until the problem is discovered. After painful surgery and other medical strategies are successful, we profusely thank the doctor. When a pastor begins to point out sinful behavior and the steps to recovery, he is often called unloving and is under siege by friends and family. Bill Hull, *Building High Commitment in a Low-Commitment World* (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 1995), 190.

<sup>47</sup> Many English VSS recognize that 5:13 alludes to Deuteronomy. Even the Nestle-Aland Greek text prints the words in italics, indicating the editor’s view that this is some kind of quotation.

<sup>48</sup> Garland 2003:190.

<sup>49</sup> Charles R. Swindoll, *Strong Reproofs for a Scandalous Church: A Study of 1 Corinthians 1:1-6:11* (Fullerton, CA: Insight for Living, 1988), 81.

<sup>50</sup> Bruce N. Fisk, *First Corinthians: Interpretation Bible Studies* (Westminster John Knox: 2000), 31.

<sup>51</sup> Garland 2003:173.