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1 Corinthians

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.

1 Corinthians 5:8

As was noted in the previous verse, the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread of the Old Testament pictured, or foreshadowed, the work of Christ. Paul claims their fulfillment is found in Him. As these were "Feasts of the Lord" (meaning Jehovah), the connection is obvious - Jesus Christ is Jehovah Incarnate. How people miss this is rather remarkable!

Because their fulfillment is found in Him and because we are "in Christ," Paul says, "Therefore..." The coming words explain our duties based on our position in Him. And what does he detail for us then? He says, "Let us keep the feast." In other words we could say, "because Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us, let us keep the rest of the Feast of Unleavened Bread." It is a metaphor asking us to consider our position in Him, the sinless Lamb of God.

Christ is the fulfillment of the Passover. Because of His shed blood, God has "passed over" us and we are now found in Him. Because we are in Him, we should "keep the feast, not with old leaven." What we once were and the way we once acted are no longer appropriate ways of conducting ourselves. If Christ had to die to redeem us, then there must have been a need for Him to die to redeem us! Why would we continue in a life that necessitated such an action. That old life consisted of "the leaven of malice and wickedness."

This is certainly a reference to what necessitated his words in the first place - the man caught up in sexual immorality who is noted in verses 1-5 is being used as an example of such a debased life and it is a lifestyle which is contradictory to holy living in Christ. Instead of following such a path, Paul implores those in Corinth (and thus the church which remains to this day) that we should instead keep the feast "with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

Jesus Christ is sinless;

We are in Christ;

Therefore, our conduct should be reflective of the sinless position we hold.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread, a Feast mandated by God for Israel 3500 years ago, pictured those in the church age who have been redeemed by Jesus Christ. We are living in the Feast and thus we should follow the example - holy living for those who have been declared sinless. Anything else would be contradictory to the honorable position to which we have been elevated.

Life application: The Old Testament isn't a compilation of outdated and useless books. Instead, it is the very tool we need to fully understand the marvelous work of God in Christ - why we need Him, what His work entails, and how His work applies to us. Let us not forsake reading, studying, and sharing the whole counsel of God found in both testaments of the Bible.

I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people.

1 Corinthians 5:9

This verse is not a stand-alone verse. If one were to cite it as a stand alone, a false impression of what Paul intends will inevitably be the result. Unfortunately, it is often used in this way and thus it becomes a verse which is used as a tool to disgrace believers who have done nothing wrong. Context is always of paramount consideration when citing Scripture.

The words, "I wrote to you in my epistle" indicate that either he had written another letter to those in Corinth which is not included in the Bible, or that he is referring to what he just said in his previous thought in 5:4 and 5:5. Either way, in this he admonished them to send the sexually immoral offender out of the congregation.

What is important here concerning this not being a "stand alone" verse, is that Paul is reckoning the person who is to be expelled as a believer. Because he is a believer, keeping company with him would leave the perception that his actions were acceptable. These perceptions would be held by the offender and by those who saw the offender and who were unschooled in the Lord's commands concerning sexual immorality.

As we will see, Paul will go on to make a distinction between socializing with believers and unbelievers and keeping "company with sexually immoral people."

Life application: Context is king in interpreting the Bible. Anyone can form any doctrine by tearing verses out of their intended context. However, it takes study, care, and continued diligence to properly interpret and rightly divide the word of God based on context. Be approved! Considered context at all times.

Yet I certainly *did not mean* with the 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. 1 Corinthians 5:10

In the previous verse, it was noted that it wasn't a stand alone verse. Paul had said, " I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people." If that were all he had said, one might be under the misguided impression that they had to hide themselves in a cave or go to a remote island with no people on it or some other place like that. Where else could one go to keep away from such people? And this is the false impression that is obtained when only that verse is cited.

However, Paul continues with his thoughts here and he will further refine them in the coming verses. His intent was not for believers to refrain from being around sexually immoral people, or people with any other such vile habits. How could the gospel spread if such were the case? Even Jesus ate with "tax collectors and sinners." Christianity isn't supposed to be conducted in walled fortresses. Instead it is to be proclaimed to those in the fallen world, such as -

To the sexually immoral - people who practice sexual acts outside of the bonds of marriage. This includes any of a host of perverse acts as well. It includes the vast majority of people in any given society. It is true that there are people who are faithful as spouses in any given culture, but if there are no limits imposed by God on how to conduct one's affairs, sexual immorality quickly becomes a predominate trait in most societies.

To the covetous - Coveting is desiring something that someone else possesses. It is the greed of the heart which is not content with what one rightfully owns. It also doesn't consider taking the time to earn what is desired. Instead it is a lust of the eyes for that which one has not been worked for or which has been rightly received, such as a gift or inheritance. It is an avaricious attitude which will eventually be realized in hatred, theft, murder, etc. if not reigned in.

To extortioners - Such are those who take advantage of others for illicit gain. They may charge high rates of repayment on loans, forced payment for "protection" which if not paid will end in any sort of punishment, etc. In this type, there is little consideration for others, but rather a rapacious desire to profit off anyone for any reason.

To idolaters - An idolater is one who puts anything or anyone before a right relationship with God. It can be a mere devotion or service to idols, such as is authorized even by some "Christian" denominations. It can be realized in prayers to or through any other person - such as praying to Mary or the saints. People can make almost anything into an idol - sex, money, gems, artwork, cars, sport teams or sports figures, etc. Idolatry includes the unhealthy devotion to anything or anyone which causes our hearts and affections to be directed away from God.

Paul tells those at Corinth that although they are not to keep company with such people, he didn't mean that it included the people of the world. This is because if so, it would mean that they "would need to go out of the world." This is obviously impossible. And so he will continue to explain what he meant in the verses ahead.

Life application: How is the gospel going to be shared by you if you isolate yourself in a room away from the wicked world? Someone took the time to share it with you. Now it's your turn. God has you exactly where He desires you. So step out and share what you know. It could change eternity for someone else.

*O God, I know that the world is a wicked place
And that I would be so safe behind a locked door
But how will the lost ever come to see Your face
In You I am so rich, but others are so poor*

*Give me the heart to step out and share this word
To talk to those who are bound by the devil's hand
Give me boldness to tell about Jesus my Lord
So that they too can be saved to an eternity so grand*

But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner—not even to eat with such a person.

1 Corinthians 5:11

This verse explicitly lays out what we need to know concerning our relationships with immoral people within the church. Though Paul had no problem with believers being with people who are morally deficient who are *not* believers, he explicitly states here what our relationship towards immoral believers should be.

He says, "But now I have written to you..." This is his doctrine and this is his direction. What is leaving the tip of his pen is to be considered as from the Lord because he is the apostle to the Gentiles and is speaking on the Lord's behalf.

And his words are that we are "not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who...." In other words, a person who claims to be a saved believer in Jesus Christ. If they are named among the roles of believers, we are to consider them in a separate category than non-believers. They are being held to a specific standard which he will now continue with as he notes "who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner."

From his list in the previous verse, he adds in two new categories which should be defined -

- 1) Reviler - This is a person who is vulgar in his words. His speech is coarse, angry, defiant, and abusive. Such a person has no problem vilifying others in their character, hurting people's feelings through speech, and demeaning those around them. Such an attitude is opposite to Christ who "when He was reviled, did not revile in return" (1 Peter 2:23).
- 2) Drunkard - A drunkard is a person addicted to alcohol; not specifically any person who drinks alcohol. A drunkard has no restraint over his drinking; it has conquered him and his allegiance is to it and not to Christ. Concerning the moderate drinking of alcohol, there is nothing wrong with doing so. The entire body of Scripture bears this out. However, like any other thing there are limits which must be exercised. These will be discussed in detail in the coming chapters of 1 Corinthians.

Paul says that of such a person as is named in his list, they are not to keep company with them, nor "even to eat with such a person." By fellowshiping with someone in this category who claims to be a brother, you then implicitly condone their behavior. They will feel justified, and those around them who witness the fellowshiping will be left with the impression that what they are doing is acceptable to you and within the body of believers.

It should be noted though that Paul terms them "believers." He never questions their salvation, but assumes that they are saved. Never in his writings does he say a person can "lose" their salvation. Instead, they may suffer great harms in this life and great loss at the judgment. But their status as believers is left between them and the Lord Jesus.

The purpose of Paul's words is not condemnation, but purity and holiness within the body and an attempt to bring about remorse and a change in the offenders. This is what is expected and this is what we should always strive for.

Life application: Who are we exalting? At what cost are we willing to bring discredit upon the name of the Lord? We must always consider what our words, actions, and associations will do and how they will appear in the eyes of others. Above all, we should strive to bring glory and honor to the name of Jesus Christ.

For what *have I to do* with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside? 1 Corinthians 5:12

Pay close heed to Paul's words in this verse and remember them as you conduct your daily affairs. In all analyses of the Bible, context is of paramount importance and it is the one aspect which is most disregarded by those who are either not Christians or who are biblically uninformed Christians who use the Bible as a tool to set their own personal agenda concerning any given issue. Today's verse is an exemplary response to the misuse of Matthew 7:1,2 which says -

"Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you."

What is the context of Jesus' words? Who was He speaking to? Under what dispensation was He speaking? And just as notable, what does He then ask His audience to do just four verses later? He asks them to make right moral judgments. Here are His words -

"Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces." Matthew 7:6

Almost every time Matthew 7:1, 2 is cited, it is ripped out of its context in an attempt to silence vocal Christians who make moral judgments against perversion within society, government, or even in the church. None of these apply to what Jesus intended and understanding this will allow the Christian to feel secure in their proper, healthy, and God-honoring moral judgments.

In confirmation of this approach, we have Paul's words which begin with, "For what *have I to do* with judging those also who are outside?" His words are showing that he is not the arbiter of the conduct of those outside the church, nor does he sit in judgment of them. This does not mean that what he says about their conduct is not valid, but that he is not the one who will decide their fate *for* their conduct. If Paul speaks of a non-believer as a licentious or perverted person, he is within his rights as a Christian. But he will not be the one to either forgive them or to cast them into hell. That right belongs to the Lord.

On the other hand, there are these types of people within the church. They act out perversion, they are divisive, vulgar, contentious, slanderous, etc (such as he has already mentioned). In those cases, he not only has a right to make a moral judgment about them (as Jesus indicated in Matthew 7:6), but he also has a right to make a punitive judgment as well. And this right extends to the church as a whole. This is made clear by the words, "Do you not judge those who are inside?"

It is a rhetorical question which demands a positive answer. If not they, then who? Unfortunately, in our society, Christians are trapped into believing that they are somehow to be silent over the ever-increasing moral wickedness displayed by those in society - from school teachers and college professors, to actors and musicians, and all the way up to congressmen, senators, and even as becomes ever more prevalent, the President of the United States.

To be a supporter of moral perversion has reached the height of fashion for the liberal left in our nation and it has grown to epidemic proportions. But Christians

are continuously told to be silent based on Jesus' words which have been torn out of context and held up as a banner for the need for "tolerance" against things that are wholly intolerable.

Life application: Right moral judgments do not stop as one exits the doors of the church. Instead, they are to be upheld at all times and against all forms of perversion. However, the punitive judgment for those perversions is not at the discretion of the church. God will judge the immoral and he will condemn them for their wickedness. He is not slack in this either, but is patient, allowing many to humble themselves and turn from their wickedness. Someday though, He will turn and fight against it when the sins have reached their fullness.

But those who are outside God judges. Therefore "put away from yourselves the evil person." 1 Corinthians 5:13

There is a difference between "judgments" and "judging." We as Christians are to continuously make right "judgments." We are to abstain from evil, recognize evil, identify that which is evil, and work against evil. However, as a body we are not given authority over those outside the church. Though we may make judgments on their conduct, we are not the judges over their conduct. Societies come and go and moral perversion is an inevitable part of them, usually increasing as the society ages.

Because the church is not the judge of societal wickedness, Paul begins with the word "But." This is given in contrast to what he just said in 1 Corinthians 5:12 -

"For what *have I to do* with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside?"

Those outside are excluded from church judgment, but they are not free from judgment! Instead, "those who are outside God judges." There is no pass for wickedness and perversion. Instead, it will be handled in a separate manner by

the ultimate Judge of all men. On the other hand, we are given authority over matters of disobedience within the church. It is the responsibility of the church to make judgments and then to pass judgment on those who violate the precepts laid out in Scripture.

To confirm this, Paul says "therefore." Because the church is given this authority, it must use it properly and exercise it without fail. For those in Corinth, the decision is rendered by Paul - "put away from yourselves the evil person."

The most severe judgment of the church is directed. The offender is to be put out of the fellowship and regarded as a pagan to those in the church. He has no rights within the body at all. He has been delivered over "to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" as Paul noted in verse 5.

Unfortunately, a consequence of living in a society where there are many churches and denominations in any given town is that the offender in the world today can simply cross the street and sit in a different church. However, the sentence if properly imposed on him should hopefully be of such weight that he would repent and turn from his wickedness.

Life application: The church has a moral responsibility to uphold God's word, to keep the body pure, and to expel those who flagrantly disobey what God expects. Let us endeavor to stand boldly on the principles of Scripture and be strong in our moral convictions lest we be found wanting in our adherence to what the Lord expects.

Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints? 1 Corinthians 6:1

In Chapter 5, Paul detailed "judging" for both those inside the church and noting that the church isn't the arbiter of matters outside the church. Now he is turning

the same thought around. The reason for this isn't explicitly stated, but it is alluded to in verse 6:6 which is just ahead.

Just as the church is to judge matters which occur within the church, the church is not to have such matters judged by those outside the church. It is a point of obvious grief to him and he will detail why as he proceeds. To stress the magnitude of the issue, he asks "Dare any of you...?" It is a note of rebuke or a note of extreme warning. In essence, as Bengel notes, it "implies treason against Christian brotherhood." What he will continue with is something bordering on sacred.

And so he continues, "Dare any of you, having a matter against another..." There will always arise disputes between people. This has occurred since the beginning and it will continue throughout the age. People perceive things differently and feel they have a right to a legal remedy for injustices committed against them. But within the body of believers, Paul demonstrates that when such a thing arises, they should not even dare to "go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints."

The absurdity of following such a course will be explained, but even before reaching those verses, it is possible to think through many reasons why this shouldn't occur. If the saints are declared righteous, then how could a fair legal decision be rendered in a court ruled by the unrighteous? Suppose a believer has wronged another believer and is unwilling to own up to his wrong. What would preclude him from bribing an unrighteous judge to maintain his supremacy in the matter?

Additionally, what kind of example would a church or church member be setting if he were to take such matters before a non-believing body? What will be the perception of those non-believers concerning the power of Jesus, the charitableness between believers, or the ability for a church to handle matters of even greater weight (meaning spiritual matters)? If they can't handle earthly problems, why should they be trusted with the eternal issues that religion is supposed to handle.

For these and other reasons, it is entirely inappropriate for believers within a church to not attempt to arbitrate their differences within the church setting.

Life application: How important is a matter that you would be willing to bring discredit upon the name of Jesus? At what point does an offense justify degrading Him in the presence of the unrighteous. Paul's words ask us to consider this and to act accordingly.

Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters?

1 Corinthians 6:2

Paul is showing the utterly absurd nature of the saints going before the ungodly for their judgments. His words confirm that their counsels are merely earthly and bear little weight. In contrast to them are the judgments of the saints. "Do you not know that the saints will judge the world?" The very people to whom the Corinthians were going to resolve petty matters between the believers are the same people who will be judged by the saints someday!

Paul is showing that the religious matters bear immensely higher weight than the earthly issues we find so important. It is to the "saints" that the religious decisions will be rendered. This verse, along with so many others in the New Testament, shows us that those termed "saints" are not decided upon by a council or a pope, but rather it is a term for "believers." All who are saved by Christ are, by default, saints. And these saints will "judge the world."

And so, to continue to help these saints think clearly, Paul continues with, "And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters?" The folly of those in Corinth is made clear! How can we hold to the promises of the future with all of its honor and power, and not reasonably consider it in our deliberations now? These niggling little matters (which seem so important at this time, but which actually have no true importance when

considered against the backdrop of eternity) that arise between believers are minute compared to what we will someday decide.

So how can it be that we can't even decide them now? Paul asks them to think! And it is all the more relevant to believers today. Those in Corinth didn't have the New Testament epistles to rely on. All they had was whatever instructions they received and their faulty memories. Now, we have the whole counsel of God given to us and ready for reference, decision, and action. What an immensely valuable tool for guidance - and yet we still neglect it and we still fall into the same error today that those in Corinth fell into prior to the publication of the Bible.

Life application: What priority is Scripture in your life? Just how willing to rely on God's instruction are you? Do you know more than He? Are your judgments more valuable than His? We know the answers, and so let us continue to learn and apply this precious gift to our every step.

Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life? 1 Corinthians 6:3

There is much debate and an almost perceived fear among commentators as to what Paul is referring to here. Some say that because there is no qualifier before "angels" it must be referring to the "good" angels. In other words, he doesn't say the "fallen" angels or the "bad" angels. Others disagree and say he must be speaking about the leaders of churches - pastors, priests, etc. The term can be used this way, but it would make no sense at all because he is writing to a body with elders already in place and he himself is an apostle.

The plain sense of the verse demands that we look at it in no other way than that he is speaking of heavenly messengers, good or bad, that will be judged by the saints. If a sentence is to be pronounced on a fallen angel, believers will be the ones qualified to make that judgment. The good angels will be excluded from such judgments because there was no fault in them. Thus, in actuality, judgment

is rendered on both. One judgment is "no" judgment necessary. The other judgment will be according to their fallen nature and evil deeds.

But for *what* could believers judge fallen angels? The answer is that they are the afflicters of believers now. They are the ones who wreak havoc among the weak, making miserable those believers who are susceptible. They are also those who completely possess non-believers and torment them as demons. Because of the angels' interactions with man, redeemed man will be allowed judicial authority over them.

Likewise, the "good" angels have been "ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?" (Hebrews 1:14). Because of this, their ministrations will be noted by those who finally see what good they wrought among men before their glorification.

Understanding this verse from this perspective then makes all the sense in the world. What we don't even perceive now will become clear to our eyes in the future. God has given those who believe an opportunity to actively participate in a realm that we now only passively participate in. And if this is so, then "how much more, things that pertain to this life?"

In other words, if we will someday judge angels who are in a completely different order of being than we are, then shouldn't we be able to handle the judgments of this life in the order we now perceive and understand! The answer begs for a positive response. Yes, we should be in control of our judgments now, not handing them over to non-believers when they fall entirely within the parameters of those who will inherit eternal life and the right to judge eternal beings.

Life application: Imagine the great honor of being one of the redeemed of the Lord. And likewise, imagine the great responsibility that accompanies that honor. Let us never take lightly our duty to govern our own affairs in the church and among believers.

Lord God, it's not to angels that you have put in subjection the world to come, but to man, and more especially one Man. All of the authority of heaven and earth is granted to Your Son, my Lord Jesus. As this is so, then why should I worry about a single thing that happens in this life, from stubbing my toe to losing my most beloved, surely all things are within the control of Your capable hands. If the future is already granted to Jesus, then all of this life is being prepared for that day. Thank You for this sure hope. Amen.

If then you have judgments concerning things pertaining to this life, do you appoint those who are least esteemed by the church to judge? 1 Corinthians 6:4

Paul is continuing on with his same train of thought concerning judgments - who should judge matters in what context? The believers in Corinth had taken civil matters, such as lawsuits, (things pertaining to this life) to the pagan courts to be settled. He has shown them the utter folly of this and now goes on with that line of thought.

He says "If then you have judgments..." In this, he is saying that these things have arisen and will from time to time arise. It is natural for there to be disputes. At the time of Moses, while in the wilderness, there was a constant stream of such matters which were brought to him. This is recorded in Exodus 18. It was at a time when people were living in tents and not even settled into a home with land and a large number of possessions. How much more is it expected that such things would arise among those living a regular life in a community.

And so when such judgments "concerning things pertaining to this life" would arise, there would need to be a judge. It is inevitable and natural. But who would be the judge? Who would be chosen to preside over such petty matters of "this life?" Paul wants them to think the issue through based on what he said in the previous verse, that as believers "we shall judge angels."

And so he says the following words, which need a careful evaluation - "...do you appoint those who are least esteemed by the church to judge?" The verb for

"appoint" is the Greek word *kathizete*. It is actually unclear whether Paul wrote it in the imperative mood (meaning a command) or in the indicative mood (meaning interrogatively). And so a couple possibilities arise -

- 1) If a command, he is telling them: You are to appoint those who are the least esteemed by the church to judge (meaning the least knowledgeable in the church would still be preferable to appointing unbelievers over them for such judgments).
- 2) If interrogatively, he is asking them if they would actually dare to "appoint those who are least esteemed by the church" (meaning unbelievers).

The debate over which is his intent has continued on since the letter was written and scholars disagree, but in the end the thought is clear either way. It is a rebuke to them for their unsound practices. It could be that Paul was intentionally ambiguous in his wording so that we would look at this from different angles and still come to the same conclusion. The practice of going outside the church for judgments was wrong and even the least informed in the church would be preferable to the most knowledgeable outside of it.

Life application: Disputes within the church and among fellowshiping believers should be mediated by those within the church. It is a concept which seems all but forgotten today, but when thought of from the eternal perspective, it is the one that certainly makes the most sense.

the lens of Christ.