



**1 Corinthians 5:1-9**  
*Purge Out the Old Leaven*

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

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

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

4 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,

5 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.

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

7 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.

8 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.

In Exodus 12 in the commands regarding the first Passover, God had instructed each Jewish family to take an unblemished lamb from their flocks, to kill it, and to sprinkle the blood on their doorposts and their lintel. The angel of death of course was coming to kill the firstborn son in every house in Egypt, but the people of God were told the angel would see the blood of the Lamb and "Passover" the houses so marked by the blood.

This blood of course symbolized their redemption from Egypt, their redemption from sin and evil, and it pointed forward to and foreshadowed the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the sins of His People. He was the one whom John the Baptist pointed to and *said "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"* He is a Paul put it, *Christ our Passover who was sacrificed for us.*

But if you are familiar with the feast of Passover, then you know that it was followed immediately by the feast of unleavened bread, and the first thing that a Jewish family had to do after they applied the blood to the lintels and doorposts was to go through the house and find all the old leaven, that is yeast and remove it. The leaven symbolized sin, and it pointed to the old life in Egypt before redemption, before they had been saved by the blood of the lamb. Now they had a new beginning and would live a new life of holiness to the Lord.

Paul unfortunately is writing to a church, that thought that it could have one without the other, Salvation without Holiness. That it could be sprinkled with the blood without purging out the old leaven.

Specifically he mentions that it was ὄλω ἀκούεται – reported commonly or well known, inside and outside the church (notice how few details he includes – the case is notorious) that the Corinthians had allowed a case of sexual immorality to arise within the church and had done nothing about it, in fact they were acting proud of what was going on.

In rebuking them Paul mentions that this immorality, specifically a man having an illicit relationship with his stepmother (that’s what he means by “Father’s Wife”) was something that even the depraved Corinthian unbelievers did not tolerate. The church had actually become *more immoral* than the world and presumably an evil report was now circulating regarding these depraved Christians in Corinth.

*How had this happened?*

Well the source was a wrong doctrine of Christian freedom, whereby they figured that if they were saved by grace, then sins did not matter, they could therefore do what ever they wanted and did not need to pay attention to God’s law, in fact this belief system is sometimes called “Antinomianism” or lawlessness and it is the polar opposite of holiness. If it was brought up, the Corinthians would probably have said something like: ***“You know we mustn’t judge. If they have a meaningful relationship, if they love each other, then that is what’s important after all, I mean I wouldn’t do it, but...”*** Like so many in our age, they were proud of how enlightened they were. They were puffed in pride because they were so open minded. So open minded that they were allowing their brains to fall out.

Today this attitude of antinomianism, is spreading like a cancer through the modern church, ***“saved by grace, o blessed condition, sin all I want and still get remission”*** and is borne out by the fact that some surveys indicate that in many areas American Christians are actually more prone to certain sins than unbelievers. Sometimes it goes under the name of “Carnal Christianity” whereby it is believed that we can have Jesus as Savior, but not as Lord. One theologian, by the name of Zane Hodges, whom a friend of mine refers to as the “Godfather of Antinomianism” has taken it to the point of saying that if we merely confess Christ at one point in our lives then it doesn’t matter how we live the rest of our lives or even if we remain in the church, we will still be saved. Such a teaching is clearly contradicted by verses like Matthew 7:20 that teach us how to identify false Christians – ***“Therefore by their fruits you will know them”*** and those that tell us if someone leaves the church and never comes back, then they were clearly never really regenerate 1 John 2:19 ***“They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.”***

What then was the answer to the disease of antinomianism? Well it is something so ghastly so dire that you can barely mention it without hackles being raised, and outrage being expressed, it is that thing more dreaded by the evangelical church even than systematic theology or the regulative principle of worship, it is ***CHURCH DISCIPLINE***.

I say that tongue in cheek, but it really has been my experience that today, we are more afraid of the cure than the disease that is killing us.

But Paul says here that is absolutely necessary, and here he directs the Corinthians to hold a church meeting at which he says as an Apostle he will be spiritually present that with the authority of Jesus Christ, they must put the one who is guilty of this sin out of the church.

What does he mean by this? He means to excommunicate the unrepentant offender from the church, in this case a trial is not necessary, the scandal is well known and the inspired Apostle has by the Holy Spirit been assured of his guilt in the matter and is therefore rendering judgment. Incidentally, with the passing of the age of the Apostles, that facility is now gone, we need to conduct trials. But clearly for the sake of the church this has to be done.

He needed to be put out of the church, expelled from the kingdom of God, and delivered back to the kingdom of Satan –

Paul sadly had had to do this before – “*Deliver such a one to Satan*” –

1 Tim 1:20 of whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, *whom I delivered to Satan* that they may learn not to blaspheme.

This is to lose the privileges and the rights of the church, to lose the assurances, and to be open to the attack of the devil, to lose fellowship

What about the destruction of the flesh? What does this mean? *Commentators are split*

*Could mean the destruction of the corrupt nature – flesh/Sarx*

“This is by many understood to mean, for the destruction of his corrupt nature, so that the end contemplated is merely a moral one.” – Charles Hodge

Or it could mean a special apostolic inflicting of corporeal disease or even death – as is threatened in 1 Cor. 11 for those who come to the table unworthily or in the case of people like Ananias and Sapphira

### **Why is this necessary?**

Two reasons; the first is to safeguard the church from the spread of sin like cancer

the leaven is not a person, but sin. The idea, therefore, is, that it is the nature of evil to diffuse itself. This is true with regard to individuals and communities. A single sin, however secret, when indulged, diffuses its corrupting influence over the whole soul; it depraves the conscience; it alienates from God; it strengthens all other principles of evil, while it destroys the efficacy of the means of grace and the disposition to use them. It is no less true of any community, that any one tolerated evil deteriorates its whole moral sense.

2 Tim. 2:16 But shun profane *and* idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness.

17 And their message will spread like cancer. **Hymenaeus** and Philetus are of this sort,

The second is for the reclaiming of the disobedient sinner - *that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.*

OUR BCO safeguards both these principles

“27-3. The exercise of discipline is highly important and necessary. In its proper usage discipline maintains:

- a. the glory of God,
- b. the purity of His Church,
- c. the keeping and reclaiming of disobedient sinners. Discipline is for the purpose of godliness (1 Timothy 4:7); therefore, it demands a self-examination under Scripture.

Its ends, so far as it involves judicial action, are the rebuke of offenses, the removal of scandal, the vindication of the honor of Christ, the promotion of the purity and general edification of the Church, and the spiritual good of offenders themselves.

27-4. The power which Christ has given the Church is for building up, and not for destruction. It is to be exercised as under a dispensation of mercy and not of wrath. As in the preaching of the Word the wicked are doctrinally separated from the good, so by discipline the Church authoritatively separates between the holy and the profane. In this it acts the part of a tender mother, correcting her children for their good, that every one of them may be presented faultless in the day of the Lord Jesus. Discipline is systematic training under the authority of God’s Scripture. No communing or non-communing member of the Church should be allowed to stray from the Scripture’s discipline. Therefore, teaching elders must:

- a. instruct the officers in discipline,
- b. instruct the congregation in discipline,
- c. jointly practice it in the context of the congregation and church courts.” – PCA Book of Church Order

He says we must do this that the church might continue to be what is supposed to be:

*“When the paschal lamb was slain, the Hebrews were required to purge out all leaven from their houses, Exodus 12:15. The death of Christ imposes a similar obligation on us to purge out the leaven of sin. Christ is our passover, not because he was slain on the day on which the paschal lamb was offered, but because he does for us what the paschal lamb did for the Hebrews. As the blood of that lamb sprinkled on the door-posts secured exemption from the stroke of the destroying angel, so the blood of Christ secures exemption from the stroke of divine justice. Christ was slain for us, in the same sense that the passover was slain for the Hebrews. It was a vicarious death. As Christ died to redeem us from all iniquity, it is not only contrary to the design of his death, but a proof that we are not interested in its benefits, if we live in sin.*

*To keep the feast means, “Let your whole lives be as a sacred festival, i.e. consecrated to God.” As a feast lasting seven days was connected with the slaying of the paschal lamb; so a life of consecration to God should be connected with the death of our passover — Christ.” - Charles Hodge*

“The Christian Church is not just the old society patched up. It is radically new.” - Morris

**Sincerity “is the harmony of our words and actions with our convictions”, “truth is the harmony of all these with reality” - Edwards**

What about the Leaven in our own lives?