

## 1 Corinthians 5

Written by K B Napier

Sunday, 14 August 2016 15:30

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### **“...a little leaven...”**

A number of serious problems existed within the church at Corinth, as we will see. Yet, Paul continues to treat them as his brethren. This is permissible, so long as the erring ones return to God and walk again on the straight and narrow path. (Otherwise, the situation contradicts necessary disciplinary measures demanded by God).

Something else we see here is that Paul had no difficulty with judging others from a distance. When I wrote against the then new ‘Toronto Blessing’ many charismatics told me that I had no authority to judge the movement when I had never attended one of its meetings. But, like Paul, I knew that it was a sinful Satanic movement, so why should I attend what was so obviously and patently false?

There are times when Christians can judge something without ever having direct contact, especially when the thing being judged is obviously and publicly against scripture. In this chapter of Corinthians Paul is saying that what he is judging is blatant sin, needing no further evidence. Something like fornication and incest are so obvious that only the words are enough to judge them. It does not matter what the ‘circumstances’ of each case are – some things are obviously wrong and cannot ever be discussed to find some kind of compromise: there is no compromise with sin.

Paul is thus saying: on certain issues there can be no compromise. They are wrong, no matter what angle they are viewed from, or what excuse is offered. They stand condemned eternally and can never be ratified under the banner of ‘special circumstances’. Sadly, many Christians today ‘make allowances’ for ‘circumstances’, which effectively condones sin.

Another thing appears in this chapter that offends so many Christians... the disfellowshipping of a fellow believer. How many churches will cast out people for no good reason, yet retain those

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who commit serious breaches of Christian morality? Paul is unequivocal – it is better to deliver them dead to Satan than to allow them to spread their sin amongst others, or to remain as a cancer within a fellowship.

We will note that Paul does not command us to charge unbelievers with this or that sin, but we must do so within the churches... yet another offensive teaching modern Christians hate! Those who commit public and serious offences must not be tolerated in our churches, but must be disciplined severely and, if required, cast out of fellowship.

So, friends, think seriously about why you do, or do not do, things in your churches. If you do not judge obvious sin within your own fellowships, then you are sinning yourselves. Do not accept sin as a norm, but rebuke it and expect a change in the one who sins. *Immediately*, not in time! And do not be afraid to judge a sinful movement or activity even if you have never witnessed it in person. Paul judged the Corinthians without seeing what they did!

Wrong and sin remain wrong and sin no matter what people try to use in support of them. Today, in a church ethos that accepts anything and rebukes nothing, there are attempts to water-down sin by calling it something else, or by reformulating theology to accommodate the sin. Stand up and be counted!

However, when opposing this blatant sin, remember to have a 'Gospel mind' so that hatred for the sin does not become hatred for the person. Sadly, some reformers expressed their zeal in a (rare) desire for blood. This kind of severity has lingered on into our present day, and it is to be shunned. Let not a love for truth and scripture cause you to lose a love for others! Both must run in tandem, or truth is fruitless. (elsewhere, I refer to the fact that God alone may hate both sin and sinner; we do not have this freedom).

Like Paul, rebuke and discipline the brethren if it is needed, yet recognise that even brethren can sin, sometimes badly. If they do not respond to gentle chiding, and then stronger rebuke, only then ought you to take matters beyond private counsel and to the local church as a whole. And, if there is no repentance, there must be disfellowship. Throughout it all, though, there must be love for the person, as a child of God.

### Verses 1-5

1.

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“It is reported commonly *that there is* fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father’s wife.

2.

And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that He that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you.

3.

For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed,

4.

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ,

5.

To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.”

Paul does not mince his words or try to be circumspect. He is blunt and to the point. If I counsel anyone, I never pretend to be interested in something else, as so many Christians do so badly! I believe in telling the truth about sin from the start. I do not begin with the weather and build up to the main issue. I want the person I talk with to be left in no doubt that my visit/talk is about their sin. By talking only about that, the seriousness is not in question. There is plenty of time for other chat after the main issue has been dealt with.

Paul wants to talk to them about a grave sin that is ‘reported commonly’ amongst them. That meant the sin was known by everybody. We cannot assume that this sin was only known to the local church. Such sins never remain closed-in, but inevitably become known as gossip amongst unbelievers. The Christians in Corinth were guilty of ‘fornication’, *porneia*. This is usually taken to mean either sex between single people, or between adulterers. Its main meaning is ‘illicit sexual intercourse’. That is, an illicit union. That is why the word can also mean

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‘worship of idols’ – for this is also an illicit union of person and false god. Today sexual fornication is sadly all too common, and even sought-after by those who claim to be believers. Also sadly, once they indulge in their desires for sex they alter their lives permanently, sometimes very badly. At the very least their frame of mind and ability to judge their own actions become faulty.

In this case, Paul is saying that illicit sexual union is bad enough, but the Corinthians were indulging in illicit unions that were frowned upon even by the paganistic unbelievers of open-minded Corinth... incest\* between mother and son. You will note that there was not just one instance of this sin – there were so many instances that it was ‘common’! Obviously, in that church the sin of one quickly led to the sins of many, and the more who indulged in it, the more desensitised to sin they became. That is why those who continuously and openly sin must be cast out of fellowship. (\*2016 note: practitioners of such sins are now attempting to make them legal).

Rather than be grieved by their own sin, these Christians were ‘puffed up’, **phusioo**, so they were not only proud and arrogant about what they did, but they made it seem a natural process! I have come across many Christians who make excuses for their sins. They do not repent but instead pretend that what they did was natural, thus defaming God’s creation and order of morality.

Their pride prevented them from acknowledging their own state before God, and so they continued in their sin, becoming less and less affected by conscience and the prompting of the Holy Spirit. In that state it is likely that God will simply hand them over to their own devices for a season, so that they will learn what life is like without His active Presence.

The Corinthians did not repent, became arrogant in the enjoyment of their sin, and did not mourn. ‘Mourned’, means to lament or to cry out in anguish over what has happened. No, says Paul, you have not understood the evil being done and you allow those who do such evil to remain amongst you! There was no sorrow or repentance. Take note that if you know a sin is being committed continually and say nothing, then *you* become just as guilty of that sin yourself.

Once such a sin has been made public and is not repented of, we must rebuke and cast out the one sinning, ‘taken away from among you’... removed, put away. That is, disfellowshipped. Indeed, Paul was so shocked by what he heard that he immediately condemned the sin being committed, for such a sin has always been anathema with God. We have no authority to

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discuss or to debate such things. If they are wrong then we must condemn the wrong, without question and without accepting or even hearing any excuses. This can be done without going anywhere near the offender or the offence (verse 3).

Paul, not with them in body, was with them in spirit... his mind and soul were concentrated on them and their situation, and he had reached his conclusions... *“(I) have judged already”*. He had heard the reports, so numerous and the same as to make any other evidence superfluous. He needed no other reports and could judge the situation from a distance because the sins spoken of were universally and always condemned by God.

Today, church councils, so-called, convene to discuss the merits and demerits of evils such as homosexuality, for example. As a result compromises are reached, where none should exist. *Biblically, if something is condemned by God there can be no discussion of merit or demerit; there can be no compromise.*

The condemnation must be uttered and maintained, with no further ado, with no offer of discussion or gathering of extra facts.

The process is very clear in scripture, and is shown in practice by Paul: First the sinner is approached privately, with overtures of gentle opportunity to repent. If this is ignored, then the sinner is approached two more times. Each time there is no discussion of the circumstances or excuses. The person must stop the sin immediately, repent, and get back to godliness. By its very nature such sin is known publicly. Therefore, any dealings must be made public.

Where sin is obvious, blatant and gross, as in this case, then the sinner need not even be approached privately. The one who rebukes may do so openly and swiftly, without the offer of three attempts. This is because every moment that the sin is left, the worse it becomes and the more the sinner is caught in its trap, the greater is the influence he has over others, who might copy the same sin. Or, at the very least, they will allow their hearts to take in what is not fruitful, thus becoming complicit in the sin of others.

Paul's authority to speak is the same as is quoted by the archangel Michael when fighting against Satan... God Himself, through Jesus Christ. When the Corinthians are gathered for their meetings, they must look at the matter and quickly put a stop to the sins in question. Only the divine power of Christ can dethrone the evil amongst erring Christians.

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You will note that Paul does not offer conciliation or talks. His words are in the form of a command: they must simply tell the sinning members to go! They had to *“deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh”*

. In Old Testament days, this would have meant being put to death. So, what does it mean in this Christian era?

The words ‘destruction of the flesh’ can mean literally death. They can also mean to receive all the woes and troubles associated with being without God’s active Presence. There is nothing like intense trouble to enable us to forget any lusts we might wish to enjoy! This is up to Satan: he will gladly ruin a man’s life in many ways, if he is a Christian intent on disobeying God. Not because Satan loves God, but because he hates Him enough to slaughter any Christian he can get his hands on.

Overall, the phrase means to cast a person out of fellowship, even if this leads to his death. Certainly, it means to name the sinner a publican or unbeliever, because that is how he is acting. God will then withdraw His active presence from the person’s life. This is not so final as we might be led to believe, for the proviso when casting anyone (if he or she is a believer) out of fellowship is that he will be re-admitted to that fellowship if and when he repents truly. The ability to repent is given only by the Holy Spirit. Thus, we may deduce that even the person who is disfellowshipped and treated as an unbeliever (though he is saved), may be given opportunities by the Spirit to repent.

Even so, the congregation that disfellowships a person must shun that person publicly and not have contact. Internally, they should pray for him or her, that they may repent and return to the fold. There should be no loss of love for the shunned one, even though there is no contact. (Brief civil courtesy is allowed).

The reason for this action, which is severe, is that God demands it. Also, so that the person cannot sin within a ‘safe’ environment and be condoned by Christians/the Church. Paul is saying that it is better that the gross sinner is destroyed or even put to death (not by the church), than to fritter-away his spiritual life on this earth. He will reach heaven, but at least his sins will not harm himself or others, if he is no longer alive.

This speaks to us of the seriousness of sin to God. The man may die, but at least when Christ comes again *“the day of the Lord Jesus”*, he will at last enter into heaven, leaving behind the sins he so cherished on earth.

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We can see from this judgment, that continuous sin that is unrepented of will bring dishonour to the sinner as well as to the local church, the universal Church and to God. It causes the person to relinquish any benefits God has to give him. It means he will no longer know the sheer joy of God, or His love, or the company of fellow believers, or the holy things that are his by inheritance. He is the prodigal son who never returns, so he never knows his father's embrace or the gift of a fatted calf.

I have actually heard such a sinner claim that he would prefer this earth's pleasures (usually with a woman!) to a life without them, knowing that he thereby incurs God's wrath! This is incredible blindness and stupidity! How can a snatch of sinful life, measured in a few short years, equal eternity with God? But, that is how successful Satan can be. He can blind a man to the final degree.

### Verses 6-8

1.

"Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?"

2.

Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us:

3.

Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

Evidently, from this example, as with the rest of the examples found in the epistle, the Corinthians thought they were invincible and strong. They arrogantly allowed and participated-in the sins Paul condemned. Not only that, but they even glorified those sins. But, Paul says, "*You r glorying is not good*".

'Glorying' is

***kauchema***

, meaning to rejoice, or to boast without good reason.

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It is often the case that those who sin grossly boast about it. Look at the sexual escapades and evils committed by Toronto Blessing adherents and note that they not only practice them, but they also enjoy and boast about them, providing twisted 'theological reasons' why such actions are permissible. Nothing can be worse than to attribute to God what He plainly speaks against! He will not be mocked and will move against such people.

It ought to be mentioned that if a local congregation refuses to cast out a gross sinner, the sinner will nevertheless be cast out by God. What does this mean? It means that even if the person remains in the congregation, God will shun Him and give no benefits or help. And He will do the same against the local church that sins with him (if only by not applying discipline). They may thus glory amongst themselves, not knowing that God has left them alone.

*"a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump"*. 'Leaven', **zume**, in this text, refers to moral and mental sin or corruption. Only a very small amount of leaven is used to cause bread to increase dramatically in size. It permeates the whole lump of dough so that none of it is left unaffected. The smallest of sins (in our eyes) is enough to corrupt everything it comes into contact with, like a cancer. It affects the whole of the person who practices it, and will affect all who come approvingly into contact with him.

The modern saying is that one bad apple makes the whole barrel of apples rotten. It has to be removed, or the badness *will* spread. (Note that the opposite does not work – one good apple will not make rotten apples good!). It is generally thought that *zum*

*e*  
may be rooted in

**zeo**

, and this may indeed be true, for the word means to be hot or boiling over with whatever within. Those who enjoy their sin are trapped by it, and have a passion for it, sometimes without seeking to indulge; they might stop the sin outwardly, but because it has not been properly dealt with, it eats at the soul nagging it to commit the sin again.

The answer to this leaven is very straightforward – it must be purged. 'Purge' is **ekkathairo**, which means to cleanse out thoroughly. See that it says 'cleanse out' or remove. It does not mean to polish up the sin and leave it there! One of the roots of 'purge' is

**kathairo**

, meaning to cleanse of filthy impurity, to cut off useless shoots from trees or vines.

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Metaphorically, it is to remove completely from guilt. The only way to remove ourselves from the guilt of others is to remove the ones who are guilty. We must cleanse our congregations by removing guilty ones who reject God's word and enjoy their sins publicly. Such people are an offence to God, harming the whole congregation.

This cleansing is not a gentle affair, but is quite ferocious and thorough, as the root of *kathairo*, ***katharos***, tells us: this is to purify by fire, to be pruned back severely, to free from corrupt desire. This is no superficial 'sorry'. It is repentance coming from deep within, an acknowledgement that God has been offended and that only grief and total surrender will do.

The sinful one must be removed so that no trace is left of the influence he once had by sinning (verse 7). The congregation must become a 'new lump'. This means to become as a reborn local church, repenting of ever allowing the sinner to remain in its midst, and repenting of any damage done to their own souls as a result, together with any offence they caused God in the process. Just as dough is kneaded and mixed, so they must now submit to God's vigorous remixing of their lives so that they again follow His holy path. (2016 note: churches/Christians that fell to the Toronto Blessing/charismatic lie have since 'calmed down', but have never once repented of their involvement. God has already judged them, and what they now see as 'blessing' is just a delusion. Until they repent of what they said, did and believed, God will remain far away from them).

This might be very painful, but it is necessary. Casting out a person from fellowship should not be a one-sided affair; it ought to involve everyone who is left, in examining their own lives and souls. With Shakespeare, they ought to admit "*There, but for the grace of God, go I*". There should be no rejoicing in the downfall of another, only a sober inward look to see that we are ourselves remaining holy.

Paul then goes on to mention communion. Christ is our Passover, or Paschal Lamb, the One Who took our place as a sacrifice. He died so that we should no longer be bound to Satan and to our sins. So, one who is saved but prefers sin, is rejecting the sacrifice for his soul made by Jesus Christ.

We cannot take Communion with dirty hearts and minds (verse 8)! Nor can we keep malice and

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wickedness in our hearts when we come to Communion with fellow Believers. To be malign toward our fellows is incompatible with holiness. It is depravity and evil. Iniquity and vile aims are not part of our heritage from God!

Yet, how many Christians regularly participate in Communion, when they have hatred, evil desires, and evil thoughts against others? Too many I fear! They smile outwardly and stab others in the back inwardly. Friends, God does not accept our participation at His table if we are like this. We would be better off not attending, as other texts tell us.

Rather, we must participate as holy people, free from leaven and unfermented by inner turmoil and the heat of evil. Our smiles and outward love must be real, borne of *"sincerity and truth"*. Sincerity is that quality not often found in Christians – genuine purity, unaffected by sin, even when opened up to scrutiny.

One thing causes me great dismay when amongst Christians; it is to feel their insincerity. It can be seen in their eyes and heard in their tone. It is noticed in the way they avert their gaze and refuse to talk genuinely and openly, with a frank yet loving word. Often, they keep many things hidden and so the people we talk to are not the persons who they really are. In effect, they are two-faced and not the genuine article.

Like this, they become bitter, or superficial and lacking in God's grace. I do not wish to know the inner machinations of every heart, but such folk need to purge their own souls of the insincerity within, for their own sakes. There is no way we can be 'as one' if we maintain a secret and dark heart.

Let us, then, promise to live our lives in truth. True to ourselves, to Christ, and to God. To live like this, we must see that personal excellence is our goal. This shuns false living which is deceitful and sinful. It loves the truth, speaks the truth, breathes the truth. Are you like this? If you are not, deal with it straight away. Do not tarry but rip out that sin in your heart that prevents a proper relationship with God, with the local church, with men, and even with your own family. When you face yourself as you really are, and decide to trust in God, you will be on the road to wholeness!

### Verses 9-13

1.

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“I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators:

2.

Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolators; for then must ye needs go out of the world.

3.

But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolator, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.

4.

For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? Do not ye judge them that are within?

5.

But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.”

In verse 9 we find a reference to a previous letter to the Corinthians, in which Paul warned them not to mix closely with those who had illicit sexual relationships. (As he is talking here about sexuality and not idols, we may assume the meaning to refer to sexuality throughout).

He now points out that he is not talking about fornicators who are unsaved. He must also have previously talked to them about people who were covetous (greedy, wanting more, lusting after what others had), extortioners (robbing money or possessions, or by charging huge amounts on loans), and idolaters (worshipping false gods, or joining with their services. Also applies to those who love money and earthly gain. Can apply today to those who join with ecumenists, charismatics, Romanists, etc., in any way, because this is complicity in their sins).

As Paul says, if we tried to cut off from the unsaved who are like this, we would be unable to live

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on this earth at all, for they are all around us! Some are our neighbours, some are our employers, some are our kings, and some our families! We cannot escape them even if we wanted to. We need not have them as our friends, but we must live amongst them, 'in the world, but not of it'.

Now, says Paul, he is writing to elaborate upon that teaching. They must not associate with those who call themselves Christians and who commit the very same sins as those linked with unbelievers, as quoted above. He adds several other kinds of sin to the list, as practiced by those who call themselves 'Christians': one who is a 'railer' or reviler, who causes mischief and mayhem. (How many of these do we know in everyday life, even in the churches?).

Then there is the drunkard... note that this is the real word we should give to men and women who drink themselves senseless; the modern word 'alcoholic' suggests a condition we cannot help and must receive treatment. God simply calls such people drunkards who indulge in the sin of excessive drinking!

Paul says that we should not eat with these people. Eating at a meal is fairly intimate in social terms, and this instruction tells us not to associate with, or be friends with, such sinners if they say they are our brethren. Sinners who repent and who try to change are different; Paul is referring to Christians (or Christians so-called) who continue in their public sins and refuse to change or to repent. These we must avoid. If they are in our congregation, they must be disciplined and, if necessary, cast out of fellowship.

We have nothing to do with those who are unsaved (verse 12). We have no connection in this world or the next. We are saved by grace and are born anew, new creatures with a fresh heart and soul. Paul says he has nothing to say about the unsaved who do these things. But, we may judge those who are our brethren, because they are equal to us and share the same Lord and future. That is how we can examine them and apply discipline. Not to do so is to reject God's commands.

God will judge unbelievers (verse 13) and we must leave them to Him (that is, their hearts and motives: we *can* judge what they say and do). But, the one who claims to be a Believer, and who insists on sinning regardless of counsel or rebuke, must be *"put away from among yourselves"*

. He is a  
*"wicked person"*

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('wicked' means evil) who has no place amongst the holy people of God.

This chapter, like every other in this Book, has relevance to us all today. Can you see it? Are you willing to be true to scripture and obey what it says? Or, will you join with those who will be cast out of fellowship? Do not condone, or secretly have sympathy for, those who God says we must cast out. And, examine your own hearts, that they are free of sin and pure in purpose (otherwise you judge illicitly).

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