

# First Corinthians 5

## Introduction:

1. Having laid a careful foundation for his authority, our brother Paul now begins unloading on this church for its many, many errors.
2. Here is a subject and practice of Christianity that has almost disappeared from the earth, especially done in any Biblical fashion.
3. The average SBC church will have less than 50% of its members in attendance today, with 30% of them totally lost as to whereabouts.
4. For exhaustive study, see the “Church Discipline” sermon outline: [http://www.letgodbettrue.com/Sermons/pdf/Church\\_Discipline.pdf](http://www.letgodbettrue.com/Sermons/pdf/Church_Discipline.pdf).
5. It is amazing today the ignorance of most Christians, for they have been entertained with fables rather than taught sound doctrine.
6. Verses like Matthew 7:1 are repeated and twisted until they condemn any judgment at all, in spite of a whole Bible of judgment!
7. Jesus preached Matthew 7:1 in the middle of a three-chapter condemnation and humiliation of the Pharisees for numerous errors.

## Outline of Chapter 5:

1. Identity of the problem (1-2).
2. Solution for the problem (3-5).
3. Necessity of church judgment (6-8).
4. Nature of church judgment (9-13).

### 5:1 **Paul publicly identified a horrible personal and sexual sin occurring in the church.**

- A. The rumor had correctly spread that Corinth had a serious fornicator in their membership.
- B. This sin is obviously known by many, for it is commonly reported, or known by a majority.
- C. Paul’s use of “common report” indicates that many or most of the church knew about it.
- D. This was no longer a private sin known only by a few that could be dealt with privately by spiritual brethren (Galatians 6:1-2; James 5:19-20).
- E. The sin was a heinous variation of fornication – a man was sleeping with his father’s wife.
- F. Fornication in general and this fornication in particular are wrong (Genesis 35:22; 49:4; Leviticus 18:8; 20:11; Deuteronomy 22:30; 27:20).
- G. As he wrote the Ephesians, such sins were not to be named even once among saints (Ep 5:3).
- H. Though the Gentiles, and Corinthians particularly, were lascivious, this sin exceeded them.

### 5:2 **The church was puffed up in pride rather than mourning its sin and getting rid of it.**

- A. Rather than grieve in anger for this sin, the Corinthians excused it in self-righteousness.
- B. Consider their high opinion of their spiritual gifts, false notion of love, and lax discipline.
- C. When a man is being blessed, it is easy for him to think God overlooks sin (Ps 50:21-23).
- D. They should have been incensed that one naming the name of Christ was sinning this way.
- E. The holy zeal of Phinehas is a character trait missing for the most part today (Num 25:1-15).
- F. They should have already sought for his removal from the church, even by divine judgment.
- G. Rather than mourning for the terribleness of sin, they were proudly thinking themselves fine.

### 5:3 **Paul had already judged what ought to be done, regardless of his absence from the church.**

- A. The situation did not need a fact-finding mission or committee meeting – it needed judgment.
- B. Paul gave his judgment quickly and authoritatively, as if he had been present at Corinth.
- C. There was not laboring with the sinning brother, for the nature of the sin was beyond that.
- D. He was guilty of a public and scandalous offence; therefore Paul could judge it easily.
- E. There is no question concerning repentance, for this public offence must be judged severely, regardless of what repentance the sinner might say he felt in his heart.

- 5:4 **Church judgment is executed by the whole church in and by the authority of Jesus Christ.**
- A. All actions private and public should be done in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (Col 3:17).
  - B. Paul mentions His glorious name twice to establish the authority by which judgment is done.
  - C. Contrary to any ministerial abuse of power, Paul directs the whole church to the action.
  - D. Church judgment is not by the pastor or a committee, but by the whole church in assembly.
  - E. They were to proceed as if he were there, which he was in spirit (intent and power), not body.
- 5:5 **Church judgment is turning a person out to Satan for the desired salvation of their spirit.**
- A. By congregational action in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, they did the following work.
  - B. Church members are turned over to Satan from the fellowship and protection of the church.
  - C. They are turned over to him that by such punishment their sinful flesh might be destroyed.
  - D. There is protection in the church of Jesus Christ, and exclusion puts one out from this safety.
  - E. This is not a miraculous sign or wonder of sending devils to possess a man to destroy his life.
  - F. Consider Job. God had him hedged about from Satan, but then Satan was given the privilege to torment him. Job's life was pretty rough after that, but we may assume he lost any pride!
  - G. Consider David. God had him hedged about from Satan, but then Satan was given the privilege to move him to number Israel. We may safely assume David walked more humbly.
  - H. Consider Peter. God had him hedged about from Satan, but then Satan was given the privilege to move him to deny Jesus. We may safely assume Peter was more humble after it.
  - I. The condition of our spirit in the day of the Lord Jesus should be of great concern to us (1:8; II Cor 5:9-11; Eccl 12:13-14; Phil 1:10; I Thes 3:12-13; I Thes 5:23; II Pet 3:14; I John 2:28).
  - J. Church judgment does not save souls in any legal way, but it can save men practically and prepare them for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, especially with prayer and admonition.
- 5:6 **The confident and haughty view of the Corinthians was not right due to sin among them.**
- A. The Corinthians thought very highly of themselves, as the church at Laodicea (Rev 3:17).
  - B. They had many spiritual gifts, teachers, and new doctrines; they did not worry about sin.
  - C. But such glorying is not good, for they had sin in their midst that corrupted the whole church.
  - D. But such glorying is not good, so let us always come confessing and asking, not glorying.
  - E. Many churches glory about and over sin today by talking about the love and mercy of Jesus.
  - F. Many churches glory about and over sin today by basking in numerical or financial growth.
  - G. Men forget the nature of God – infinitely seeing all details – and He is a holy perfectionist.
  - H. A church cannot come to Him with only one thing wrong, if they know about that one thing.
  - I. David had one impressive parade to move the ark, but God found fault with his methods.
  - J. Asa had one impressive revival, and God mercifully overlooked the remaining high places.
  - K. Paul illustrated sin by the power of leaven, or yeast, to affect or infect the whole lump.
  - L. Sin is compared to leaven, or yeast, or a canker, in other passages (Gal 5:9; II Tim 2:17).
- 5:7 **Due to the relationship with Jesus Christ, the Passover Lamb, they should remove leaven.**
- A. Paul continued his metaphor by telling them to get rid of the leaven and be a new lump.
  - B. The Corinthians were unleavened legally by Christ, but they must be unleavened practically.
  - C. Jesus Christ fulfills the Passover figure and type, so they should match the unleavened bread.
  - D. It is our custom to use unleavened bread, for we know that is what our Lord and apostles did.
  - E. But the concern of a church should not be unleavened bread, but an unleavened congregation.
  - F. Jesus told his disciples to avoid the leaven of Herod and the Pharisees – hypocrisy (Mk 8:15).

- 5:8 **The communion feast should be kept with unleavened bread and a sinless congregation.**
- A. A church must be dedicated to keeping itself pure from any leaven of malice or wickedness.
  - B. A church must be dedicated to keeping itself as a body of members in sincerity and truth.
  - C. Paul uses “feast” for communion, as it is the N.T. Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread.
  - D. The unleavened bread of the Passover is best fulfilled by the sinless lives of the congregation.
  - E. Sin and sinners, such as the one identified here, should be put out to keep the lump pure.
  - F. The Lord’s Supper is the focal point of church membership, which ought to be kept pure.
  - G. Only closed communion can possibly allow the nature of church judgment taught here.
- 5:9 **Paul had taught them by a written epistle earlier to avoid dangerous worldly associations.**
- A. Christians are not to socialize unnecessarily or dangerously with fornicators (Eph 5:11-12).
  - B. Fornication was common by inclusion of it in the rules from Jerusalem (Ac 15:20,29; 21:25).
  - C. Fornication was common by its frequent mention (I Corinthians 6:18; 7:2; 10:8; II Cor 12:21; Galatians 5:19; Ephesians 5:3; Colossians 3:5; I Thess 4:3-7; Rev 2:14,20-21).
  - D. There was a precedent already established for the Corinthians to avoid worldly fornicators.
  - E. Paul allowed social company or eating with unbelievers (I Cor 10:27), but public fornicators pressed Christian liberty beyond the lawful to that not expedient (I Cor 6:12; 10:23).
  - F. It is the yoking, fellowship, communion, or agreement with sinners that Paul condemned (II Cor 6:14-17), for such company is contradictory (Amos 3:3) and dangerous (I Cor 15:33).
- 5:10 **Paul’s rule of company with worldly fornicators was not absolute, or they could not live.**
- A. If his warning were taken too seriously, they would have to leave the world to avoid contact.
  - B. Yet we know that friendship with the world is a very dangerous thing (I Cor 15:33; Jas 4:4).
  - C. Solomon warned about the danger of ungodly friendships (Pr 1:10,15; 4:14-15; 22:24-25).
  - D. We must rub elbows and do business with the world, but we do not need to fraternize.
  - E. We do not look for isolated property on an island somewhere to escape the world altogether.
- 5:11 **Church members should not socialize with brothers excluded for large sins against God.**
- A. By this epistle and at this time and to address this and similar situations, Paul draws a stricter rule against fellowship and socializing with brethren who engage in these sins.
  - B. The saints were allowed to eat with unbelievers, if it was expedient and safe to do so (10:27).
  - C. Paul draws a stricter rule for the treatment of excluded brethren than for worldly sinners.
  - D. We understand “keeping company” and “not to eat” to describe friendly socializing here.
    1. Keeping company is having companions of that sort, or friendly relations (Ps 119:63).
    2. Paul is using a parallelism, which compares keeping company with worldly sinners (5:9).
    3. It is hard to imagine he wrote earlier to warn against the Lord’s Supper with the world!
    4. Keeping company is used to describe social fellowship (Acts 10:28 cp Galatians 2:12).
    5. In the other church judgment text, it has no context of the Lord’s Supper (II Thess 3:14).
    6. If we limit the issue to the Lord’s Table only, why the strong warning of II Thess 3:15.
    7. The apostle elsewhere indicates avoidance and withdrawal (Rom 16:17-18; II Thess 3:6).
    8. Jesus taught a man rejecting church judgment should be treated harshly (Matt 18:15-17).
    9. The treatment of a fornicator did not include comfort, love, or forgiveness (II Cor 2:6-8).
    10. The treatment was such that it was about to bury him in overmuch sorrow (II Cor 2:6-8).
    11. We understand Paul to have cut him off from the Lord’s Table as sinful leaven (5:6-8).
    12. The eating here is just what you think it is – eating! Something they did with unbelievers.
    13. But they were not to eat with excluded brethren, who were turned out for excludable sins.
    14. The limit on this avoidance, withdrawal, or shunning is plainly stated (II Thess 3:15).
    15. Continuing social fellowship did not make enough difference and punishment for sinners.

- E. The demonstrative word “such” in contexts like this link many sins together by association.
  - 1. In this passage we have the general rule for all other public sins comparable to the fornication specific to this case at Corinth. This is how we argue out from a general rule.
  - 2. By combining lists with the identifier “such,” we may tally a list of over forty comparable sins to guide our judgment (Rom 1:28-32; I Cor 6:9-11; Gal 5:19-21; Eph 5:3-7).
  - 3. By combining these lists, which God considers comparable sins, our self-righteous rankings are exposed as deceitful and ungodly in the sight of a holy God.
- F. Then we can add all the offences by apostolic authority (II Thess 2:15 cp Heb 10:25; etc.).

5:12 **Church judgment extends only to those within the church, not those outside the church.**

- A. Paul, though an apostle of Jesus Christ, did not have jurisdiction over sinners in the world.
- B. He appealed to the Corinthians that it was their right and duty to judge their membership.
- C. Paul’s use of “also” is simply referring to the classes of sinners – those within and without.
- D. Joining a church gives it the right to judge and exclude you, if you sin excludable offences.
- E. There is a very real difference between those within and without a local church – church membership is a very distinct relationship based on mutual commitment and discipline.
- F. Visitors from Philippi were strangers to the commitment and communion at Corinth, and the church at Corinth had no way of knowing their condition or judging them.
- G. Communion is open, close, or closed. We keep communion closed to our membership only.

5:13 **God judges those outside the church, and the church should judge those within the church.**

- A. We do not have to worry about those outside the church, for the Lord will judge every one.
- B. Contrast this with the Old Testament, where the mandate was to destroy all the Canaanites.
- C. However, let no man think that a church without knowledge of his sins or practicing lax church judgment can protect him. See God’s judgment in the church (11:29-32; Acts 5:1-11).
- D. The Lord Jesus Christ has limited our sphere of authority to a single local congregation.
- E. With this arrangement, and our duty for the purity of the church, sinners must be put outside.
- F. When a church puts a sinning member away from themselves, he is then in God’s hands.
- G. God told Israel to stand back and let judgment fall on the sinners (Numbers 16:21,24,26,45).
- H. Paul’s summary judgment is very simple – get the wicked fornicator out of your church now!
- I. Satan is the god of this world (II Cor 4:4) and moving only by God’s permission (Job 1:12; 2:6), so we find judgment includes delivering such sinners to Satan as described above (5:5).
- J. It is in the world of hopeless satanic delusion that God’s true children may be granted repentance to acknowledging the truth and deliverance from their captor (II Tim 2:25-26).
- K. This verse neatly concludes Paul’s concise and thorough explanation of judging a fornicator.
- L. We can read the blessed recovery of this fornicator in Paul’s next epistle (II Cor 2:6-8).

**Conclusion:**

- 1. The horrible nature of sin should be seen by the Lord’s treatment of it even in New Testament churches.
- 2. It is our duty and privilege to have a church pleasing to the Lord Jesus Christ with a pure congregation.
- 3. The condition of our spirit in the day of the Lord Jesus should be of great concern to us (II Cor 5:9-11).

**Additional study:**

- 1. For exhaustive study, see the “Church Discipline” sermon outline: [http://www.letgodbetruer.com/Sermons/pdf/Church\\_Discipline.pdf](http://www.letgodbetruer.com/Sermons/pdf/Church_Discipline.pdf).
- 2. For the definition and reasons of closed communion: <http://www.letgodbetruer.com/BibleTopics/Communion/ClosedCommunion.htm>.