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1 Corinthians 5 Paraphrased



By Dan Maines

1 Corinthians 5 Paraphrased

Introduction

† Paul now addresses a serious problem inside the Corinthian assembly. Instead of correcting open sin, the church was tolerating it. This chapter shows that the community of believers must guard its purity. Paul's instruction was written to real churches living in the generation before Jerusalem's fall, and it shows how the early believers were expected to deal with sin within the covenant community.

† The issue was not hidden wrongdoing but public immorality

that even the pagan world considered shameful. The church's failure was not only the sin itself but their pride in allowing it to continue. Paul calls them to act decisively so the body would remain holy.

† Early Christian writers also recognized this chapter as guidance for church discipline and moral purity among believers living under Christ's kingdom.

1 Corinthians 5:1

It has become widely known that there is sexual sin among you, and it is the kind of immorality that even the pagan world rejects, a man is living with his father's wife.

† Paul begins by pointing out that the sin was already public knowledge. This was not a rumor but something openly known in the community (Leviticus 18:8).

† Even pagan society recognized the seriousness of such behavior, which shows how far the Corinthians had drifted from the moral standards expected of God's people.

† Clement of Alexandria warned that believers must live in such a way that even outsiders cannot accuse the church of tolerating corruption (Stromata).

1 Corinthians 5:2

Yet instead of mourning over this, you have become proud. The man who committed this act should have been removed from your fellowship.

† Paul rebukes their pride. Instead of grieving over sin in their midst, they acted as if everything was fine.

† Mourning was the proper response because sin harms the whole body of believers (James 4:9).

† Irenaeus taught that churches must guard their purity so that the body of Christ is not corrupted by unchecked sin (Against Heresies).

1 Corinthians 5:3

Even though I am not physically present, I am with you in spirit, and I have already judged the one who committed this act.

† Paul's authority as an apostle allowed him to address the matter even from a distance.

† His judgment was not personal anger but a necessary act of leadership to protect the church (1 Corinthians 4:21).

† Eusebius recorded that apostolic authority guided the early churches even when leaders were far away (Ecclesiastical History).

1 Corinthians 5:4

When you gather together in the name of our Lord Jesus, and I am with you in spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus present,

† Church discipline was not a private decision but something done by the assembled body of believers.

† Christ's authority stands behind the church when it acts in obedience to His commands (Matthew 18:18-20).

† Tertullian wrote that the gathered church acts under Christ's authority when correcting serious wrongdoing (Apology).

1 Corinthians 5:5

hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.

† Being handed over to Satan means removal from the protection and fellowship of the church.

† The purpose was not revenge but correction, hoping the person would repent and be restored (1 Timothy 1:20).

† Early Christian leaders taught that discipline was meant to lead sinners back to repentance rather than destroy them (Barnabas, Epistle of Barnabas).

1 Corinthians 5:6

Your boasting is not good. Don't you know that a little leaven spreads through the entire batch of dough?

† Sin inside a community spreads if it is ignored. Paul's illustration of leaven shows how corruption grows if left unchecked.

† The image comes from the Passover tradition where leaven symbolized impurity that had to be removed (Exodus 12:15).

† Clement of Alexandria explained that moral corruption spreads quickly unless the church deals with it decisively (Stromata).

1 Corinthians 5:7

Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new batch of dough, just as you truly are unleavened. For Christ our Passover lamb has been sacrificed.

† Paul connects the removal of sin with the Passover imagery. Believers are called to live as a purified people because Christ fulfilled the Passover sacrifice.

† The church was meant to reflect the holiness of the new covenant community (1 Peter 1:16).

† Irenaeus affirmed that Christ's sacrifice created a purified people who must walk in holiness (Against Heresies).

1 Corinthians 5:8

Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with the old leaven of sin and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

† Paul speaks symbolically of the Christian life as a continual feast celebrating the work of Christ.

† Sincerity and truth replace the corruption of the old life under sin (Colossians 3:9-10).

† Early writers taught that believers live in constant remembrance of Christ's sacrifice through holy living (Justin Martyr, First Apology).

1 Corinthians 5:9

I wrote to you in my earlier letter not to associate with sexually immoral people.

† Paul reminds them of previous instructions. The Corinthians misunderstood what he meant by separation.

† His warning applied to believers who claim faith yet continue in open sin.

† Tertullian wrote that the church must distinguish between correcting believers and interacting with the wider world (On

Modesty).

1 Corinthians 5:10

I did not mean the immoral people of this world, or the greedy, or swindlers, or idolaters, because then you would have to leave the world entirely.

† Paul clarifies that believers still live among unbelievers in everyday life.

† Separation from the world entirely is impossible while living in society (John 17:15).

† Clement of Alexandria taught that Christians interact with society but must not adopt its immoral practices (Stromata).

1 Corinthians 5:11

But now I am writing that you must not associate with anyone who claims to be a believer yet lives in sexual sin, greed, idolatry, slander, drunkenness, or cheating others, do not even share a meal with such a person.

† The focus is on those who claim to follow Christ but refuse to repent.

† Fellowship implies acceptance, so persistent rebellion cannot be treated as normal Christian behavior (2 Thessalonians 3:6).

† Early church leaders emphasized that discipline preserves the integrity of the church community (Irenaeus, Against Heresies).

1 Corinthians 5:12

What responsibility is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not the ones responsible to judge those within it?

† Paul's point is that the church's responsibility is internal accountability.

† God judges the outside world, but the church must correct its own members (1 Peter 4:17).

† Eusebius noted that the early church understood discipline as a necessary part of maintaining unity and purity (Ecclesiastical History).

1 Corinthians 5:13

God will judge those outside. Remove the wicked person from among yourselves.

† Paul closes with a direct command echoing language from the Law about removing evil from the community (Deuteronomy 17:7).

† The purpose was to protect the holiness of the church and call the sinner to repentance.

† Early Christian leaders consistently taught that the purity of the church must be guarded for the sake of the gospel (Tertullian, Apology).

Historical References

† Clement of Alexandria wrote that moral purity within the church is necessary so believers remain distinct from the corrupt practices of the surrounding world (Stromata).

† Irenaeus explained that the apostles gave clear instructions to preserve the holiness of the church community (Against Heresies).

† Eusebius recorded that early congregations practiced discipline in order to protect unity and doctrinal truth (Ecclesiastical History).

† Tertullian described how the church gathered to correct wrongdoing among believers while still extending grace and restoration (Apology).

How it applies to us today

† This chapter reminds us that the church must never celebrate or ignore sin within its fellowship. Love includes accountability.

† Believers are called to live as a purified people because Christ has already paid the price for our redemption.

† The goal of correction is always restoration and repentance, not punishment or pride.

† When the church maintains holiness and truth, it reflects the character of Christ to the world.

Q & A Appendix

Q Why was Paul so strong about this sin?

A Because open sin corrupts the entire community if it is tolerated (1 Corinthians 5:6).

Q Does this chapter mean Christians should avoid all unbelievers?

A No, Paul specifically says believers still live among people in the world (1 Corinthians 5:10).

Q What does handing someone over to Satan mean?

A It refers to removing someone from church fellowship so they face the consequences of their sin and hopefully repent (1 Timothy 1:20).

Q Why must the church judge those inside it?

A Because believers are accountable to one another in the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 5:12).

Q What was the purpose of removing the sinful man from the church?

A So that repentance could occur and ultimately his spirit would be saved (1 Corinthians 5:5).

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

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Source Index

† 1 Corinthians 5

† Clement of Alexandria, Stromata

† Irenaeus, Against Heresies

† Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History

† Tertullian, Apology

† Epistle of Barnabas

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