

IMPLICATIONS FOR CHURCH DISCIPLINE
IN 1 CORINTHIANS 5

by

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1 Corinthians chapter 5 contains information concerning a specific problem in the Corinthian church and how it was to be handled. The instruction contained in these 13 verses forms a major portion of the basis for the practice of church discipline. Due to the involvement of the apostle in the situation, there is some question in regard to how much of the action taken tests apostolic authority and how much is based on the authority of the church. The answer determines to what extent modern day churches should apply these instructions. Coupled with this difficulty is the problem of the terminology used by the apostle. Statements such as "deliver over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh," and "do not even eat with such a one" have led to a diversity of interpretation and corresponding confusion in applying church discipline.

A study of verses 1-5 reveal that the church is held accountable by the apostle for not taking action in relation to a particular case which called for church discipline. As a result, these verses describe the activity of church discipline: congregational action to formally remove the individual from their fellowship for the purpose of his salvation. This person is treated as an unbeliever.

The principles behind church discipline are laid out in verses 6-8 through the use of figurative language. A lack of discipline results in false confidence while the practice of discipline produces the appropriate purity of the church. The sacrifice of Christ provides both the basis and impetus for removal of evil from the church.

In practical outworking of discipline, two main problems are predominant: how does one act in relation to a person who has been disciplined and how does a church determine who is to be disciplined? Verses 9-13 answer these two questions.

The contents of 1 Corinthians 5 direct instruction to the modern church just as they did to the church at Corinth and give comprehensive material on the practice and principle of church discipline.

Accepted by the Faculty of Grace Theological Seminary
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- BAGD A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature by Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, Wilbur F. Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker.
- ICC International Critical Commentary, ed. by C.A. Briggs, S.R. Driver, and A. Plummer.
- NICNT New International Commentary on the New Testament, edited by N.B. Stonehouse.
- TDNT Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, edited by Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich.

INTRODUCTION

The Need for This Study

One experienced pastor has written, "One of the most neglected doctrines of the Word of God is church discipline."¹ Another notes, "I don't think we deal with fifty percent of the discipline cases we should deal with in this church."² To ask pastors or lay persons alike, there is a recognition that church discipline is not practiced or, in many cases, even understood. One might ask if there would be any need for church discipline today if the world in general or the church specifically were in better moral and spiritual condition than the first century church was. But no one would venture to suggest that this is true.

On a large scale, the existence of liberal churches and apostate denominations bear mute testimony to the failure of applied discipline in the past. On the more personal level it is true that, "Moral looseness is so prevalent

¹Paul R. Jackson, The Doctrine and Administration of the Church. (Schaumburg, Ill.: Regular Baptist Press, 1968), p. 67.

²Donald L. Bubna, "Redemptive Love: The Key to Church Discipline," Leadership 2(Summer, 1981), p. 78.

that even the most sheltered individuals are aware of it."¹
As has been true throughout its history, the problems of society have manifested themselves within the church, and the church has failed to respond appropriately. One of the primary ways in which it has failed is in the practice of discipline.

Two reasons for this failure are ignorance and a false concept of kindness. In terms of ignorance, one will find that church discipline is not usually dealt with in the types of literature which the average believer reads, or even in some of the more specialized works which Christian leaders read. This writer was moved to make this study after reading two recent volumes on the operation of the church and finding no mention of church discipline in either one.²

Along with this dearth of information is the prevailing attitude which tolerates immoral behavior or even false doctrine in the hope of 'winning' the individual through 'kindness' or 'love'. Discipline is a measure "alien to our Western thinking and abhorrent to our clubby approach to church life."³

In light of these problems, there is a need for serious study of the New Testament doctrine of church

¹Jackson, Doctrine, p. 68.

²Gene A. Getz, Sharpening the Focus of the Church (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974); Earl D. Radmacher, What the Church is All About (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972).

³John White, "Discipline that Heals," Moody Monthly 78(February, 1978), p. 58.

discipline with a view toward implementation in the local church.

The Purpose of This Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate a part of the doctrine by a thorough examination of 1 Corinthians chapter 5. The city of Corinth was characterized by loose and licentious living, a situation duplicated in the present time in the United States.¹ The fifth chapter of 1 Corinthians deals with a specific case of immoral behavior, but also provides many general principles of church discipline and some specific procedures to be followed. By studying the specific case of discipline (vv. 1-5), the principles behind church discipline (vv. 6-8), and the practical outworking of discipline (vv. 9-13), a basic understanding of church discipline will be provided.

¹W. Harold Mare, "1 Corinthians," The Expositor's Bible Commentary, vol. 10, ed. by Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), p. 216.

CHAPTER I

A SPECIFIC CASE OF DISCIPLINE

The Setting

The church at Corinth was founded by Paul on his second missionary journey (Acts 18:1-17), in about 50-51 A.D.¹ He spent a year and a half there (Acts 18:11), establishing a church in the midst of such moral bankruptcy that it was notorious even in Greece.² After he left, Apollos came and carried on the work (Acts 19:1). As long as things continued well, apparently Paul's direct help was not needed.

Later, when Paul was at Ephesus (about 55-56 A.D.) he received reports from the household of Chloe (1 Cor 16:17) and a letter sent by the church at Corinth. These reports form the basis for the writing of 1 Corinthians. Although he had written previously (1 Cor 5:9), those instructions had been misunderstood, and the time had come for more direct, personal explanation. Some of the areas which needed to be covered the Corinthians themselves had recognized and asked

¹Ibid., p. 177.

²Everett F. Harrison, Introduction to the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1964), p. 271.

³Ibid., p. 284.

about in the letter. Others were apparently not recognized by the church but were deduced by Paul from the report of Chloe's household. The information behind chapter five was probably from the latter source.¹

In the course of 1 Corinthians, the apostle begins with the problem of divisions in the church, and rebukes them for their immaturity (3:1-3), pride (3:18-23; 4:6-9), and unwise judgments (4:1-5). These themes, or problems, will continue to appear throughout the book as the source of the church's confusion and error. In chapter five, Paul turns to a specific case where the church should have exercised judgment and did not. In chapter six he points out occasions where the church should pass judgment but did not have the opportunity. These stand in stark contrast to the judgment they had exercised regarding Paul and Apollos (4:1-5).

Within this context the apostle deals with the problem of a man in the church who was involved in an immoral relationship. Writing to an immature, arrogant, and improperly judgmental church in a difficult environment, he gives strong, clear instruction on how to deal with the problem. Chapters five and six demonstrate the inconsistency of the Corinthian church: on the one hand they are tolerating gross sins of impurity and on the other they

¹A.T. Robertson, Word Pictures in the New Testament, vol. 4 (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1931), p. 111.

will not tolerate injury (6:7).¹

The Problem (5:1-2)

The situation contained a two-fold problem. The first is that the individual was counted as being in the church and yet continued in gross sin. Even in the Corinthian society, this situation would be noticeable. Barclay is guilty of some overstatement when he says, "In sexual matters the heathen did not know the meaning of chastity."² But it was necessary for Paul to use an obvious error in order to highlight the church's situation. That is the second facet of the problem: the attitude and resultant inaction by the church, which is the main focus of the apostle's attention.³

The Individual's Sin

The specific instance involved is first described in general terms so the readers would understand clearly why Paul was so concerned. It is then identified more specifically so they would know exactly to which individual he was referring. The general description paints a

¹Thomas Charles Edwards, A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians, 2nd ed. (New York: A.C. Armstrong & Son, 1886), p. 120.

²William Barclay, The Letters to the Corinthians, The Daily Study Bible (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954), p. 49.

³Frederick Willem Grossheide, Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians, NICNT, ed. by N.B. Stonehouse (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1953), p. 131.

bold picture which gives a context to the situation being tolerated by the church. Coming immediately after the threatening question of 4:21, this description flows out strikingly without any grammatical connection.¹

The general description

The apostle describes the sin in broad terms which establish clearly the great danger faced. This description includes the type of sin involved, the clear fact of that sin, and the contrast it affords with even the lowest common denominator: the Gentile world.

The type of sin involved: πορνεία

Due to the use of πορνεία in the exception clauses in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9, much discussion has taken place in reference to the meaning of the word, whether it is used broadly of sexual immorality or specifically of illegal relationships. Although it may help simplify the exception clauses in Matthew, citing 1 Corinthians 5:1 as a restricted use of πορνεία is not wise.² In this passage an instance of an illegal relationship is cited, but it is symptomatic of the general toleration of πορνεία in the church.³ A review of the use of πορνεία in the New Testament will reveal

¹R.C.H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians (Minneapolis, Mn.: Augsburg Publishing House, 1937), p. 205.

²One who does this is Jesse E. Boggs, "1 Corinthians 7:15: Pauline Privilege or Not?" (M.Div. Thesis, Grace Theological Seminary, 1981), p. 13.

³Edwards, Commentary, p. 122.

this general usage.

The word group is used 55 times in the New Testament, with *πορνεία* accounting for 25 of those uses. The main concentrations are in Paul (21 times, 14 in 1 Cor) and Revelation (19 times).¹ The preponderance of usage in 1 Corinthians shows that it was an acute problem for Paul in that church.² Other passages in the epistle seem to indicate that general immorality is intended there (1 Cor 6:13, 18; 7:2; 10:8). Boggs is correct when he states, "One thing that is certain is that this word considered in isolation is uncertain. . . Context must determine whether the word is to be understood in either a restricted or broad sense."³ The context of this passage points to the broad usage of the word, which includes unlawful sexual relationships.

In harmony with that interpretation is the fact that abstinence from *πορνεία* was included in the instructions from the Jerusalem council in Acts 15:20, 29. These instructions were apparently based on Leviticus 17-18, and therefore emphasis has fallen on sexual relationship of too close relatives (Lev 18:6-18).⁴ But also included in the chapter are prohibitions against unnatural sexual activity

¹The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, "*πορνευω*," by Horst Reisser, 1:499.

²Ibid.

³Boggs, "Pauline Privilege," p. 15.

⁴TDNT, by Friedrich Hauck and Siegfried Schulz, 4:593.

(18:19), adultery (18:20), homosexuality (18:22), and sodomy (18:23). Limitation to any one of these would be uncharacteristic of the word. It was also used in New Testament times of prostitution, both commercial and cultic.¹ It should be understood in terms of sexual sin in general,² or "cohabitation within forbidden degrees."³ These degrees are outlined to some extent in the Leviticus passage but also would include other biblically prohibited sexual practice.

The warning flag raised by this word should not go unnoticed. There is sexual immorality in the church, which the apostle will highlight with a particularly heinous instance.⁴ The fact that this was a particular sin noted by the Jerusalem council puts great impact behind the severity of the problem. It is a question which came up repeatedly in the confrontation with the Greek world and is warned against repeatedly later in the apostle's ministry (1 Cor 7:2; 10:8; Gal 5:19; Eph 5:3; 1 Thess 4:3).⁵ This is the opening round in a continuing battle for the apostle in his ministry to the churches.

¹Bruce Malina, "Does Porneia Mean Fornication?" Novum Testamentum 14(January 1972), p. 12.

²Robertson, Word Pictures, vol. 9, p. 111.

³F.F. Bruce, 1 and 2 Corinthians, New Century Bible, ed. by Ronald E. Clements and Matthew Black (London: Oliphants, 1971), p. 53.

⁴Grossheide, Commentary, p. 119.

⁵Reisser, "πορνείω," p. 499.

The clear fact of the sin

The epistle need not be loaded down with documentation, the fact of this sin is well known in the church at Corinth. Although the translation of ὄλως as "actually" or "generally" is not the most common one in Classical Greek, it is not unknown, being found in Plato and Aristotle.¹ This meaning fits well with the only other use of ὄλως without the negative, which is found in 6:7. Despite Lenski's pontifications, it is the best translation.²

The verb, ἀκούεται, is an example of a perfective present tense.³ Paul continues to build his case by identifying the notoriety that this sin had among the Corinthians (ἐν ὑμῖν). It was a well known fact.⁴ "Actually the nature of the situation was such that the facts were obvious. There were no extenuating circumstances or consideration of motives that could change the sinfulness

¹J.B. Lightfoot, Notes on the Epistles of St. Paul, (n.d., reprint ed., Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1957), p. 202. BAGD, p. 565.

²Lenski, Interpretation, p. 205. Cf. Leon L. Morris, The Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians, The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, ed. by R.V.G. Tasker (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1958), p. 86.

³F. Blass, A. Debrunner, A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, trans. and rev. from the 9th German ed. by Robert W. Funk (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961), p. 168.

⁴John Calvin, Commentary on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians, vol. 1, trans. by John Pringle (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1948), p. 179.

of the situation."¹ The whole church was aware of the existence of πορνεία and was apparently unconcerned. This called for the intervention of the apostle.

The amazing contrast

Not only was there well known immorality extant among them, the nature of this specific case was such that no one would excuse it. This particular behavior did not exist "even among the Gentiles" (v.1). The use of the term "Gentile" is undoubtedly negative in its connotation.² Those from whom the general population had come, who had no Spirit-given sensitivity, would not tolerate the same kind of sin which the Corinthian church was tolerating. This was a statement of the highest scorn; they were trying to win Corinth while living more loosely than the rest of the population.³

Interesting testimony is borne by Euripides, Hippolytus representing the Greek world and Cicero, Pro Cluentio representing the Latin, both effectively renouncing such practice.⁴ Cicero states that it was an unheard of practice, except for one instance which he knew about. In spite of general condemnation, the practice still

¹James L. Boyer, For a World Like Ours: Studies in 1 Corinthians (Winona Lake: BMH Books, 1971), p. 57.

²TDNT, s.v. "ἔθνος, ἔθνημος," by Georg Bertram and Karl Ludwig Schmidt, 2:369.

³Robertson, Word Pictures, vol. 4, p. 111.

⁴Bruce, 1 and 2 Corinthians, p. 53.

existed. Along with these Gentile testimonies, the Jewish book of Jubilees called for exclusion from Israel of anyone who was guilty of this particular offense.¹

The specific description

What was this odious form of πορνεία which the church had tolerated? What was so terrible to everyone else but could be tolerated in the midst of their pride? It was a relationship which was uniformly condemned by Mosaić Law (Lev 18:8; Deut 22:30; 27:20) and Roman Law.²

A particular relationship

With tact and care, the apostle states what instance he has in mind. Someone (τίνα) has (ἔχειν) his father's wife. The name is not stated because it is not needed. Everyone would know who it was; the problem was the sin, not the man (vv. 6-7). The relationship was either marriage or something approximating it due to the standard New Testament use of ἔχω in reference to a relationship between a man and a woman.³ The incident with the Samaritan woman in John 4:8 indicates that it need not have been actual marriage,

¹E.P. Sanders, Paul and Palestinian Judaism (London: S.C.M. Press, 1977), p. 370.

²Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer. Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Epistles to the Corinthians, trans. by D. Douglas Bannerman, translation rev. and ed. by William P. Dickson, 6th ed. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1883; reprint ed., Winona Lake: Alpha Publications, 1979), p. 108.

³Boyer, 1 Corinthians, p. 58. Other such passages are John 4:17; 1 Cor 7:2; 7:12-13, 29; Gal 4:27.

she "had" a man who was not her husband.¹ Since the woman is described as his father's wife it most likely was not official marriage, besides the fact that it was illegal. The present tense of the verb indicates an on-going relationship.

An outgrowth of πορνεία

In relation to the reported πορνεία in the church, this is one manifestation which is viewed as a result of that immorality, not the subject of that report. This fact is indicated by the use of ὥστε with an infinitive, which yields a consecutive idea.² Their toleration of immorality produced this heinous manifestation of immorality. Also, the terminology "his father's wife" seems drawn from Leviticus 18:8 where "his father's wife" as a stepmother is distinguished from his mother (Lev 18:7).³ Both of these factors relate the incident back to πορνεία which was prohibited by the Jerusalem council and generally condemned in the New Testament.

¹Robertson, Word Studies, vol. 4, p. 111. Cf. C.K. Barrett, A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians, Harper's New Testament Commentaries, ed. by Henry Chadwick (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), p. 121. It is questionable whether such a marriage would be allowed by the magistrates even in a city like Corinth.

²C.F.D. Moule, An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), p. 140.

³Charles Hodge, An Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1950), p. 81.

The church's complacency

Still to be answered, however, is the question of how the church could fail to act in light of such a situation in their midst. A suggestion has been made that a line of rabbinic interpretation allowed a proselyte to enter such a marriage since he was a new creation, and therefore old relationships ceased to exist.¹ If the church adopted this interpretation it could appear to justify their inaction. The improbability of such a suggestion may be seen in the fact that the Jews themselves rejected such an interpretation and the Gentiles would not condone it apart from some such scriptural support.²

The real cause is stated by the apostle in two ways. One is by the use of the word ὄργη, which shows that the general Corinthian lifestyle led up to such a situation. The second was the fact that they were proud ("puffed up", v.2). These two causes are laid directly at the feet of the church. The situation is not the result of one man causing shame on all, but that the whole had virtually invited him to do so. They had brought this upon themselves.

The relationship to 2 Corinthians 7

Several interpreters state categorically that the man's father was still alive, and a member of the Corinthian

¹Robertson, Word Pictures, vol. 4, p. 111. Meyer, Handbook, p. 108.

²Hodge, Interpretation, p. 82.

church, based on the description and congratulation given by Paul in 2 Corinthians 7:11-12.¹ The description given there is vague enough to be related to almost any type of problem in which two parties are involved. The whole debate over the existence of a severe letter which was written by Paul between First and Second Corinthians is involved. The diversity of that debate is beyond the scope of this paper. However, there are some factors involved with this passage in relation to 2 Corinthians 7 which are pertinent to the passage.

First is the thunderous silence contained in 1 Corinthians 5. If the father were alive and a member of the church, would Paul have no word of encouragement for him? The man described in 2 Corinthians 7:12 is "the one offended," but the general impression in 1 Corinthians 5 is that no one was bothered by the situation. The apostle on other occasions did not hesitate to name names and prescribe action when there was a problem between two believers (Phil 4:2-3).

Second is the use of *πονεΐα* to describe the situation rather than *μοιχεία*, which would be true if the man was involved with his living, believing father's wife.²

¹Joseph Agar Beet. A Commentary on St. Paul's Epistles to the Corinthians, 5th ed. (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1892), p. 91; Lenski, Interpretation, p. 207; Meyer, Handbook, p. 108; Hodge, Exposition, p. 81.

²Murray J. Harris, "2 Corinthians," The Expositor's Bible Commentary, vol. 10, ed. by Frank F. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), p. 310.

Although $\pi\omicron\nu\nu\epsilon\acute{\iota}\alpha$ may include adultery (see Lev 18:20), one would normally expect a distinction here to show the father's interest in the outcome.

Also in support of the father being alive one might point to the terminology "father's wife". If he were dead, the relationship would be dissolved. But this may be seen as a common (at least to a Jew like Paul) term for "step-mother", a relationship which would still exist even after the father's death.

In any case, the existence of a living father only adds to the horror of the situation, and does nothing to aid in interpreting the passage here.

The Church's Sin

In this particular case the church is also guilty. Not just because it had produced an environment which was conducive to such an occurrence, but because they were continuing in their proud lifestyle. Throughout the chapter the apostle is more concerned with the church's response than the sin of the individual.¹ When the church acts rightly, there is hope for the individual in spite of his sin (1 Cor 5:5). Paul first describes their sin and then states what should have taken place.

The description of their sin

Their sin is the same as he had already noted in relation to their factions; they are puffed up with pride

¹Grossheide, Commentary, p. 131.

(4:6,18,19; 5:2). It is a recurring theme of the book, with φουσιώ occurring six times in reference to attitude.¹ Their pride blinded them to the fact that they had no basis for pride (v.6).

Their state of pride is described in terms of a perfect periphrastic construction, indicating their established and continuous attitude. He emphatically says, "and you are. . . ?" to indicate the contrast between the actual state and how they perceived themselves, preparing the way for his own action in verse 3 (ἔγω μὲν). Perhaps the same factions that were produced by pride formed the means by which the man could find acceptance. By joining with a group, he may have found a haven among his peers who would overlook his personal indiscretions in order to have one more on their side.² This severe statement would burst their bubble and bring out the nasty truth they hid from themselves.

The proper response

In stark contrast to their sinful pride stands the course of action that should have followed the awareness of this situation. It is stated first in terms of attitude and then in terms of action. Neither is complete without the other.

¹W.F. Moulton and A.S. Geden, eds., A Concordance to the Greek Testament, 5th ed. revised by H.K. Moulton (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1978), p. 997.

²Robertson, Word Pictures, vol. 4, p. 112.

Their attitude should have reflected the seriousness of the offense and the drastic action required. The Corinthian church was a young church and a young church is an evangelistic church; it has to be to even exist. In contrast with their efforts to bring in people, they were now responsible to turn someone out. Implied in the attitude of mourning is the loss of a brother, as if he had died.¹ The change of tense from perfect ("puffed up") to aorist ("mourned") is significant. What should have taken place previously did not and as a result their state is fraudulent.²

In mourning, they should have reflected a "passionate grief which leads to corresponding action."³ The action is to result in the offender being removed from their midst. The form is a common one for a desired result (ἵνα clause). The one who has done this deed will be taken away, out of their midst. This purpose is placed in a general sense in terms of the person involved by the use of the participial phrase, ὁ τὸ ἔργον τοῦτο πράξας.⁴ This indefinite descrip-

¹Morris, Epistles, p. 87.

²Lightfoot, Notes, p. 203.

³TDNT, s.v. "πένθος, πενθέω," by Rudolph Bultmann, 6:42.

⁴There is an inconsequential variant reading which appeared in the 2nd edition of the United Bible Society's Greek New Testament where it reads ποιήσας (supported by p⁴⁶, B, D, F, G, L, P, Ψ, 049, 056, 0142 and most minuscules). The 3rd edition has πράξας (supported by p¹¹, X, A, C, 33, 81, 88, 104, 326, 436, 462, 1912) on the premise that it was more likely to be replaced by the more common term than vice versa. Cf. Bruce M. Metzger, A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament (London: United Bible Societies, 1971), p. 550.

tion sets a precedent for other cases of such sin. The verb root, *πράσσω*, indicates a way of life, not just one event. It is not just a certain individual who is unworthy of church membership, it is any person who acts in a way contrary to the Word of God.

Paul's Solution to the Problem (5:3-5)

Since the church had failed to take proper action, the apostle steps in to correct the situation. There is a question over whether the action now described is done by the apostle as he exercises apostolic authority or if the church is to take the action it should have all along, but now under direct command to do so. In light of the context and the description, it appears that the church is the one carrying out the decision of the apostle, taking responsibility for its own actions.

What the apostle has done

In contrast to the church (the emphatic "you" of v.2), Paul now states what he has done (perfect tense) in regard to the situation. His statement is equally emphatic, using the phrase *Ἔγω μὲν γάρ*, to indicate the strong contrast. They failed to act, but Paul is now acting decisively.

The clarification of the situation

The apostle must make it clear that he is not acting in haste or carelessly. Some in the church may have been tempted to excuse themselves due to the apostle's

absence. They may have thought, "That's easy for you to say from a distance, but you don't understand what it is like here!" By means of a compound participial phrase he assures them that his physical absence makes no difference.

Using two concessive present participles he explains that his absence is physical only.¹ The fact that he was bodily absent needs no explanation, but the concept of being present in spirit must be appreciated fully. In modern idiom, "I am with you in spirit" can have an almost useless connotation. In contrast, Paul's usage of the term in Colossians 2:5 shows that he uses it to indicate a vicarious sharing of their experience. In this sense it is close to what the modern idiom ought to convey. Hodge is right when he suggests that it was a presence of knowledge, authority, and power.² To that list should be added empathy as per the usage in Colossians 2:5. His actions were exactly the same as if he were physically there; he issues a public pronouncement of judgment.³

The usual interpretation of κέκοινα (5:3)

The apostle, rather than doing nothing as the church had done, instead has already decided or passed judgment on the situation. The usual interpretation of his action is to take κοίνω with the infinitive of verse five in the

¹Robertson, Word Pictures, vol. 4, p. 112.

²Hodge, Exposition, p. 83.

³Grossheide, Commentary, p. 120.

sense "I have decided to..." which is used in that sense elsewhere in the New Testament.¹ In accordance with this understanding, many commentators understand Paul to be exercising apostolic authority, with the church as observers, albeit active ones due to his absence.² The accusative phrase, τὸν οὕτως τοῦτο κατεργασάμενον, is interpreted as a "prospective accusative"³ which is resumed as the object of παραδοῦναι (5:5). Without arguing the possibility of this interpretation grammatically, there are some factors which point to another interpretation.

Κέκρινα as a legal sentencing

Another possible interpretation is that Paul has passed judgment on the man and is commanding the church to carry it out. It is the terminology of the law where the judge passes sentence for the bailiff to carry out.⁴ In this way the church and the apostle are delivering the man to Satan; both take responsibility. In support for this view is the fact that the accusative phrase τὸν οὕτως τοῦτο κατεργασάμενον functions most clearly as the object of κέκρινα in the sense "I have judged the one who acted this way." Also, the context has judgment as one of its under-

¹BAGD, p. 451.

²Barrett, Commentary, p. 124; Meyer, Handbook, p. 110; Hodge, Exposition, p. 83; Edwards, Commentary, p. 124; Lightfoot, Notes, p. 203-204.

³Lightfoot, Notes, p. 203.

⁴Lenski, Interpretation, p. 210.

lying themes. Wrong judgment (4:5), correct judgment (5:12-13), and the church's ability or responsibility to judge (5:12; 6:2-5) are all dealt with in the close context. In light of the apostle's command, "be imitators of me," in 4:16, it is natural to understand his action as one which the church could have taken, and now must do so under constraint. It is not a unique prerogative of the apostolic office.

Of the nine instances of κρίνω followed by an infinitive listed by Moulton and Geden, five are in a judgment type of usage, with the others used in the sense of a personal decision.¹ 1 Corinthians 5:3 is not listed by them as an occurrence of personal decision (κρίνω with complementary infinitive).

An objection might be raised in relation to the parallel instance in 1 Timothy 1:20 where Paul states that he had delivered two men to Satan. Since Paul states there that he did the delivering, and no church is mentioned, it might be maintained that it was a unique apostolic authority. That reference (1 Tim 1:20) does not contain sufficient information to set aside the instructions of 1 Corinthians 5, which gives more information on the circumstances and the action contemplated. Paul could say truthfully that he had delivered the man to Satan in this case, even though operating in conjunction with a church.

¹Moulton and Geden, Concordance, p. 561.

What the church is to do

The content of Paul's judgment forms an imperative to the church to act. The infinitive, παραδοῦναι, is used in indirect discourse, giving the content of the apostle's judgment. Since the church is to carry out that judgment, an imperatival sense is given to the infinitive. This is common in papyri, but not so common in the New Testament.¹ In this context, it is used in a judgment form following Old Testament prophets, with modification for warning and rebuking the church.² The relationships of the component parts of this indirect discourse to each other is not clear.

The authority for action

The first phrase in the text is "in the name of our Lord Jesus," which may be connected with either the indicative, "I have judged"; or the infinitive, "deliver over"; or the participle, "gathered together." Word order would tend to associate it with the participle, "gathered together" while the sense of "in the name of our Lord" as an expression of authority or representative action points to connection with the infinitive, "deliver over."³ This latter understanding matches its use in 2 Thessalonians 3:6

¹H.E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament (New York: Macmillan Co., 1927), p. 216.

²James Hope Moulton, W.F. Howard, and Nigel Turner, A Grammar of New Testament Greek, 4 vols., vol 4: Style, by Nigel Turner (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1976), p. 88.

³Boyer, 1 Corinthians, p. 60. Cf. Grossheide, Commentary, p. 122.

(another passage on church discipline). But the use of εἰς τὸ ἑμὸν ὄνομα in Matthew 18:20 (also dealing with discipline) shows that the gathering together is also in the name of the Lord. In light of that, it is appropriate to understand this phrase as a solemn formula which governs all that follows: both the participle and the infinitive.

The time of the action

The second phrase is a genitive absolute which identifies those who are involved in carrying out the sentence and when it is to be carried out. The participle indicates a duly brought together meeting of the church, since συνάγω is a technical expression for the meeting of the church.¹ Those who are involved are the congregation of the church at Corinth ("you") and Paul, although he would be absent ("my spirit"). This phrase demonstrates that the sentence was to be passed openly, and the meeting would allow the church to act in partnership with the apostle.

The power for action

The third phrase in the text has similar difficulties to the first phrase. The terms, "with the power of our Lord Jesus" could conceivably go with either the participle ("gather") or the infinitive ("deliver"). Some argue that the phrase should go with the infinitive because the sense

¹Barrett, Commentary, p. 124. For contrast with συνέχεσθαι see Lenski, Interpretation, p. 213.

of "power" goes with the action being carried out.¹ But once again, a comparison with Matthew 18:18-20 indicates that the power of Christ is associated with their coming together.² The use of $\sigma\acute{\upsilon}\nu$ as the preposition also lends weight to connecting the phrase to the participle, which has $\sigma\acute{\upsilon}\nu$ as its prefix. Likewise, the statement "our Lord" connects in number and person with "you and my spirit," thereby linking the phrases. These are all minor connections. The point is that the church, when gathered together to do what Christ has commanded, is guaranteed the power of Christ to fulfill its task.

The action itself

The action the church is to take is stated by the infinitive $\pi\alpha\rho\alpha\delta\omicron\upsilon\nu\alpha\iota$, which means to "hand over, give (over), deliver, entrust, give up, give over, commend, commit."³ It is used in the New Testament of Jesus' betrayal of Judas, God's judgment on sinners, giving up of self, authority given up, as a technical term for passing on knowledge or information, and in the sense of commending someone to someone else.⁴ In what sense it is used in this text is a subject of some debate.

¹Lenski, Interpretation, p. 213. Cf. A.T. Robertson, A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1934), p. 628.

²Meyer, Handbook, p. 111.

³BAGD, pp. 614-615.

⁴TDNT, s.v. " $\pi\alpha\rho\alpha\delta\acute{\iota}\delta\omega\mu\iota$ " by Friedrich Buchsel, 2:169-172.

Deissmann has compared it with two ancient execration texts which bear certain similarities to 1 Corinthians 5:4-5.¹ He sees two technical expressions in 5:5 which relate to these texts. The first is παραδίδωμι with the dative of person in the sense of "deliver to Satan."² The second is the usage of σύν in the sense of "with, in fellowship with."³ These parallels prove that in his mind the apostle was using a familiar form of expression and, "proves therefore, that the apostle advises the Corinthian church to perform a solemn act of execration."⁴

This is an interesting hypothesis, but on closer examination it does not help in interpreting the passage. First, although the word παραδίδωμι is used in both places (1 Cor 5:5 and one ancient text) and the ones to whom the person is delivered are similar (Satan and Daemon), the powers involved are completely contradictory. In the execration formula, it is by the power of the underworld, here it is by the power of Christ. Second, it is inconceivable that Paul would warn his readers against idolaters (5:11; 6:9) and against becoming "sharers in demons" (10:20-21)

¹Gustav Adolf Deissmann, Light from the Ancient New East, trans. by Lionel R.M. Strachan, 4th ed. (New York: Hodder and Stoughton, 1922), pp. 303-305. He is enthusiastically concurred with by Robertson (Grammar, p. 628) and cited by Buchsell (TDNT, s.v. "παραδίδωμι," p. 169).

²Ibid., p. 304.

³Ibid., p. 305.

⁴Ibid.

and then use pagan ritual to purify the church. Third, the pagan ritual had the harm of the person as its goal; here the purpose is profitable to the person.¹

The most logical interpretation of παραδίδωμι is to relate it to New Testament usage. In the context, it is related to removing the man from the midst of the church (5:2,7,13) which would place him in the realm of those who are "outside" whom God will judge (5:12-13). This action is done in the name of the Lord Jesus, and therefore with His power, authority, and in accordance with His will. Therefore, the use of παραδίδωμι should correspond to its use elsewhere in reference to God and sinners. Immediately Romans 1:24-32 comes to mind with the repeated phrase, "God gave them over" (παραδίδωμι). The church is to act like God does, turning the man loose in the direction he is already headed. This is the means of judgment for now; God will take care of the ultimate judgment (5:13).

The one to whom the man is delivered over is Satan. The sense in which this is true is not completely clear in the verse, but the context indicates that it is done through removal from the church body. This is taken by most interpreters to be movement from the church where Christ reigns to the world where Satan rules, as stated in Ephesians 2:12, Colossians 1:13, and 1 John 5:19.² There is no

¹Lenski, Interpretation, p. 216.

²Morris, Epistles, p. 88. Cf. Barrett, Commentary, p. 216; Marvin R. Vincent, Word Studies in the New Testament,

reason to read anything more into the passage than this explanation. In this case, Satan found one whom he could devour (1 Pet 5:8). The church was merely recognizing what was already true.

The purpose of the action

The purpose of the church's action is stated in two ways. The proximate purpose is that his flesh would be destroyed, while the ultimate purpose was that his spirit would be saved in the day of the Lord.¹ The exact meaning of these two phrases is hard to understand. The problem is based on the relationship between "flesh" (σάρξ) and "spirit" (πνεῦμα). If flesh is taken ethically, how is the ethical spirit saved? And if spirit is taken as a component part of man, how can the destruction of the flesh (which would then be the body) be beneficial?

In supporting the use of flesh here as being equivalent to the body, Zemek notes that the flesh and spirit antithesis does not always mean the same thing. In four other instances in the New Testament, they stand for body and spirit.² This shows the possibility of such a meaning

vol. 3: The Epistles of Paul (n.d., reprinted: Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1946), p. 210.

¹Lenski, Interpretation, p. 216.

²George Zemek, "Σαρξ in the New Testament with Special Emphases on its Background and its Occurrences in Hamartiological Contexts" (Th.M. Thesis, Grace Theological Seminary, 1977), p. 117. The four passages are Gal 6:8; 2 Cor 7:1; Rom 2:28-29; Col 2:5.

here. Also, the term ὄλεθρον ("destruction") is too strong a word for anything but bodily chastisement.¹ Further evidence may be drawn from the fact that the Deuteronomy formula quoted in 5:13 always involved death.²

One might expect the use of σῶμα and ψυχὴ in this type of meaning, but the present usage emphasizes the religious capacity of the πνεῦμα which would not be conveyed by ψυχὴ.³ In view of chapter 15 of 1 Corinthians, it would be inappropriate to speak of the σῶμα as being destroyed in this severe terminology, therefore σάρξ is used.⁴

Another major factor against the use of the term "flesh as the fleshly desires" is the statement of the ultimate purpose: "in order that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord." To understand flesh as the desires of the flesh, a corresponding ethical understanding of spirit must be produced, but none fits this expression of purpose.⁵ The time reference, "the day of the Lord" points to the final condition of the man at the judgment seat, not

¹S. Lewis Johnson, "The First Epistle to the Corinthians," The Wycliffe Bible Commentary, ed. by Charles F. Pfeiffer and Everett F. Harrison (Chicago: Moody Press, 1962), p. 1237.

²R. Kempthorne, "Incest and the Body of Christ: A Study of 1 Corinthians 6:12-20," New Testament Studies 14(July, 1968), p. 570.

³Zemek, "Σαρξ," p. 117.

⁴Frederick Louis Godet, Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians, vol. 1, trans. by A. Cusin (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1886; reprint ed., Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1957).

⁵Hodge, Exposition, p. 85.

his spiritual attitude in life.

One important fact to be raised at this point is that the destruction of the flesh is not equivalent to some apostolic infliction of punishment. Usually cited as such inflictions are the cases of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11) and Elymas (Acts 13:9-11).¹ Beside the fact that the case of Ananias and Sapphira had nothing to do with apostolic pronouncement, the contrast between those occurrences and this one is great. In those instances it is the Spirit of the Lord who inflicts the punishment, not Satan. Also, both instances were strongly punitive, without positive purpose in the lives of the victims. Here, the goal is ultimately positive; there is distinct hope for the man. It is not apostolic judgment in physical destruction which is envisioned here. It is rather the bodily chastisement to which persistent sin leads, including, in some cases, death (1 Cor 11:30; 1 John 5:16-17).²

The spiritual condition of the man is an issue on which there is not much unanimity among interpreters. Whether he is saved or not is usually intimately related to the commentator's view of 2 Corinthians 2:5-11. If he views that passage as the sequel to this passage then this man is usually described as a believer. If he sees that passage in relation to some other instance, then it is usually concluded that the man is an unbeliever.

¹Cf. Ibid.; Grossheide, Commentary, p. 123.

²Johnson, "Corinthians," p. 1237.

The discussion should center on the expression of the ultimate purpose in this case: "that the spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord." This statement is a peculiar one for Paul, being the only place where the πνεῦμα is said to be saved. He usually speaks of the whole man being saved (he never speaks of the ψυχή being saved).¹ The construction of the statement, however, is not that uncommon. In every case where ἵνα is used with the aorist passive subjunctive of σώζω, it refers to potential, not realized, salvation.² This potential idea, combined with the eschatological concept of the day of the Lord indicate that this is salvation in its ultimate sense.³ The result in view may be similar to that in 3:15, with the man's essential self being saved with the loss not only of his works but also his flesh.⁴ The statements in the following context, where the man is the source of leaven while the church is unleavened (5:7) and where the man is "called a brother" point to a false profession.⁵ They will be dealt with in context. This man, then is being viewed as an unbeliever in this context.

¹TDNT, s.v. "σώζω, σωτηρία," by Werner Forester and Georg Fohrer, 7:992.

²Mark 5:23; John 3:17; 5:34; Acts 16:30; 1 Cor 10:33; 1 Thess 2:16. Compiled from Moulton and Geden, Concordance, pp. 928-929.

³Morris, Epistles, p. 89.

⁴Barrett, Commentary, p. 127.

⁵Boyer, 1 Corinthians, p. 62.

The relationship to 2 Corinthians 2:5-11

Many cite 2 Corinthians 2:5-11 as proof the man was, in fact, a believer who later repented. In that passage Paul is understood as instructing the church to forgive the man and to receive him back into the church by reaffirming their love for him.

Although there is some parallel in terminology, speaking of the man in terms like τοῦτου (1 Cor 5:2 with 2 Cor 2:5,7) and the concept of punishment (1 Cor 5:3-5 with 2 Cor 2:6), there are several contrasts with 2 Corinthians 2:5-11 which indicate that this may be a different situation than in 1 Corinthians 5.

The basic problem is that the nature of the offense and the forgiveness are not very similar. In 2 Corinthians 2:5 the man has caused sorrow to Paul and to the church. In 1 Corinthians 5 the sorrow is over the church's inaction and pride. In 2 Corinthians 2:10 Paul offers to forgive the man, but he would not need to forgive him in the case in the present chapter.¹ In 2 Corinthians the report which Paul received was from Titus (2:13), while in 1 Corinthians Timothy is the one being sent (4:17). Finally, the letter referred to in 2 Corinthians 2:1,3 was in place of a second sorrowful visit, but that does not appear to be the case in 1 Corinthians (4:18,19; 11:34; 16:2,3,5-7) which looks forward to a visit, not back on a sorrowful one.

¹Harrison, "1 Corinthians," p. 310.

²Ibid.

The inconclusive nature of this evidence may be seen in the works which deal with 1 and 2 Corinthians. Most older commentators say the situations are the same, most newer works say they are different. In relation to the man's spiritual condition, there is a caution that needs to be recognized. The statements in 1 Corinthians were made on the basis of the information at the time the letter was written. The statements in 2 Corinthians, if referring to the same man, were made after the instructions of 1 Corinthians were carried out. All that they may prove is that Paul's instruction worked in this case: the man was saved. The indefiniteness of the statement, "might be saved" is broad enough to cover either possibility.

To treat the man as an unbeliever is also commensurate with Jesus' instruction in Matthew 18:17, "let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax-gatherer." It is also appropriate in light of the fact that he is among those listed who will not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor 6: 9-10). To treat the man as a believer, the apostle would go against his description of the facts.

In light of the apostle's redemptive purpose, 2 Corinthians 2 does supply some insight into the concept of church discipline. First, repentance should be met with reinstatement, reaffirmation of love, forgiveness, and comfort (2 Cor 2:7-8). Also, Paul was enough of a realist to recognize the success in having a punishment inflicted "by the majority" (2 Cor 2:6). The action with

reference to this man in 1 Corinthians 5 may also have been less than unanimous. Finally, discipline is a test of a church's obedience to "all things" (2 Cor 2:9).

The 2 Corinthians 2 passage is, therefore, parallel in context, but may not be an exact sequel to the passage here in 1 Corinthians 5. It cannot be used to assert that the man involved here was being treated as a believer. Even if it were the same man, the apostle did not know the future and his instructions treat the man as an unbeliever, for that is what he was acting like.

Principles for Church Discipline

In the course of this specific case of church discipline, the apostle lays down some general principles which will serve as guidelines to churches of all ages in this area.

The representative nature of the situation

Although a particular problem is the focus of Paul's attention, he uses terms and phrases which broaden the scope of his instruction beyond the limited application to this one instance. The references to the individual are all in terms of "such a one" (5:5) or "the one who has done this" (5:2,3) which demonstrates that anyone who has acted similarly should face similar treatment.

With reference to the church, his instructions are based on what they ought to have done (5:2), on the authority and power of Jesus, the Head of the church (5:4-5) and

in terms of the church's official gathering together (5:4). These factors point to the church's ability and responsibility to carry out discipline in relationship to its members. Calvin states it more forcefully, "Hence, too, it appears that Churches are furnished with this power that, whatever fault there is within them, they can correct or remove it by strictness of discipline, and that those are inexcusable that are not on the alert to have filth cleared away."¹

The church's general personality

Another important factor which is highlighted in this passage is the general personality of the church in reference to discipline. On the one hand, its toleration of sins of a certain type bore fruit in a particularly detestable form of that sin in their midst. Their accompanying pride caused them to overlook even that. On the other hand, even being a carnal, spiritually immature church (3:1-3) they were still expected to carry out discipline (5:2, 5:7,13).

A church must develop a sensitivity to, and abhorrence toward, sin. As Barclay put it, "Our one security against sin lies in our being shocked at it."² Churches must exercise self examination (2 Cor 13:5) and commit themselves

¹Calvin, Commentary, p. 187.

²William Barclay, The Letters to the Corinthians. The Daily Study Bible (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954), p. 49.

to purity to the degree that any sin causes mourning (1 Cor 5:2). The personality of the church can either develop cases for discipline or prevent them.

The individual's position

This passage also shows that the individual's position in the local church is not guaranteed in the face of open sin. A person of the type described in these verses does not belong in the church body, but rather belongs outside, being treated as an unbeliever. There is no such thing as correction of sinful behavior by environmental purity, the sinner will erode the environment. If he persists in his sin he will be classed with the sinners as Matthew 18:17 commands.

The individual's moral life is also shown to be a vital concern of the church. Only the professed believer in the situation is dealt with; the woman was evidently not numbered among the brethren. Rather than being a matter of personal privacy, as it is treated in modern day America, the individual's moral practices are shown to be of vital concern to the church. Judgment is to be exercised by the church on the basis of clear knowledge (5:1) and the revelation of God.

The procedure of discipline

Finally, discipline is shown to be a public procedure undertaken by the church body acting in official capacity, in the authority and power of its Head, the Lord

Jesus. Acting in this way, a person who persists in a particular sin is removed from the church body and is classed with the rest of those who deny the commands of Christ in their lives, under the control of Satan. The purpose is never retributive justice, which is reserved only for God (5:13; Rom 12:19). The judgment exercised by the church is only whether the man is living up to his profession. The verdict places him in proper relationship to the church so that he may receive the ministry of the church with the purpose of restoration to his former position, only now on the proper basis. This ministry may be ultimately evangelistic or merely corrective; the procedure has been outlined in this chapter.

CHAPTER II

THE PRINCIPLES BEHIND CHURCH DISCIPLINE

The apostle shifts his attention from the specific case troubling the church to a statement of the principles which underlie the disciplinary action. These principles should provide the necessary motivation for carrying out discipline in future situations. There is some difficulty in interpreting these verses due to the figurative language employed, and an apparent shift in the use of the figures in the sequence, which is a characteristic of Paul's style.¹

The Reasons for Discipline(5:6)

Two reasons for exercise of discipline are given. One is negative and the other is positive in perspective. The church had a problem with pride, which in a proper degree could be appropriate confidence, but the basis of that pride was faulty. Discipline was required to correct the situation. Positively, the church could protect itself from further problems by acting in discipline to remove the corrupting force from its midst.

¹Lightfoot, Notes, p. 205.

A basis for confidence

The first reason for exercising discipline is stated, "Your boasting is not good" (NASB). At first glance this would appear to be a chastisement for false pride, which it is to a certain degree. But the translation is misleading. The Greek word rendered "boasting" is καύχημα which is more accurately an object of boasting or the ground for boasting.¹ It was the subject of their boasting, the condition of their church, which was bad, not the fact of boasting itself.

Καύχημα is not always bad; the apostle uses it elsewhere in a positive sense to indicate an accomplishment or worthy attribute.² Καύχημα, then, may be good or bad. In this case the church had no grounds for boast or confidence; corruption was in their midst. Discipline must take place in order to restore their basis for assurance and confidence--which also affected Paul (2 Cor 1:14; 3:1-3). That confidence would be on a firm foundation when rooted in obedience to the Lord of the church, from whom they had received everything (4:7). The apostle has taken one concrete sin and arrived at the church's sinful attitude.³

¹BAGD, p. 426. Cf. Lightfoot, Notes, p. 204; Vincent, Word Studies, vol. 3, p. 211; Meyer, Handbook, p. 114.

²Those references are: Rom 4:2; 1 Cor 9:15-16; 2 Cor 1:14; 5:12; 9:3; Gal 6:4; Phil 1:26; 2:16. Derived from Moulton and Geden, Concordance, pp. 542-543.

³Grossheide, Commentary, p. 124.

A protection for the church

The second reason for discipline to take place is stated by use of a common proverb in the form of a rhetorical question. Of course they knew that a little leaven leavens the whole lump; that is a basic truth in the kitchen. The problem is that these who were proud of their wisdom and knowledge did not even know that this was also true of the church, a simple basic truth.¹ The apostle had already shown that their toleration of immorality had led to a flagrant case (5:1) and that their pride had led to the sin of neglect (5:2). The principle was established in their experience, and here it is sarcastically brought to their attention.

On first impression one might take "leaven" to be equal to the individual who is to be disciplined in the passage. Discipline is in view contextually both before and after this reference (5:1-5; 9-13). It is therefore not feasible to disconnect this parable from that subject as if it had reached a "provisional end,"² not to be mentioned again until 5:13. The parable relates to discipline, but it should not be pressed into a one-to-one relationship with the specific event in view. The effects of leaven were used proverbially in various ways in the ancient world, both in and out of Scripture.³ The use in this

¹Boyer, 1 Corinthians, p. 62.

²Grossheide, Commentary, p. 124.

³TDNT, s.v. "ζύμη, ζυμός, ἄζυμος," by Hans Windisch, 2:903-906.

passage is a general truth.

The use in this passage is the common one in the New Testament: evil as a growing influence.¹ To apply it directly to the man in the situation does not make good sense. The presence of the man does not make the congregation evil for they are "unleavened" (5:7).² The proverb is also applied to a disciplinary action in Galatians 5:9-10 where it is applied to the influence of false teaching. The truth involved is adaptable to various situations. The second reason for discipline is that the evil which they had tolerated cannot just be quarantined because it will have further effects. These effects will be like those of leaven, permeating the whole of the church; no one will remain unaffected. There is an implicit warning and exhortation to self-examination, as the apostle elaborates in 11:28-32.³

A subtle aspect of the parable is important to note. There is an emphasis on the contrast between the little leaven and the fact that it leavens the whole lump. The position of μικρά in this sentence highlights the smallness of the evil.⁴ Whether or not anyone would try to maintain that the good influence of the majority would serve to reform the source of evil, the apostle leaves no room for such a

¹Barclay, Letters, p. 50. Barrett, Commentary, p. 127.

²Lenski, Interpretation, p. 220.

³Morris, Epistles, p. 89.

⁴Robertson, Word Pictures, vol. 4, p.113.

contention. The only way for the church to protect itself is eradication of the leaven.

The Picture of Discipline (5:7)

Paul restates his command for discipline to take place, this time in terms of the Jewish Passover Feast. This pictures the process of discipline in terms of the preparations for that feast, demonstrating the active and far reaching nature of the church's responsibility.

The command in action

Here the command is to "clean out" (ἐκκαθαίρω) the old leaven. The verb employed is a variation of the one used in 5:2 referring to the removal of the man from the congregation. This preserves the connection with the teaching on discipline in the rest of the passage. Figuratively they were to make their houses free of leaven like a Jew would in preparation for the Passover Feast; that is, with great diligence (Zeph 1:12) under threat of severe penalty (Exod 12:15).

In their actual experience, the church was to apply this principle in at least two ways. In the immediate context it covers the expulsion of the offender from the congregation.¹ But in the context of the epistle and the rest of the New Testament, it relates to the individual as well. In the epistle, the apostle repeats exhortations to

¹Beet, Commentary, p. 94; Morris, Epistles, p. 89.

flee from sin (6:18; 10:14) and commands to examine oneself (11:28; cf. 2 Cor 13:5) which is comparable with this command. Elsewhere the command to "cleanse yourselves" is used in the New Testament (2 Cor 7:1; Jas 4:8). The sorrow of the congregation (v.2) and the effect of the leaven (v.6) require this personal aspect of the removal of leaven, as well as the corporate action.

The purpose of the command

The purpose of the removal of the leaven is stated in terms of the church being a "new lump." This renews the emphasis the apostle places on his concern for the church body as well as the individual. The congregation is to experience as a whole what the individuals are in Christ, that is, "newness" (Col 3:9-10; Rom 7:6; Eph 4:22,24; 2 Cor 5:17).¹ In verse six, the church cannot be pure and contain any leaven. Here the church cannot be "new" and contain any "old" leaven. The contrast between new and old is a carry over of the consistent Pauline motif of old being the unsaved man and the new referring to the saved state.² "The Christian Church is not just the old society patched up."³ That which is old has no place in the company of those who are new. If the church will be what

¹Lightfoot, Notes, p. 205.

²Grossheide, Commentary, p. 125; Meyer, Handbook, p. 115.

³Morris, Epistles, p. 89.

Christ intends, discipline must take place.¹

The basis of the command

The command is based on the absolute incongruity between evil and what the believers are in Christ. The evil and the evil person are classed as leaven, but the believers are unleavened, or, more literally, non-leaven. The action is taken in accordance with (καθώς) this character. As Meyer put it, "ἄζυμος εἶναι" is the essential characteristic in the Christian, who is, it is taken for granted, reconciled to God, born again, spiritually dead and risen again with Christ (Rom 6:2 ff.) and who is a new κτίσις of God (2 Cor 5:17; Eph 4:24; Col 3:10). . . ."²

The structure here rests the imperative ("remove") on the indicative ("you are"). This imperatival indicative structure is central to Paul's ethical thought (Rom 6:11-14, 19; Col 2:20-3:14).³ The thought is "Be what you are" and provides the basis of the Christian life. The command is impossible without the indicative and the indicative concept is emasculated without obedience to the command.⁴ This is not an experiential purity; the Corinthian church has already been described as "fleshly" (3:1-3). They are not shining examples of mature Christianity, yet the

¹Johnson, "1 Corinthians," p. 1237.

²Meyer, Handbook, p. 115.

³Barrett, Commentary, p. 128.

⁴Ibid.

apostle can speak of them as unleavened.

This terminology is strong evidence that the individual being disciplined is treated by Paul as an unbeliever. He is not included in those who are unleavened. Rather, it is associated with the leaven, both in its effect and in its fate. Therefore he is like the Corinthian believers who were in their "old" state, that is, unregenerate. This description squares with the command to put him out of the congregation, the description of him (and others) as "called a brother" (5:11), and the purpose of discipline being his salvation (5:5). It is also consistent with Pauline emphasis elsewhere on a person's lifestyle being indicative of their true state in relationship to Christ (see Phil 3:17-19; Col 1:21-23). The command is based on the objective work of Christ in the lives of the Christians as believers.

The urgency of the command

Above all other factors, the death of Christ demands that the leaven be removed. The use of καὶ γάρ, where καὶ loses almost all its force, relates the sacrifice of Christ to all that precedes it.¹ The root cause of the cleansing and the basis of the distinction between who are the leavened and who are the unleavened is found in the sacrifice of Christ. The concept of Christ as the Paschal Lamb is first mentioned by John the Baptist (John 1:29).

¹Blass and Debrunner, Grammar, p. 236.

The phrase "our Passover" fits with the details of His death (John 19:13,31; 18:28; 13:29; Mark 14:12; Luke 22:7). It is the fact of Christ's atoning death that makes the experiential removal of sin and evil so important, to match the deliverance He has wrought.¹ "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."²

More than just another reason for cleansing, or even the ultimate reason, the apostle is making the case for a sense of urgency in the cleansing. There is a touch of sarcasm here in respect to the state of the Corinthians. The simple aorist indicative verb looks back to the event of Christ's death,³ which happened about 20 years previous to the writing of the epistle. Using the terminology of the Passover, Paul subtly goads the Corinthians for not acting. The Paschal Lamb has been sacrificed, and still the leaven has not been cleaned out. What a contradiction!⁴ The Jews searched out the leaven before the sacrifice, but even after the sacrifice was made once for all, the Christians had not done so.⁵

The point is not to make the Passover into a type

¹Barrett, Commentary, p. 128.

²Hodge, Exposition, p. 87.

³Lightfoot, Notes, p. 206.

⁴Meyer, Handbook, p. 116. ⁵Morris, Epistles, p. 90.

of Christ's sacrifice. Rather the Paschal Feast is used to picture the relation of Christ's death to the need for cleansing in the church and in the individual's life.¹ The apostle is organizing his material in an understandable and familiar format in order to communicate his message. The message is an urgent command to carry out discipline at all levels.

The Results of Discipline (5:8)

Continuing the use of the Passover Feast as a basis, the church is exhorted "to keep the feast" properly. This is a picture of the life of the church which builds on the idea that they are living in the days following the sacrifice of the Paschal Lamb, which in the Jewish practice would be the days of the feast. The idea of a feast or festival is appropriate to Paul's conception of the Church as a joyful, thankful, singing community (Eph 5:18-20; Col 1:12; 3:15-16; 4:2). In spite of the difficulties encountered by the Corinthian church, and the consequent sorrow for Paul, he maintains his positive view of what the church can be. There are, then, two ways or contexts in which the church might keep the feast. One is to be avoided, the other is to be sought.

What should not happen

The one thing to be guarded against is continuing on as they were, trying to live in a Christian community

¹Lightfoot, Notes, p. 206.

while being pervaded by evil. Paul warns that the feast (life) is not to be kept with the old leaven, nor the leaven of evil and wickedness. To do so is totally against what God requires and incurs His wrath.

The "old leaven" has been shown already to be sin acting as it does in the unbeliever's life. It also has reference to the man being disciplined.¹ A further description is given in this passage as the leaven "of evil and wickedness." This description is made up of the two synonyms, *κακία* and *πονηρία*, used as appositional genitives demonstrating the evil character of the leaven. They are paired in Romans 1:29 as well, which is part of what God delivered sinful man over to. A relationship is also to be seen with Satan who is called *ὁ πονηρός* (Matt 13:19; 1 John 2:13-14, et. al.).² These two parallels show the appropriateness of 5:5 being taken as a removal from the church body and into Satan's domain in the world. To retain such a man in the church or to retain sin is to hold on to what is characteristic of Satan, belongs to the unregenerate state, and has been released by God in judgment.

The Corinthians cannot afford to attempt to live a community life as the body of Christ in this way. It is totally inconsistent with what he died to accomplish. It is unthinkable for a Christian to claim Christ and go on

¹Lenski, Interpretation, p. 223.

²Hodge, Exposition, p. 87.

living with sin, whether personally or corporately.¹

What should happen

In strong contrast (ἀλλά) to this, the believers are to live as a group in the midst of others who are unleavened (ἄζυμοι), characterized by sincerity and truth. The context of proper Christian community is among those who are unleavened, those whom Christ has redeemed from the power of sin and is making his own. These are "pure", that is, they act morally in accordance with His will.² They are of the truth, those whose lives correspond to the eternal, heavenly realities.³ These are the only ones who can observe the festival which Christ has provided.

The man whom the church was to discipline cannot fit in this group. His insincerity is shown by his association with leaven and with sin. His falseness is shown by the fact that he is only "called a brother" (5:11). He has no place in this joyful assembly; he must be turned out into the place he belongs.

Principles For Church Discipline

In this portion of the chapter the principles provided for church discipline are foundational, dealing with some of the basic concepts which underlie the practice.

¹Boyer, 1 Corinthians, p. 63.

²Grossheide, Commentary, p. 127.

³Beet, Commentary, p. 95.

These concepts help one to understand why discipline must be practiced and give perspective on who is "in" and who is "out". They also provide some encouragement with regard to the positive effects of exercising discipline.

The priority of purity in the church

These verses point out the high priority purity is to have in the church. In all three verses, purity is the goal of the whole operation. This purity extends into the believer's personal life, as shown by the rest of Scripture. The Lord is actively working to purify the Church through the Word of God (Eph 5:26-27). Coupled with the purity is to be a unity based on like mind and character (5:8).

McQuilkin has correctly observed that:

God designed the Church on the pattern of His own character. But today that pattern is twisted and distorted, sometimes beyond recognition. . . . When it is unholy or disunited, it denies the basic character of God. . . . To the extent that the Church loses this basic character of God, it loses its power.¹

The danger of toleration

Closely aligned with the importance of purity is the danger of toleration of sin. One might be tempted to overlook some impurity in the hope that environment will change the situation, that the majority will win. This is the secular community's philosophy and is fast gaining support in Christian Education and Evangelism ministries in

¹J. Robertson McQuilkin, "Whatever Happened to Church Discipline?" Christianity Today, 18 (March 29, 1977): 8.

many churches. In fact, in the area of evangelism it has been practiced for many years, depending on the events of the Prodigal Son story to happen in church.

But the description given here will not allow for such a philosophy. Sin or the sinful person is not something which can be kept in quarantine within the church body. As long as it is present it will spread like leaven and permeate every area of the body. The only solution is removal, which runs completely counter to popular thought. The question is one of basic obedience to Christ.

The responsibility to discipline

The apostle no longer intimates that the church should act; he commands it. The local church is responsible to exercise discipline when one who claims to belong shows that he does not. His life will be characterized by what is "old" to Paul--the lifestyle of the unregenerate man.

The reason the church must act is because of what it is. Here the description is in terms of non-leaven. It is totally inconsistent with the work of Christ to tolerate that which is contradictory to his work to enjoy the benefits of His blessing. What the church is by nature is the opposite of what the world is by nature. The church must recognize that in discipline.

The responsibility to discipline is an urgent responsibility. Since Christ has provided the release from the power and condemnation of sin, it is past time for the

removal of sin from the Church. God has put the sacrifice ahead of the obedience. Now it is time to catch up.

The reward of discipline

The exercise of discipline leads to a reward in that the life of the church may be lived in accordance with its character in Christ, which is likened to observing a festival. Such an Old Testament festival was a period of time consecrated to God. In like manner, a life consecrated to God is the natural result of Christ's sacrifice.¹ This is impossible without discipline to remove that which would hinder the church. In contrast, when discipline is practiced, the church's community life will be free to reap the benefits which are hers through the ministry of Christ.

The judgment involved

A judgment must be made in the act of discipline. These verses show that the judgment entails identifying one who bears the marks of an unbeliever. The purpose is not condemnation but rather, salvation (5:5). The judgment is of the person's character as shown by his works.

¹Hodge, Exposition, p. 87.

CHAPTER III

THE PRACTICAL OUTWORKING OF DISCIPLINE

In order to show the church what was involved in removing the individual from among them, Paul refers to a letter he had previously written which had instructions which were applicable to this situation. He implies that they were either misunderstood, misapplied, or both. He sets the record straight and summarizes his instructions with a direct quotation of an Old Testament verse to seal the matter.

How to Treat the Individual (5:9-11)

What is not involved

The apostle must remind the church of instructions he had previously given which the church had misapplied, if they responded to them at all. The use of the aorist ἔγραφα could refer to the present letter (1 Cor) but the addition of ἐν τῇ ἐπιστολῇ confirms that it is referring to another letter.¹ This involves the hypothesis of another letter which is now lost, but that causes no real problems.

The instruction contained in that letter told the

¹Moule, Idiom Book, p. 12; Blass and Debrunner, Grammar, p. 172.

Corinthians not to associate with immoral persons. This order used the verb συναναμίγνυμι which refers to the close associations or dealing with people generally, in a familiar way.¹ It is used in the LXX in Hosea 7:8 to indicate mingling with other nations that caused a loss of purity by Ephraim.² To apply it to the world in general was not precisely what the apostle had in mind.

The apostle explains that he did not mean the instruction in the way they apparently took it. He negates this concept with the phrase, οὐ πάντως ..." which is taken by some interpreters to mean "not at all."³ Instead, the word order should be observed so that οὐ negates πάντως with the resultant meaning, "not altogether," or "not in all cases."⁴ The fact is that the Corinthian church was to practice separation, but not a total cut off of contact in monastic fashion (cf. 2 Cor 6:14-18). Apparently the church had taken this instruction to the extreme and in the wrong areas, assuming they did anything about it.

The absurdity of their interpretation of his in-

¹Leon L. Morris, The Epistles of Paul to the Thessalonians, The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, ed. by R.V.G. Tasker (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1957), p. 147. Cf. BAGD, p. 784.

²TDNT, s.v. "συναναμίγνυμι" by Heinrich Greeven, 7:853.

³Grossheide, Commentary, p. 127; Lightfoot, Notes, p. 208.

⁴Lenski, Interpretation, p. 227. Also unpublished class notes by John Sproule, Advanced Greek Grammar, Grace Theological Seminary, 1981.

structions is shown by the fact that it would necessitate their departure from the world. The types of people he describes are to be expected in the world in light of the parallels in Romans 1, which was written from the city of Corinth. The crucial text is when someone claims to be a part of the church body and yet is characterized by these qualities.

What is involved

In contrast with what he had written before, and with their interpretation of that instruction, the apostle is now writing in a manner which no one should misunderstand. Verse 11 explains just how that previous information was to apply in this specific case and in relation to other situations which might arise. The fact that this time ἔγραφα is an epistolary aorist is clear from the adverb νῦν, indicating the present letter.¹

Who is involved

Their profession. The ones with whom Paul was specifically concerned when giving his instructions were not those who had no interest in Christianity or the church. Rather they were those who in their own eyes and in the eyes of others were a part of the church body.

The verb, ὀνομάζω, is used in the New Testament in several ways. First, it is used in the sense of giving a

¹Moule, Idiom Book, p. 12.

name or title to someone (Luke 6:13; 6:14). Second, it is used in the sense of naming or using a name (Eph 5:3; 1:21; Acts 19:13; 2 Tim 2:19). In one instance it clearly is used in the sense of "to be known" in the passive voice.¹ The usage here is in the passive voice and is not distinctly like the other examples. The use of the present tense would preclude the act of being named a brother as in the first case. When one considers the durative sense of the present, the other two definitions tend to overlap. This person is known and is spoken of as a brother. It is a title regularly used of him. The participle serves to mark the distinction from the man of this world (5:10) who acted similarly.

In light of what this man is (subjunctive form of εἰμί) and what Paul says about that sort of person in 6:9-10, this title must be considered to be stated in the way it is in order to demonstrate the questionable nature of this identification. If the apostle wished to say the man is truly a brother, the participle, ὀνομαζόμενος, would be unnecessary. General consensus among interpreters points to the doubt cast on the validity of his profession.² The compound form, ἐπονομάζω, is used in a similar way in Romans 2:17.³ Romans 2:2-28-29 show that it is a false profession

¹BAGD, p. 575. TDNT, s.v. "ὀνομάζω," by Hans Bietenhard, 5:282.

²Boyer, 1 Corinthians, p. 64; Grossheide, Commentary, p. 128; Calvin, Commentary, p. 197; Lenski, Interpretation, p. 228; Morris, Epistles, p. 92; Hodge, Exposition, p. 90.

³Lightfoot, Notes, p. 209.

or identification.

The possibility of this happening is stated in terms of a third class conditional sentence, showing that the situation may be reasonably expected to occur.¹ As Lenski notes, "It is needless to say that this expectation has been amply fulfilled in the entire history of the church."²

Their character. These with whom Paul is dealing are further described in terms of their moral character. This is the distinguishing feature which marks them out for the exercise of this instruction. These people may be called brothers, but they are lacking what the name implies.³ The fact that this is not an exhaustive listing is shown by the use of the indefinite relative pronoun τοιοῦτω. This concluding term, used also in verses 1 and 5, shows the emphasis is on a type of person. In 6:9-10 these six are included with four others in a description of persons who will not inherit the kingdom of God. It would be folly to assume that the ones listed here are cause for discipline whereas the additional ones in 6:9-10 are not.

The first type of person named is the same as the individual in question in this chapter, one who practices πορνεία. The fact that this is the one sin singled out by Paul in his previous letter (indicated by verse 9) shows

¹Robertson, Word Pictures, vol. 4, p. 116.

²Lenski, Interpretation, p. 228.

³Ibid.; Lightfoot, Notes, p. 209.

the general nature of the term in the context. The discussion of verse 1 covers all that need be said about it.

The second type is one somewhat surprising to twentieth century Americans who are comfortable with materialism. This is a covetous person. The term πλεονέκτης first was used in the sense of "having more," then became "receiving more," and finally came to mean "wanting more."¹ In Ephesians 5:3-5 it is identified as a form of idolatry, underscoring a neutral sense.² It is linked with ἄρπαξ in verse 10, which indicates a more open form of greed,³ but that is listed separately here (the sixth characteristic). Between the two terms all forms of greed and covetous behavior are covered.

Third on the list is the sin of idolatry. This is at once both the most obvious and the most surprising one on the list. Remembering that the person involved is called a brother, how could he possibly be involved in idolatry? First, the very real problem idolatry presented in the ancient world must be appreciated (cf. 1 John 5:21). Although an appeal might be made to Colossians 3:5 to prove that Paul means covetousness, the use of clear terms for covetousness in the context tends to negate such an argument. The most natural interpretation would be one who still participates in the heathen feasts (1 Cor 8:7-10; 10:20-21).⁴ As Hodge

¹TDNT, s.v. "πλεονέκτης, πλεονεκτέω, πλεονεξία " by Gerhard Delling, 6:266.

²Ibid. ³BAGD, p. 109. ⁴Boyer, 1 Corinthians, p. 65.

states, idolatry in a Christian's life is "not merely intentional and conscious worship of false gods, but doing anything which, according to the common judgment of men, expresses such worship."¹ It is important to note that eating meat offered to idols does not belong to this category at all times, but may be another form of sin and lead a weaker brother into idolatry (1 Cor 8:1-13).

The final two characteristics are ones which at first glance do not seem to fit in modern thinking with the sins of idolatry and sexual immorality in terms of severity. But they are on an equal footing with them in this list. *Αλοίδροσ* is used only here and in 6:10 in this form in the New Testament. The verb form is used in 4:12 as part of the treatment Paul had experienced. It carries the idea of reviler or abusive person, and the practice of it (*λοιδορίον*) is prohibited for the believer, even in return for such abuse (1 Pet 3:9).² A drunkard should be self-explanatory, but is not in some quarters. It describes a person who indulges in drunkenness,³ not just a person who drinks a beverage with alcohol in it. The dividing line may be difficult to establish clearly, but there is a difference. The verb form, *μεθύειν*, is used in 11:21 as one of the causes of disorder at the communion table. The

¹Hodge, *Exposition*, p. 90.

²BAGD, p. 479.

³TDNT, s.v. "μέθη, μεθύω, μέθυσος, μεθύσκομαι," by H. Preisker, 4:547.

cultural view of these views may be seen in Chrsostom's observation that people in his day complained about these 'respectable' vices being grouped with the obviously evil ones which precede them.¹

Some observations on these characteristics as a group are important for understanding discipline more clearly. First these sins cover all aspects of a believer's life: social (covetous, greedy, abusive), spiritual (idolator, drunkard, cf. Eph 5:18), and personal (sexually immoral and others). Sin in any facet of a believer's life must be dealt with, either by the believer himself or by the church as a body if it is persistent. Second, these were all vices recognized, if not actually detested, by the society at large (except for idolatry).² There is no doubt about whether they exist. Third, these are all condemned in Scripture elsewhere; there is no doubt about their heinousness before God. Fourth, these six specific sins were all a particular problem in the Corinthian church.³ They were apparently chosen for their impact on the church's attitude.

The general command

If any of those sins are characteristic of a person

¹Robertson, Word Pictures, vol. 4, p. 116.

²Cf. Deissman, Light, p. 320.

³Idolatry: 1 Cor 8:7-10; 10:14, 20-21; sexual immorality: 1 Cor 5:1-6:13, 18; 7:2; covetousness and greed: 1 Cor 6:10; 2 Cor 9:5; reviling, abusiveness: 1 Cor 6:10, 4:12; drunkenness: 1 Cor 11:21, 6:10.

who is identified as a brother, then the apostle makes it clear that his earlier instruction definitely applies, this time in every case. A discontinuation of normal relationship or fellowship is called for, a continuing activity as indicated by the use of the present tense.¹ Although this is not possible to carry out rigorously in relation to all the people of this type in the world, it is definitely possible and required in relation to those who are identified in connection with the body of believers. It is similar in impact to the instructions in 2 John 10; no "business as usual" attitude allowed.²

The command explained

The repetition of the command not to associate with this type of person is not enough. The Corinthians had misinterpreted it once before in relation to the world in general. It was necessary for Paul to make it perfectly clear to what extent he meant for the prohibition to be applied in this situation. His application has not lost its force over the centuries.

The command in this case is to be carried out to the point of not even eating with that person. The infinitive, *συνεσθίειν* may be interpreted either as epexegetical to the command³ or as an imperative which would carry on

¹Boyer, 1 Corinthians, p. 64.

²Lenski, Interpretation, p. 228.

³Grossheide, Commentary, p. 128.

the command.¹ In either case, the sense is still the same; this is the extent to which the command is to be applied. The word indicates an "unrestricted intercourse" with another person (see Luke 15:2; Acts 11:3; Gal 2:12).² "The brother under discipline was to be denied fellowship and particularly were the believers not to eat with such an one, the most obvious act of fellowship."³

Although the love feast may be in view here, as perhaps in chapter 11, the lack of modifying phrases in this passage would indicate that normal, everyday meals are the major application, although the feast and the communion service would undoubtedly be included.⁴ The apostle's approval of eating with an unbeliever (1 Cor 10:27) shows that this command is a special application of the broad command, employed when the person involved is supposedly a brother. "There is no close fellowship with anyone who claims to be a Christian, but whose life belies profession."⁵

The relationship to 2 Thessalonians 3:6-14

In 2 Thessalonians 3:6 virtually the same command is addressed to the Thessalonian church as is here addressed

¹Cf. Robertson, Grammar, p. 943 on the imperatival use of the infinitive.

²Greeven, "συναναμίγνυμι" p. 855.

³Johnson, "1 Corinthians," p. 1237.

⁴Morris, Epistles, p. 92.

⁵Ibid.

to the Corinthian church. In that context it is applied to the problem of "unruly brethren" (3:6) and those leading an undisciplined life (3:11). These are different problems than those in the Corinthian church. The Thessalonian church was a model to others of faith which changed lives (1 Thess 1:5,9; 2 Thess 1:3-4). There was no flagrant case with which Paul had to grapple, just the fine tuning of an already faithful church.

Those involved in 2 Thessalonians 3 are definitely brothers, toward whom the church is to maintain a loving attitude even in withdrawal.¹ This is in direct contrast to 1 Corinthians 5, where the spiritual condition of the offenders is at least in doubt, but most likely they are unregenerate. The difference is that in 2 Thessalonians the problem is related to church order. Here the problem is in the character of the individual. The basic response is the same: separation. But there is a diversity in degree and purpose. In the Thessalonian's case, they were to maintain contact, admonishing the man as a brother in order to shame him (3:14 with 3:15). In the case of the Corinthians, they were to break off all normal contact in order to see the man be redeemed.

How to Distinguish Who Should
be Judged (5:12-13)

The summary of the church's responsibility is

¹Jay Pankratz, "The Doctrine of Church Discipline", M.Div. Thesis, Grace Theological Seminary, 1974), pp. 18-19.

stated very simply by two rhetorical questions. The first question identifies who not to judge. The second implies who is to be judged. On the basis of those facts, the church's responsibility is clear; God will take care of the rest.

Who is not to be judged by the church

The first rhetorical question uses a form common to Paul's writings: "of what concern is that to me?"¹ The implied answer is, "none." Those who have no connection with the church are obviously not within the authority of the apostle who was sent or given to the church (Eph 4:11-13). Those who are "outside" are obviously not "inside" the apostle's authority, and therefore not the church's either.

The phrase οἱ ἔξω is one used by the Jews for those who are not the chosen people.² It is used several times in the New Testament of the ones who are outside the church or the disciples of Christ (Mark 4:11; Col 4:5; 1 Thess 4:12; 1 Tim 3:7). This is the difference between the sinners of the world (verse 9) and those who are "called a brother."³ There is no basis or imperative to judge them, so the command not to associate with the sinners (verse 9) does not have rigorous application to this group.

The reason those outside are not judged by the

¹Blass and Debrunner, Grammar, p. 156-157.

²Barclay, Letters, p. 54.

³Lenski, Interpretation, p. 231.

church is found in the fact that it is God's own responsibility (v.13). Those who are outside are judged by God. He will deal with them appropriately. This fact colors the interpretation of παραδίδωμι in verse 5 since the judgment of the church is complementary to the judgment of God. The church does it like He does. The tense of the verb "to judge" may be either present or future; the form is ambiguous except for the accent supplied by the editors. The present tense reading is proper, for it preserves the parallelism with the judgment in verse 12.¹ God judges those outside the church.'

Who is to be judged by the church

The second rhetorical question is stated in such a way as to expect an affirmative answer, "Do you not judge those within? Yes, we do."² The question format is a way of emphasizing their duty and making it plain.³ Of course they judge those within. They had done it improperly (4:5) and should be doing it properly (6:1-4). Judgment is a fact of the church's life, the church could not continue to exist without exercising some type of judgment.⁴

The object of the church's judgment is those who are "within." This is a significant term for it shows

¹Lightfoot, Notes, p. 209.

²Grossheide, Commentary, p. 130.

³Morris, Epistles, p. 92.

⁴Lenski, Interpretation, p. 232.

Paul's conception of the church as a new and closed fellowship, separated from the rest of men.¹ This concept is expressed in 1 Corinthians 10:32 where the church is one of three groups in the world. But the apostle is very realistic in his assessment of the church. Although judgment is limited to those who are in the church, he recognizes that there are those in the church who are only "called a brother," and not one in fact (cf. Phil 3:17-20).

The church's responsibility (5:13b)

Since God judges those outside, and since the church judges those inside, those who live like they belong outside are to be put there. The church judges the lip and the life, not the heart; its only business is to judge who belongs in and who belongs out.² In the same situation, Israel would have been obligated to exercise capital punishment.³ The demand for removal is therefore not unreasonable; it shows the mildness of the Gospel in contrast with the rigors of the law.⁴

The statement here is a citation from Deuteronomy 17:7; 19:19; 22:21,24; 24:7 in capital punishment contexts. This clinches the case for expulsion of the offender.⁵ It

¹TDNT, s.v. "ἕσσω," by Johannes Behm, 2:698.

²Lenski, Interpretation, p. 231.

³Grossheide, Commentary, p. 131.

⁴Calvin, Commentary, p. 197.

⁵Robertson, Word Pictures, vol. 4, p. 116.

is the same verb as in 5:2 and comes into the sentence abruptly, as if to say, "Do it!" The fact that it is a continued refrain in Deuteronomy and that the identity is left indefinite shows that it is a general principle. Any such wicked one is to be removed from their midst. He is of the same character as the old leaven (5:8, *κονηρός*). He is to be returned to the outside where he belongs and where God will do the judging (5:13a).¹ The church will judge angels (6:3), is able to judge between its people (6:1-5), and is responsible to judge itself, to see whether the individuals are believers as testified by their life.

Principles For Church Discipline

The principles for church discipline in these last verses of the chapter reveal the practical nature of the apostle. To command the removal of the offender from the church is not adequate enough instruction for the church to know what exactly he means for them to do. He does not let them down.

How to carry out discipline

Church discipline is carried out by means of the church consciously avoiding normal social contacts with the person which might be construed as Christian fellowship--including meals. There is a certain amount of mature discretion to be exercised, as in a restaurant if the person sits

¹Morris, Epistles, p. 92.

at an adjacent table. The discipline in the sense of withholding of basic necessities of life is not included. The point of Paul's instruction is that the offender be removed from the church (5:13), which is social as well as official removal. This is action in congruity with God's actions at this time.

Who to discipline

A person becomes a candidate for discipline when he or she becomes characterized by some sin in the eyes of the church. This sin must be of such a character that it is recognizable to the world and uniformly condemned in the Word of God. Each church will have certain sins which are particularly dangerous to its members, just as the Corinthian church did. These are to be especially guarded against.

The church must realize that it has no jurisdiction out in the world. Those who come into the church and name the name of Christ, however, place themselves in a structure which is subservient to His authority. It is a commitment to depart from iniquity (2 Tim 2:19). "A man professing to be a Christian professes to renounce all these sins; if he does not act consistently with his profession, he is not recognized as a Christian."¹

¹Hodge, Exposition, p. 90.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

In light of the extensive discussion of church discipline in 1 Corinthians 5, it should be regarded as a primary, although certainly not solitary, text on that doctrine. It deals with the application of discipline to the lives of those whose lives are characterized by a particular sin. Other problems in the church, such as unruliness in believer's lives and doctrinal purity are dealt with in other passages like 2 Thessalonians 3 and Galatians 5. The recurring theme in all these passages is that the church is responsible to exercise discipline based on sound judgment.

As the church approaches the close of its twentieth century of existence, it must come to grips with the truth of its responsibilities. Books which promise success based on programs are commonplace today. But where is the program for purity? What materials are available for exercising of discipline? What is to be done with the person who fills out all the study guides, memorizes the verses, and volunteers for all the positions, yet persists in clear cut sin? What is the program for him? 1 Corinthians 5 reveals that program.

The church is to meet in its official assembly, acting in the authority of Christ, relying on His power. When the church body is satisfied that discipline is called for, it is to pronounce such judgment in order to officially remove the individual from its fellowship. The individual members are then to follow through on that judgment by breaking off personal fellowship with the individual. The attitude on the part of the body can never afford to be proud or arrogant. It is instead to be an act of mourning, sorrow over the necessity of such drastic action. The person involved then becomes the object of the evangelism ministry of the church.

There is another aspect to the doctrine of church discipline that hangs over the whole passage. That is the possibility of the Sovereign Lord standing over the church exercising His discipline (Rev 2:5; 2:16; 3:19). With that possibility in the background, a church cannot afford to allow the leaven to infiltrate and the dough to rise. The only hope for the purity of the Church is discipline, and the only hope for the salvation of this type of individual is also discipline. The church must not fail in this duty.

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