

Oh, nicely done. I really love that special music. You think of the words going through your mind as you listen to that instrumental performance, and having met to worship and adore the Lord our God is the goal. And you can imagine Paul's shock at hearing that when the Corinthians meet, they're actually slapping each other on the back for the presence of a guy who is in an active state of incestuous relationship.

And so, as we return now to our study in 1 Corinthians chapter 5, he says, "It is actually reported," but this is not the word "reported." It's from akouō, and it's a fine translation, but it doesn't mean to report a thing. It means to be heard. You know, acoustics comes from the word akouō. And he says, "It's actually heard." People are talking about this. There's a reputation that your group has got, and he uses akouō for a reason. It could have been one of the talking verbs, but he says, "It's heard," and it's a reminder that what we do makes a difference. People watch. Do you stand for your values? Do you stand and reflect the glory of God and the Lord Jesus Christ or not? Because it's going to be heard.

You have a bursting radius. I think in artillery terms. I told you I was cleaning out that box yesterday, and I found all of my old gunnery supplies, and I found after-action reports from when I was in Beirut. And I showed Patty, every October I have sort of a special time with the Lord, and I thank Him that I am still here because both I and my younger brother easily probably in the normal course of events would have been in the bombing of the barracks down at the airport. My brother tried his best to move heaven and earth to be with his TOW unit from Broken Arrow that was deployed there, and he should have gone, could have gone, would have gone, wanted to go. They wouldn't let him, for reasons unknown to almost anybody, but those are the guys who were in the building, and he would have been there. We, when we left the hotel on the Corniche there in Beirut because of security concerns, and they said, "You need to go to some place safer. You can either pick something in the civilian community, or you need to bunk down with the Marines at the airport."

But we were getting all of these—anyway, I was showing Patty that I've still got a sheet of paper off of a primitive copier from 1983, but there were weekly security updates. And this particular page, there's, on the 21st of October, two days before the 23rd—this was Friday—they published the previous week's security incident report, and they published a map. And they had little, you know, back then you didn't have any computer graphics or anything. These were pasted on pieces of paper with typed legends, and they said, "Right here there was a grenade attack. Right here there was a Marine killed by a sniper. Right here LAF, Lebanese Armed Forces, experienced this, and the Italians experienced that." And the page was just covered with these little stripes just for the preceding week up to the 21st. And at the bottom the maker of it had written in magic marker, "Notice the increase in the threat level to you people," and it was accompanied by a two-page typewritten script that went into great detail about how it has never been as dangerous in Lebanon as it is right now. We've never seen this level of hostile activity.

This is Friday the 21st. Sunday morning the 23rd is when the truck bomb was driven through the—despite all of this warning, the Marines guarding the gate were not allowed to have rounds in their weapons because they were afraid that there might be an accidental discharge and it would create an incident. You look at that map, at all of the active hostility going on all over the place, people being shot, people being blown up, people being killed. They found guys with RPGs. There was a VW bus that had been painted to look like a Red Cross vehicle, and inside were RPGs and AK-47s that they had stopped. I mean, the threat level was huge, but the leadership did not respond to the threat and take action to ensure that they were ready. That's what we're talking about here. There is a threat, and you can't underestimate it or you're going to have a tragedy. And Paul is emphatic here in 1 Corinthians chapter 5.

Anyway, I was thinking about we all have a bursting radius. I've been thinking artillery all weekend now from going back and reliving that experience. I read my after-action report. It reminded me of so many things. It was almost like watching a movie. I pulled up this paperwork, my orders, the assessments, the training materials they gave us at Fort Bragg preparing us, and I had a map. I took notes in a lecture, and it explained the difference between the Shia and the Sunni and the Christian Maronite militias and where the Syrians were, and here's all of the, you know, Aley and Souk el Gharb and Jounieh and Beirut, and it just all—you know how it is, you run across something and things that you hadn't thought about in years just suddenly come flooding back.

But it just reminded me of a lot of things, but one thing in particular is you have to be aware of your space. There can be a threat level on the outside, but you also have an influence on your surroundings by your presence. And Paul talks about both of those things here. He begins by saying, "It is actually heard," and this akouō, you lose it in the English. It is heard. You're having an effect. People know about this. You may not be

making a big deal of it, but people know that, well, you know, they claim to be Christians, and they've got a holy Savior, and they've got a heavenly God, and, you know, they're talking about deliverance from judgment and all the rest of it, but there is a guy living in incest and they're proud of it. Paul says, "It's heard. It's known. I'm way over here, and the people from Chloe have come and told me, and it's shocking. It's shocking news. It's not even named among the ethnoi, the nations, the Gentiles, polite company." And if you've ever been to Greece and looked around at how heinously, profligately carnal they were, to not even be named among them, it's got to be, you know, pretty edgy. But you are puffed up and have not rather mourned that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you.

Now, look at that wording. If they had recognized this and had mourned over it, Paul says you should have been mourning that this might have been taken away. He doesn't say mourned and sent away, and it's really important to notice the difference. If they had recognized this for what it was, if they had identified it and seen the threat that it was and had come together and prayed, the implication here is God would have removed it in an elegant way. Remember Ananias and Sapphira. Peter stood up and identified this problem, but they didn't excommunicate Ananias and Sapphira, did they, in Acts? When they sold the piece of land, brought all the money, and said, "We've done like everybody else," and Peter says, "You're lying to the Holy Spirit. You've held back part of it." How did they get removed from that congregation? It's kind of a reverse Enoch: they was not because God took them.

Paul says, "If you had identified this and had mourned over it, he might have been taken away from among you." God would have handled it. But because you tolerated it, because you embraced it, because you became puffed up—and evidently some of these teachers that are competing with Paul and Apollos in their own name and gathering force and maybe distinguishing themselves—this is another thing going through a lot of my collected theological materials. It seems like every new generation of young scholars who come up in the seminary and the academic world and the world of denominational politics and so on, they want to make a mark. They want to distinguish themselves. And so you had dispensationalism back in the '50s, and Charles Ryrie wrote this book on dispensationalism in the '60s. Well, then you had the new dispensationalism because we can make it better, and then you had progressive dispensationalism, and then you had Calvinism, then you had neo-Calvinism, and now you have new Calvinism. And boy, if you want to see some hair-raising stuff, read what John Piper has to say about new Calvinism. There are 12 distinguishing characteristics of it, and it would just make your eyes pop.

So these guys apparently were distinguishing themselves and going one better than Paul and Apollos and even Peter and the Lord Jesus by saying, "Well, we are enlightened now." This may have been incipient Gnosticism. The flesh doesn't count; it's gnosis, it's knowledge. And that's why Paul is careful to distinguish the wisdom of God doesn't seem wise to men. If you think the wisdom of God is the wisdom of men, that ends up being gnosis. And he's going to talk about it later on when he gets to 1 Corinthians 13, talking about spiritual gifts, and knowledge puffs up, love builds up. By the way, knowledge puffs up. That's another one of the six uses of that word, *physioō*, in this letter. Simple knowledge.

And these guys evidently—and we're kind of extrapolating a bit here, or interpolating. Do you interpolate or extrapolate when you're doing what I'm doing? You can figure that out later. But we're figuring out what could have been the situation. And evidently these teachers, this is one of their distinguishing marks. They say, you know, Paul would have probably just wagged a finger at this, but we've grown beyond that. We've got a new enlightened view where sin is so far below the realm of the radar here that it doesn't matter what he's doing. Just glory in the fact that he's in the church and we get all these benefits from it.

He says, "If you had mourned, he would have been taken from you. But because you didn't mourn and you were puffed up, I am coming among you in spirit and invoking my apostolic authority, and I'm saying, expel the guy and do it publicly as a group." Why does he say do it publicly as a group? Why couldn't they, well, you know, we don't want to embarrass him. Why don't we have a private meeting? We'll go like Nicodemus, late at night, and we'll say, "Well, you know, Bob, you're living with your father's wife, so, you know, we really would appreciate it if you wouldn't come to church next Sunday." He says, "When you have gathered together in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, with the power of the Lord Jesus Christ, deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be delivered in the day of the Lord Jesus, that his spirit may be saved."

He's a believer and yet turned over to Satan. Now, what do we think about when we think about being turned over to Satan? This is not the only place where we have this kind of language. You will remember that Jesus,

just before the crucifixion, told Peter that Satan had asked for him, that he might sift him like wheat, and Jesus doesn't say, "But I will not allow him to touch you."

Jesus says, "I've prayed for you, that your faith will not fail." Satan has asked for you. Who else did Satan ask for when the Lord called him by name? I am sorry to be such a nitpicker, but there was—and I've told you this before—but there was a pastor in a church that I attended that did a whole study based on Job, the first two chapters, and he said, "When Satan calls your name," and I said, you know, if you read the book, Satan didn't call Job's name.

God called Job's name. And Satan comes up, "Where have you been?" "Walking up and down and to and fro in the earth." "Have you seen my servant Job?" God says to Satan. God initiated the whole tete-a-tete between Satan and Job. God called Job's name. Why? Because Job was ready, and God has, for thousands of years now, been reflecting His glory off of Job.

Job had no idea. When he was sitting in the ashes, scraping himself with a broken piece of pottery, and his wife is saying, "Curse God and die, curse God and die," Job has no future hope that, well, you know, Scripture is being written here, and people thousands of years in the future are going to look at me and be comforted and encouraged and learn so much, and my three friends are going to sit here and opine and expound and do firing line here for all of these chapters, and then we're going to finally hear from Elihu, and he's going to represent the Lord Jesus, and he's going to bring in some divine viewpoint, and then God is going to come in a whirlwind of fire.

Job didn't know any of that when he made his decision to stick, to hold. "Though He slay me, I will trust Him." Not knowing at all how important it was to cling to his righteousness, the righteousness that is declared as that book opens. Job was a righteous man, and he holds fast to it, and he doesn't let that evil that surrounds him on the outside penetrate and change him.

And that's what Paul is demanding of the Corinthian church here, and by extension, it is what the Lord Jesus Christ is demanding of you and of me. Faith is the substance of things looked at up in the future. It is the evidence of what we cannot see. By it, the elders obtained a good report. You remember Hebrews chapter 11: without faith it is impossible to please Him. You come to God, you believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. Reward. Paul has talked about that.

You remember our earlier context here. If any man's work survives, there is a reward. The wood, hay, and stubble burns up; he suffers loss. That is not out of the blue. Paul is already thinking ahead to what he's going to tell them about this guy. He has set it up by tying the false teachers and saying, "I'm aware of these teachers and what they're saying, and how they're comparing themselves, and how they are distinguishing themselves. I know about that." And he says, "What seems to be wise and what seems to be smart and what seems to be clever in the human world is foolishness to God. And what you might think is a foolish standard that God sets, and a foolish requirement that God makes, is wiser than the wisest men." And you better keep that in mind, because it is heard that among you there is this unconscionable evil, and you're puffed up.

I demand, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, verse 4, chapter 5, when you're gathered together along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ—you've got double authority here. You've got apostolic authority, and you've got the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

And it's no accident. This is such a tightly woven fabric. Remember back when he said in verse 8 of chapter 4, "You are full, you are rich, you have reigned as kings without us"? You've reigned as kings. How would they reign as kings? Are they just living in opulence and wealth? That's not an issue in Corinthians. He doesn't say, you know, you're wealthy. He says, you've got homes you can eat and drink in, and you shouldn't take advantage of the poor. But he doesn't call them out for being materialistic and worldly.

How are they reigning as kings? They are making new policy. They are establishing new standards of morality and of righteousness for the group. They are reigning. They are legislating. They are ruling. They are deciding what's right and what's wrong, what's punishable and what's rewardable. And Paul says, "I wish you really were reigning. I wish you were qualified to rule and reign with Christ so that we could rule and reign with you." And it's a little bit of a tongue-in-cheek jab there back in verse 8, because Paul and Apollos are not going to rule and reign with them because they are ruling and reigning in the realm of Satan. And Paul and Apollos, even though they are despised and fools for Christ's sake, they will one day rule and reign with Christ. And these people who think they are ruling and reigning will be nowhere near. They are going to be in the darkness which is outside.

So all of this is carefully constructed, carefully thought out and interwoven. And it brings to our minds what's on the line. Think about it in terms of application. We are going to fold up our Bibles here in a few minutes, exit stage left, go live out the rest of our day, the rest of our week. What should we bring from this look at the truth of God's Word? How should we then live? The best question ever asked by Francis Schaeffer: how should we then live? What difference does this make to us?

And what's great is we don't have to say, "Well, I'm sure glad I don't want to attend a church where they let any incestuous rascals in." We don't have to worry about that. Apostle Paul is not going to show up at our door, so we are off the hook, and you just go be warm and be fed and not think about it. It is absolutely and directly the sword point of the machaira of God's Word, dividing asunder the soul and the spirit and the joints and the marrow, and it is judging the thoughts and intents of our heart. So what should we do with this?

We are the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit, and through Him and the Word of God the dwelling place of the Lord Jesus, and through them and those the dwelling place of God the Father. If we permit, if we allow—and all of us do this, either episodically, periodically, or perhaps more often than that—it should not be habitual, and it shouldn't be routine, and it shouldn't be an ongoing presence like this individual. The individual doesn't really matter, the specific nature of his immorality, his porneia. It is the fact of his presence in the fellowship.

Paul says, "When you gather, my apostolic spirit is there. The spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ is there. You are really going to think that these things are compatible?" They are not. It is either/or, one or the other. You can't have both.

Verse 5: "Deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh." The word flesh there is *sarkos*, and it is often translated sinful nature, for the destruction of the sinful nature. And so there is a debate, an interpretive question here that has different interpreters have come down on different sides of it. Is Paul literally saying when you expunge this guy, he is going to be like those at Armageddon where the flesh dissolves and the eyes go away in their sockets? Or he is going to get leprosy, or you remember, was it Jehoram that got the intestinal disease and his gut spilled out and he died a horrible death? Or Herod, when he got too proud and the worms ate him? Is it going to be some heinous, awful spectacle of destruction? Satan is going to go out there and just give him some sort of awful demise?

*Sarkos* can be the sinful nature, and it is also possible that what is not being eradicated, what is not being suppressed, what is not being treated by regular exposure to the Word of God and healthy fellowship of believers speaking the truth to one another in love, that is what ought to diminish and suppress and weaken and put into a very small box the sinful nature. Hopefully beneficial fellowship, strong teaching, the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, the example of the Lord Jesus, in this case the example of the apostles, ought to empower people to keep their sinful nature, their *sarkos*, in check.

If that is not happening, if that does not happen, if fellowship is not up-building—remember Ephesians chapter 4 and the up-building and the edification that takes place in a healthy fellowship where there is sound teaching and that which every joint supplies and so on—then you could argue this passage says what is not being done in the church is going to be done by the consequences of a godless, Christless, fellowship-less life out in the world, and Satan is the god of this world. You have this over and over again in Scripture, where the god of this world is Satan, and experience of his influence and his domain is going to wake somebody up in the way that we often have to hit rock bottom before we reset our priorities.

It is interesting that there are so many different plausible interpretations of this. Another one is, another possible valid from the Greek translation of this is, "Turn this man over to Satan for the destruction of your fleshly works so that your spirit may be saved." It just has articles; it does not have possessives here. There is a note in the NET Bible, the New English Translation, that says, "This is one of the most difficult passages in the New Testament, and there are many different interpretations regarding what is in view here."

Many interpreters see this as some sort of excommunication: turn this man over to Satan, which in turn leads to the man's physical death, the destruction of the flesh, resulting in the man's ultimate salvation. I would not say resulting in it, but looking ahead toward it. He is going to be destroyed in the flesh, but in the day it will be recognized that he belongs to Christ.

Others, secondly, see the phrase destruction of the flesh as referring to extreme physical suffering or illness that stops short of physical death, thus leading the offender to repentance and salvation. Thirdly, a number of

scholars, including Gordon Fee in his New International Commentary on the New Testament—Gordon Fee, a very well-respected, widely read commentator—takes the reference to flesh to refer to the offender's sinful nature or carnal nature, which is destroyed by placing him outside the church back in Satan's domain. But in parentheses it says, "Exactly how this destruction is accomplished is not clear," and is one of the problems with this view.

Fourth, more recently, some have argued that neither the flesh nor the spirit belong to the offender but to the church collectively. Thus, it is fleshly works of the congregation which are being destroyed by the removal of the offender so that the spirit, the corporate life of the church, lived in union with God through the Holy Spirit, may be preserved. The alternate translation, "for the destruction of your fleshly works so that your spirit may be saved," reflects that view.

Now, it is my opinion, we have certain little short, sweet interpretive, short, sweet rules, and when we say we, I mean I. I've made some of these up myself. One of them, you may remember, is when you come to difficulties, especially in the Old Testament with the text—we saw this in 1 Samuel, it's one of the most troubled texts there are—and in my view, where God has not chosen to preserve the text well enough that we can clearly translate it, He has provided enough evidence that we can reconstruct it and get the meaning. The meaning that He wants is preserved even if some of the individual words may be questionable. God will not leave His Word in doubt.

Some way or other, we will be able to figure out what it means. We don't have to depend on a pristine autographed text, right? That's just one of the canons of belief we have. God isn't going to give us a piece of bread but it's got a big rock in it that we can't chew. Jesus says, "If you ask, you'll receive. If you seek, you'll find." And if I go to God's Word, I'm going to get what God wants me to get out of it, regardless of the state of the text. God will find a way to make sure I know what He's saying, where and when I need to know that, right?

Well, another one of these sort of understandings, at least, that I have and that I will share with you is that when a text seems to be susceptible to multiple meanings that are consistent with the rest of Scripture and have applicational value, then instead of saying, "Well, it's either this or it's this," I tend to think, well, if God has left this—this is not really a good use of the word, but the first one that always comes to my mind is—it's polyvalent. It can combine in more than one way.

Remember they used to have atoms in the old Bohr model with a certain number of electrons in the outer shells, and some of them had half a shell and they could go either way. They could either lose some electrons and combine this way, or they could gain some electrons and combine that way. And I say, well, but I want them to either be—I forget what they were—either acids or bases, or either this or that. They either oxidize or they're either blue or red when you put them in the litmus test. They need to be one or the other. Well, some of them are susceptible to be used in different ways depending on conditions.

It is my view that when you come to a passage like this that is legitimately and helpfully meaningful in more than one way, it's probably multiple or three-dimensional, if you will, for a reason. And we are supposed to explore and think about both of those possibilities. If God doesn't choose to be exclusive and limit it to one meaning and it has multiple helpful ideas there, the language is purposely ambiguous. It's one of those if-the-shoe-fits, wear-it kind of things.

In the Old Testament, you go to Isaiah 9:6, I think it is, where it says, you know, "A virgin will conceive and bear a son." Well now, is he talking about the child that will be born in the days of the king and Isaiah, or is he talking about the child that's going to be born to Mary in Bethlehem? Which is it? Well, yes, it is both. If you keep reading the context, before this child knows and comes to understand certain things, before he gets to a certain age, the threat from Syria and the northern kingdom will dissolve. It's a sign. And it was a sign in that day. It is also a sign later on. That verse means both things.

And your problem comes when you are dedicated to capitalizing words and pronouns that refer to deity. "A virgin will conceive and bear a son." Well, is that capital S or small s? Well, if it's both, but you've got a New King James or something that wants to capitalize everything referring to deity, what do you do? Well, they say, "Well, because one of the meanings is Jesus, we're going to capitalize it." So if you go to Isaiah, you will find that it says, "A virgin will conceive and bear a Son," capital S. Well, then you say, "Well, but Jesus wasn't born in the days when before he knew his right hand from his left and curds and whey and, you know, smoking wicks and all the rest of it." And it can be confusing.

Well, and it can be confusing if we don't remember our context. This is why I've harped on the idea that Paul is standing in here as a visual Bible and what he is doing in the cursing arena, which is very graphic and very profound. I personally think that this is a sort of visible curse that this man is going to experience in that day. You're in the days of signs. You're in the days of sign tongues. You're in the days of sign healings. You're in the days when Ananias and Sapphira drop for telling a fib, what some people would call by saying, "We brought all the money," and they only brought some.

You think this is a death penalty offense? They sold the land and brought a gift. They held some back just because they didn't mention that they were a little puffed up and saying, "Look at what great people we are. We've brought this money in, you know, be impressed." They die for that. Patty mentioned, I think over the break, you know, that you think back to when the law first came out and right after that the guy went out and was gathering a few sticks on the Sabbath and he died. He was stoned for that. And you think all of the excesses and abuses down through history, this guy picks up a few sticks on Saturday and it's a death penalty. It's a sign.

They didn't stone everybody that ever picked up a stick. They didn't stone everybody that ever did a sexually immoral act in a church. Everybody that told a little lie did not drop like Ananias and Sapphira. These are signs, and they speak of spiritually significant and important things. What do we take from this? Whether this is the sinful nature or the body itself, whether this is the world of Satan that's going to destroy him or Satan himself personally interacting with this guy—you know, does Satan say, "Oh Lord, You want me to destroy his flesh? Okay, here I go." You know, is it going to be a Job situation? What's the bottom line for us if we step back and look at this?

It is a graphic picture of how destructive and how dangerous it is to tolerate that which is manifestly known to be wrong. It's known. The Gentiles won't even tolerate this. No question that it's wrong. And yet, here it is in your life. Here it is in your fellowship. For us, you know, we always say, as goes Israel in the Old Testament, so goes the individual believer in the New. Well, in many cases, as goes the early church, which is still transitioned out of the Old Testament, it's the new ecclesia. We still look at that and make personal application. They are the corporate temple of the Holy Spirit. "Two or three are gathered, I'm in the midst." Well, the Lord Jesus promises to be in the midst of us. We personally, individually, singular pronoun, are the temple of the Holy Spirit in the same way that the fellowship was the Holy Spirit.

So, if this is what is necessary to keep a church pure and keep it on track, how much more so us? And so the application is, if we think that we're, you know, really living in grace and look how God overlooks my peccadilloes and my small infractions and my minor coloring outside the lines here, this is a reminder that we need to judge ourselves lest we be judged. We need to examine ourselves to see if we are in the faith. We need to remember that the Lord Jesus did not use radical language lightly.

When He says, "Eat My flesh and drink My blood," it is designed to shock. Why? How important is it to be spiritually fed from that which only Christ can provide? It's critical. If you do not eat that spiritual food, if you do not partake of that spiritual drink, you have no part with Him. When He uses shocking language about pulling out your eye and chopping off your hand, why is that shocking language used? What's on the line? It's bigger than we imagine.

I go back to my early example. There are things that you've seen and that you know. Certainly there are things that I have seen and that I know from first-hand observation. I know what it looks like when a terror bomb goes off and over 240 people are killed. I know what that looks like. If I was ever a commanding general and we were ever in a hostile environment and we've got guards at gates with weapons, I promise you, on my watch there's never going to be anybody with an unloaded weapon. I personally, typically, don't go anywhere without a loaded weapon because I have seen what happens when you don't have it.

And you think, well, how many days have gone by? How many times has there been a truck bomb? It only needs to be seen once and you will be a lifelong fan of being ready with a launchable bullet should the need arise. It changes you when you see that. This should change us. It was supposed to change the Corinthian church, alert them, warn them. He says, "I'm not trying to shame you in verse 14 of chapter 4. I'm not trying to belittle you. I'm trying to warn you."

Somebody can say, "Well, I can't believe you're giving me this advice. Don't you respect my judgment? Don't you trust my instincts? Don't you think I know what I'm doing?" I'm not trying to shame you. I'm trying to warn you. Paul has seen things. Paul has been places. Paul has been face to face with the Lord Jesus, and he's been in some of the darkest places you can be. He's been not only commissioned by the Lord, he's been blinded by the

Lord and smacked down. Remember? And he's trying to warn us about how serious this is to identify and remove that which corrupts.

People don't have any problem understanding this. If you want to talk about cancer, well, we did a biopsy and it's malignant. What do people want to do? Get that thing out of me and get it out now before it spreads. That's what this is.

So as you read chapter 5 here, and he goes on, he says, "Your glory in verse 6 is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?" You think, well, it's a small thing. It's not a big issue. It will spread. Why is it that homosexuality is condemned as a death penalty offense in the Old Testament? Well, but if they love each other, if they're in a committed relationship, you know, love is love. Isn't there multiple kinds of love? And can't it be this? And can't it be that? Leaven spreads. It's just like puff gram. You can say it in two words: leaven spreads. It's its nature. That's what it does. Leaven doesn't sit there dormant. It spreads. If you don't want—if you're trying to make unleavened bread so that you can celebrate the Passover—you can't let any leaven touch it or the whole thing will be leavened. It will be ruined and you cannot keep the feast.

Therefore, verse 7, purge out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us. Not accidental that he transitions into leaven and the Passover lamb. What have we just been talking about? Remember I said context will often fill in the gaps for us? Turn him over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh. Why? Because the destroyed flesh of the Lord Jesus is not working for him. If you do not have the destroyed flesh of the Lord Jesus on the cross, your Passover, if the Passover blood is not on the doorpost, what happens to your firstborn? It's either the firstborn's flesh or it's the flesh of the Passover lamb. It's one or the other.

You need to get this guy out of the house or the blood of the Passover lamb is not going to be respected and you're all going to die. That's the picture. Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us. This guy is negating the work of Christ for you all, for the whole entity. Get the leaven out. It's got to be unleavened bread. There's got to be the blood of the Passover lamb on the door or there will be destruction. Remember the word for destroyer has the same root as destruction of the flesh. When he says they were destroyed by the destroyer in another place, that's this word. It links you back to what was on the line on that very first Passover night.

If you're going to go where God wants you to go and be where God wants you to be and enjoy the blessings of the land flowing with milk and honey, you can't die on the night of Passover. And in order to not die on the night of Passover, you need two things. You need the blood of the Passover lamb and you need to have no leaven in the house. That's what Paul is alluding to here. It means a lot. He's being as emphatic as he knows how to be.

Therefore, verse 8, let us keep the feast. Let's be obedient. Let's honor God's instructions. Not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened—notice bread is in italics—with the unleavenedness, the uncorruptedness of sincerity and truth. By leaving out bread here, he's saying, you know, you're the bread. You're the body that can't be corrupted. Unleavenedness. Keep the feast with the unleavenedness of sincerity and truth.

Now we'll pick up next time in verse 9. "I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people. I did not mean with the sexually immoral people of the world, or with the covetous, extortioners, idolaters. Since then, you would need to go out of the world." And you can see where this is going. There's a difference in what is inside and what is outside. The problem becomes if we recognize how important this is to purge out and be clean, come out from among them and be separate, purge out the leaven, have the blood of the Passover lamb, and you get that, what Paul is going to go on to say in the rest of this chapter is, keep your focus inside the fellowship. Keep your focus inside the doors of your own domain here.

If you start trying to apply that same standard to everybody else, you can't live in the world. He's basically saying, you've got your hands full purging out leaven and being pure over what you control. You can't control the world. You can't control your neighbors. You can't control those who are around you. You cannot go impose a standard on others, is where he's going with this. The focus is on me, myself, and I. And by extension, in a fellowship, these things apply. But for us particularly, it is the individual.

I don't have to worry about whether you have or have not purged out some perceived leaven that I think I see. Not my business. Paul says if you start doing that, it will never end. You'd have to leave the world to not be fully occupied trying to figure out and parse things that you don't even have any business looking at and you

can't know. What you can look at and what you do know is what's inside the fellowship. And he says you ought to be mourning over the presence of things like this and you ought to be taking action. Mourn before God about it. God will remove it.

If you don't, then you're going to get outside the protection of God. And if you're outside God's protection and outside His blessing, you're going to be just like Israel, Ebal and Gerizim. Deuteronomy 28, you remember? Fourteen verses of blessing and then the whole rest of the chapter is the cursings. This is what happens when your sky turns to iron and your fields turn to brass or whatever it is. I mean, it's just awful. And all it is is the withdrawing of God's blessing.

To be outside this fellowship is to be in the domain of Satan. And it will only lead to destruction because that's all Satan can do. He can't create; he can only destroy. He cannot build up; he can only pervert. And being outside that blessing presence is to inevitably be destroyed. And that's the message of human history. It's the message to the angels, it's the message to us. And it applies. It has pertinence when we look inside our own soul.

Purge out the leaven. Find the immoral thing and bring it before the Lord. God will remove it. If we recognize it and mourn over it, God will remove it. God will give us what we need to escape it. If not, we're going to have to make a big more significant effort. You know, when Jesus said, "If your eye offend you, pluck it out," wouldn't it be a whole lot better if your eye just didn't offend you to begin with? When your eye starts looking in a direction, you say, "Get back. Eyes in the boat," they used to say when I was a midshipman. Keep your eyes straight ahead. Don't be gazing off and getting distracted.

The key to success and not losing your eye or your hand is eyes in the boat. Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, is seated at the right hand of the Father. Looking unto Jesus. If your eyes don't offend, you don't need deliverance. You don't have to take formal action that is public and painful and visible. You're already being heard. But it's more like the Philippians and the Thessalonians where they've got a reputation for faith and obedience, that Paul says, "I don't even have to tell people about you all. Your reputation has gotten there before we did." That's what we want to be. That's what we're being called to here in 1 Corinthians chapter 5.

We'll take a look at the last part of this chapter and the beginning of chapter 6 next time. Let's close here in a word of prayer.

Father, thank You for the truth of Your Word. Thank You for the power that it gives us, the kingdom into which it brings us, the potentials and the opportunities that are ours because the Lord Jesus died for us, because He has taken us to Himself and brought us before You. We pray that as we ponder these things and reflect on them, that Your Holy Spirit will show us clearly, shine a light in our souls so that we can see exactly what needs to exit, what needs to be purged and removed so that we can be a sacrifice, holy and acceptable as our reasonable service. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.