

# *Save a Sinner*

**By Warren Zehring – July 23, 2011**

Brethren, the greater Church of God today, are repeating the errors of the past. It just seems like we are a people that cannot learn our lesson. The Bride is not prepared for the return of Jesus Christ.

We are seeing people within God's Church, divorcing and remarrying, against God's clear instructions to us. In today's climate, they find a new congregation to attend services, where no one questions what they have done. It seems like time passes and men tend to forget, and overlook sinful situations that should have been dealt with a long time ago.

We need to understand that God has no statute of limitations on sin that should have been repented of.

Does God forgive? Of course He does, and He expects us to do the same. Jesus put it this way:

**Luke 17:3** "Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him."

We see that repentance is necessary, and we also see that we have the job of rebuking a brother who sins. The sin must cease, before forgiveness can take place.

Our text for today is I Corinthians 5.

It had come to Paul's attention, that there was a depraved state of affairs in the Corinthian congregation that was not being dealt with appropriately, by anyone.

Corinth was notorious for its wide-open sexual immorality. It was known the world over for its promiscuity, and the ways that were just totally against what God would have men to do. They had Diana's temple, which was a temple of prostitution.

But what Paul was speaking about was an infraction that was going on within the church, and it was so bad that it was even beyond even the perversions of the heathens of the world.

A man in the congregation had enticed the wife of his Dad into cohabitating with him.

**1 Corinthians 5:1** "It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife."

In today's sermon, we will see that in a situation like this one, our Christianity demands a responsible approach toward the sinner, on one hand, and a responsible approach on the part of the faithful congregation, on the other.

There is a two-fold responsibility on the Church of God that was being neglected in Corinth.

There have been two incorrect methodologies of the Church of God, in the recent past: First, to disfellowship the sinful party with the clear understanding that he should never darken the door again. Or, the second wrong response to the problem is for the church brethren to simply wink at the grievous sin, and go along as if nothing had ever happened. Both of those scenarios are wrong.

As faithful Christians, our first motivation should be to help our brother back into a viable spiritual life. We are "*our brother's keeper*."

When a brother or sister stumbles, you and I must be willing to pitch in to help them regain their spiritual footing, but it requires discernment and judgment to know when and how to intervene.

Here is what God requires:

**Galatians 6:1** "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, you which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."

We are told to restore such a one, not to disfellowship him and make it very clear that we do not want to see him again. That was one approach in the church. Or, go along with his sin like we are okay with it. That is not an option, but it is a clear command of God: "*Restore such a one*" to a viable spiritual life.

What is so good about this example, which we have in I Corinthians 5, is that it worked!

We do not find out how well it worked until II Corinthians, but the restoration of the sinner to the congregation was successful. That is what we need to keep in mind. Yes he was a wicked sinner, and that is the way the problem is going to be addressed today. But let us understand that he was restored to a viable spiritual state, and God willing, he will be in the first resurrection – in spite of these horrible sins that he had in his life.

Paul had written previously to the Corinthians, instructing them not to fellowship or socialize with anyone involved in that kind of illicit behavior. But, brethren, let us understand that there is a time to socialize, and there is a time not to socialize.

The Corinthians were making the other mistake, and they were justifying their behavior of doing nothing to help the problem by saying to themselves, 'We are magnanimous enough to overlook his indulgences – after all, we were all sinners once before, and we are fair-minded enough not to judge or condemn him.' Well, brethren, the Corinthians were well off the mark. They could not see that they were spiritually arrogant and smug.

Paul's reply to them was, "*You are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you.*" (1 Corinthians 5:2)

The situation called for fasting and prayer, and intervention in the life of the sinner.

Let us understand brethren, that there is a great deal more to I Corinthians 5 than the story of a church member involved in an incestuous relationship with his stepmother. Most of the time, when we think of I Corinthians 5, that is what we think it is about. But let us understand that everyone in the church at Corinth already knew that infidelity and sexual sins were flat out wrong, and that they were against the Ten Commandments. But now, the entire congregation was guilty of aiding and abetting the lawless man, and they themselves were in need of repentance and change themselves. The congregation had missed the mark also.

The purpose of this section of scripture is not a matter of whether or not the man was sinning, that is a given, or about how bad the sin was, because we know that.

The question that Paul brings up is "what to do about it."

Paul proceeds to show not only how to handle the sinful situation, but who is responsible for dealing with the terrible encroachment upon the church.

The Corinthian congregation was not mature or well-developed, spiritually.

Paul had mentioned that a few chapters back, "*And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ*" (I Corinthians 3:1).

These remarks are part of the Scriptural canon and they are passed on to us today. But the greater Church of God is making the exact same mistakes today that the Corinthian church was making. We do not have a temple to Diana, but we have the sexual immorality, we have the divorce and remarriage outside of God's law, and we have a lot of problems that we should be, but are not, dealing with.

One of Paul's most important responsibilities before God was to promote the spiritual growth and development of the church congregations that he pastored.

In this epistle, Paul did not address this problem on account of the immoral man only, or his father, whom he had so grievously wronged.

**Leviticus 18:8** 'The nakedness of your father's wife you shall not uncover; it is your father's nakedness.

Paul's purpose in writing was for the welfare of the congregation, and that is what goes over our head most of the time. His purpose for writing I Corinthians 5 and 6 was for the welfare of the Corinthian congregation. It was to enable them to spiritually mature to the point of handling their problems themselves.

Paul explains his purpose for writing, "*Wherefore, though I wrote unto you, I did it **not** for his cause that had done the wrong, **nor** for his cause that suffered wrong, but that our **care for you** in the sight of God might appear unto you.*" (2 Corinthians 7:12)

Paul is saying, 'I want you to understand that I did this for the congregation's sake.' Paul wanted the congregation to take ownership of the problem in their midst for the very purpose of the spiritual development of the church, brethren.

**Proverbs 22:6** Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

What does that Scripture have to do with what we are speaking about today?

In the same way brethren, that a maturing child needs to learn to make decisions that he is held personally responsible for, Paul was teaching the Corinthians how to take responsibility for the affairs of their own congregation. They could not grow, they could not progress, and they could not become spiritually complete, until they learned to take the bull by the horns for themselves. They had to learn to be responsible and get involved – and not shirk their duty. In the same way that when a child is never given the opportunity to make responsible decisions that affect his life, he will not mature.

It was the responsibility, not of Paul, but of the local congregation to come to grips with that sinning man – it was their problem to deal with.

Certainly, Paul told them what the proper judgment of the situation was, but it was the congregation's responsibility to maintain the Godly standard in their area. They were responsible to hold that person accountable and to deal with him.

In effect, Paul says, 'I've judged the matter already, and I know what the answer is. But you have to learn to rise to the occasion and do the same thing.' He told the Corinthians that they had to take matters into their own hands, and show that wicked person the door, and turn him back into the world until he repents and learns his lesson (1 Corinthians 5:5, 13).

If Paul had decided and carried out every decision that had to be made for them, the congregation would have never been able to grow in grace and knowledge to the point of administering their own matters.

Christianity is not a spectator sport. It is not a sport where people in the congregation get to just sit back and take it all in. That is not full Christian development, and it cannot take place that way.

*"Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? And if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?"* (1 Corinthians 6:2)

Jesus Christ had personally taught this principle during His earthly ministry.

In difficult cases, the problem is to be brought before the entire congregation for their adjudication. They have to get involved, as they are a part of the problem, and they are a part of the solution.

*"If he [the offender] shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the ['ekklesia' – congregation]: but if he neglect to hear the [called out Christian community], let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican."* (Matthew 18:17)

This is the first instance where I will show you that the matter has to be passed on to the **church congregation** to be dealt with. We will talk a little while about how that has incorrectly changed over time. But the word of God is eternal, and it is not going to change.

In this particular case in I Corinthians 5, after the sinning man was suspended by the congregation, he came to miss their love and fellowship.

He repented and was returned, in good standing, to the fellowship of the congregation. A sinner was saved, because the congregation was involved.

Righteous judgment begins with ourselves: "Let a man examine himself... for if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged [condemned by God]." (I Corinthians 11:28, 31)

**John 7:24** [Jesus said], "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge with righteous judgment."

Here in James 5 is one of the places that I have taken the title for today's sermon from: "**Save the Sinner.**"

**James 5:20** Let him know, that he which converts the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.

That is the responsibility that we, as Christians, have. We are to save sinners. We are co-saviors with Jesus Christ, and shall hide a multitude of sins. Brethren, you would think sometimes in the church of God today that we are almost like empire builders. We want to be the biggest, the best, and on the most television stations. Or, at least you might surmise that we are corporate organization promoters.

Brethren, we are here to save sinners. We are to walk in the shoes of Jesus Christ. He was here to save sinners, and He was not willing that any should perish (2 Peter 3:9).

Our consciences must be formed by scriptural moral truth. We do not come to God "just as we are." We come to the church, when we are first called, as perverted men and women. We have to inform our consciences that they must conform to the mind of God.

Chapters 5 and 6 of I Corinthians, are about a congregational consciousness, formed by scriptural moral truth, to know right from wrong, and to deal with it on a congregational basis. Maybe you have not thought about that before, but a congregation is a community, and it has a moral consciousness. We might even call it a culture. The world in the church is different from the outside world.

Jesus is speaking here of saving sinners, and returning sinners to the fold repentant and back in good stead and reconciled to God.

**Matthew 18:11-12** For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost. How think ye? If a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and go into the mountains, and seek that which is gone astray?

Jesus is talking about saving the one in one hundred. He is talking about saving the one that has gone astray. Jesus Christ did not have the attitude that we have seen so prevalent in the church, where when somebody goes astray you just kick him out and do not have anything to do with him ever again. 'Let him know he's not wanted, disfellowship him, and bar the door!'

**Matthew 18:13** And if so be that he find [the lost sheep], verily I say unto you, he rejoices more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray.

There is great rejoicing in turning somebody around, back to the body, back to the congregation, back to God and Christ.

**Luke 15:7** I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repents, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.

Then Jesus Christ takes the story of a shepherd out tending his sheep, and he raises it to a high spiritual level.

**Matthew 18:14-15** Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish. Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone...

So it is a one-on-one situation. You go to your brother and tell him that you are offended because he did this to you, or he violated God's principles.

**Matthew 18:15** ...if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.

Okay, everything gets reconciled, becomes copasetic, and everything is back on an even keel.

**Matthew 18:16** But if he will not hear thee, then take with you one or two more...

Take somebody else that realizes, yes, an offense happened, and we suffered loss at their hands. They will be able to communicate that to the one that has done the offense.

**Matthew 18:16** ...that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

This is a Christian principle that it is established by witnesses saying that it did happen. It is raised to a very high level of adjudication here – to a spiritual plane.

**Matthew 18:17** And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church [*ekklesia*]:

Here is a place where the church has been terribly amiss. I brought this up at a ministerial conference one time. I said that this word church is the Greek word, 'ekklesia.' It means the called out ones, it is the little sheep, it is the brethren, it is the congregation, it is the saints, and it is those who are in the body of Christ.

Tell it to the **church brethren** Jesus says. I was told, "No, no that is not very expedient and that does not work real well, what we want them to do is come and tell us, come tell the ministry, the hierarchy, or headquarters. But whatever you do, do not tell it to the brethren."

But notice what Jesus Christ says: "*but if he neglect to hear the church [ekklesia]...*"

In today's atmosphere, a sinner never gets to hear the church brethren, and he does not have the congregation able to come to him and say, 'Hey buddy, what happened? How did you start doing this? How did this happen? Let us get you back on track. We will fast with you, we will pray with you, we will loan you some money, and we will protect you'.

But Jesus says, if he neglects to hear the called out ones, the *ekklesia*, the church, then *let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican.*" It is un-biblical to skip that step, and have one minister hear the predicament, who more than likely might be out of town or new to the area.

That minister might not even know him or his background as a kid, or what he has been up against, or how it came to be. The minister would just disfellowship him and send this guy back into the world because he does not want him.

No, brethren! That is not the way God wants it to work. He is the very one that we are supposed to drop everything else we are doing and go and bring him back into the fold. Right there Christ tells you and me, and the entire congregation, that it is on our back. "Tell it to the assembly," then if he will not hear the assembly, then if everybody begging and pleading, showing him in fasting and prayer cannot get him back, then maybe we have to recognize him as a goner. Maybe he was never one of us. But we cannot skip those steps just for expediency. The obligation to deal with the problem, to judge the problem, falls right in the lap of the brethren of the congregation. Jesus says to tell the fault – the trespass to the called out ones – the brethren.

Now, somehow, this has wrongly been changed in the churches of God, and it goes all the way back to Worldwide Church of God. I do not know when or where it started. Maybe we got this from the great Roman Catholic Church. Maybe in that church everything is brought to the priest to deal with. But it is wrong, and that is not the way that Jesus Christ has instituted it.

I know that when I came into the church, this is the way it was done. Congregations expected the minister to do everything. Pasadena expected the local minister to handle it himself, unless the problem became so big that headquarters had to be called in.

Congregations expected the minister to do everything, all the judging, dealing with the problem, running things, while the congregation was left out of the picture altogether.

Members have been taught that if there is a problem like that, you bring this to the minister for him to deal with the problem. 'Do not let anybody else know about it.' Sure, we do not want to spread and ruin anybody's reputation, and that is why Christ said that we are to try it real hard by ourselves. Then if he does not hear you, then you take only one or two more who already know about the problem, or know the character very well. If that does not work, you bring it to the entire congregation.

But what have we been taught? You bring it to the minister and let him deal with it. One man giving it a shot, which was usually all too often 'show him the door'. Except, nowadays we see that the congregations have gone over to the other ditch. It seems like we go from one excess to the other. Now the ministry sometimes does not even know the problem, and all of the members are just saying that it is okay, we were sinners too, and who am I to judge, and I don't want to get involved, or whatever they say to themselves.

That was not the example that Jesus Christ gave.

Jesus Himself, refused to be the sole judge, he refused to be in the role of judge between two brothers in a quarrel over their inheritance. Why is that, and what can we learn from this?

**Luke 12:13** One of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me.

So this fellow knew that Jesus was a powerful figure, and asked Jesus to make his brother give him his share. But notice what Jesus said in verse 14:

**Luke 12:14** And He said unto him, Man, who made Me a judge or a divider over you?

Jesus was saying to him that He was not the one who was going to dispense his Dad's funds when he dies. 'I am not the executor of your Dad's estate. Nobody has given me that job'. Why would Jesus say it that way? Think of this, brethren, when you have a congregation that knows these two brothers who are squabbling over their Dad's inheritance, and the whole congregation is aware of all of the details and circumstances, and also what the Bible says about who should get what. Yes, an older brother should get a double portion, but that is because he is going to take care of all of the old aunts and all of the other details that would fall through the cracks. But, brethren, here is what we have in the church. There is a "social order pressure" and a church judgment brought on the brothers to kowtow to the group's evaluation of the matter. If the whole church says, 'Look, your older brother is supposed to get more because he has to take care of way more dependents, and therefore he deserves a greater portion'. The congregation would know, and it would be a general understanding among them to know, as to what was fair and what was balanced, and who was supposed to get what. Or, maybe this person should have received half, or whatever he was demanding. He would be able to present his case, and his brother would be able to present his case. And this big conflict that was going on, at church, and it would be going on at services every Sabbath. The congregation would say, 'Here is what is right, here is what is fair. This is what you guys have to do'. There is a congregational spirit and attitude that motivates the two brothers to conform to the mind of the assembly and to the word of God. That is, if they really wish to remain a part of things.

That is the way that it should have been handled back then in Christ's time, and that is the way that it should be handled in the church today. We will see that we are not supposed to go to law, you are not supposed to sue your brother in court, because the church congregation is there for you. The brethren know you, they know your family, and the church brethren would come to your aid.

Back in Worldwide, we were doing it incorrectly. Often, the first time many in the congregation even knew there was a problem was when the minister disfellowshipped and marked the person from the pulpit. We were all shocked, and we didn't know that there was a sin in the congregation. The minister would always add that we should pray for his repentance, but it was said snidely. It was said almost as if this was a mark of death when someone was disfellowshipped. I never knew a single minister, but maybe he kept this private too, to go to that one in ninety-nine and try to recover him, and fast and pray with him, and show him the error of his ways and bring him back. It was done all wrong in the church, and we suffered for it, and we are still suffering for it.

The congregation was kept in the dark. The congregation never had the opportunity to measure the offense against the word of God, and grow spiritually thereby.

The congregation never had the occasion to exercise any judgment in the matter, as the scripture so clearly showed that they should have.

There was never any congregational pressure for the sinner to conform, or else. He was just given the "or else" and shown the door.

The way the situation was handled in the Worldwide Church of God, the congregation never had the opportunity to pray and fast about the situation. If you missed that Sabbath, you missed the disfellowshippment, and may not have know for a long time what had happened.

The congregation never had the opportunity to know any of the details, or to have a chance to go to their brother and to try and help him. Maybe one person in the congregation could have got through and turned him around, or pointed out something in a way that the sinner had never thought of. We are to save sinners, not to expedite them out of the Body of Christ.

The brethren never had ownership of the problem, which was theirs by right, by God's word. And so therefore the congregation lost out and they were unable to grow and mature as a congregation should.

The minister kept the control, and he maintained the power over the situation.

Brethren, it is not the minister's church, it is God's Church.

Paul told the Corinthians:

**II Corinthians 1:24** The [ministry] does not have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand.

The ministry does have a very important job. They are to preach and to teach God's truth, but not to dictatorially dominate the brethren.

**Acts 2:42** And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

The apostles had the godly authority to set sound doctrine, while the church brethren were supposed to implement God's way in their lives, and their congregations as a whole. Doctrine is a Church-wide issue, not an issue facing a single congregation. The congregations did not initiate or institute doctrine, but they put it into service. Congregations, like individuals, can never mature, grow and learn to make responsible judgments and decisions for themselves unless they are a part of the judgment process.

**1 Corinthians 6:2** Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? And if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?

Unfortunately, and we see this in the congregations today, some members are simply willing to just let life happen to them, and they never learn to take control to get involved, and to take the bull by the horns, or to force things into the way they should be, and to stand up and to be counted. I use the word 'force,' which might offend some of you. But Jesus tells us to *strive* to enter into the Kingdom of God (Luke 13:24). If you have ever watched an NFL football game, you may have noticed that those guys are striving, they are pushing to have it their way, and that is what we are supposed to be doing.

Brethren, we only go around once, and Jesus said:

**Matthew 24:11** And many false ministers shall rise, and shall deceive many.

Even right now, today, there are many false ministers. Many deceivers have gone into the world. Do we believe it? We have to fight wrong wherever we find it, in the church or in the ministry, and we have seen our share of that.

Jesus said that these ministers would deceive the **very elect!** We are the elect. Do we believe it?

**Matthew 24:24** There shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

**I John 4:1** Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.

Brethren, we are in a battle ground and we, as congregations, need to stick together. We need to test these things daily as the Bereans did (Acts 17:11). Go to the scriptures. Do the scriptures say that it is okay to go to church on Sunday? We were taught that from the pulpit, right here in this town.

**Matthew 7:15** Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

God's Word tells us to notify one another and give warning when we see a minister who is not living up to His high standard of conduct. "Marking" means that we are to alert others of the danger when a minister teaches or practices false doctrine.

**Romans 16:17** I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.

They may look like real shepherds, but not if they are telling us to go to the trinity doctrine. We as congregations are to stand up against that sort of thing. We do not set the doctrine, but we are to uphold the doctrine in our areas. We are told that the church could be seduced – even if it were possible the very elect.

**I Timothy 4:1** Now the Spirit speaks expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;

Satan is wise. The adversary is more cunning than the beasts of the field. There are all kinds of traps that we fall into. Brethren, we are to be led by the Word of God [the Bible], which is our instruction manual. Can we see how subtle Satan is? He teaches the congregations not to judge the smallest matters, and so they have not learned to deal with seducing spirits. Terrible things happen to the congregation when the membership in general – and I will even include the ministry, are not able to deal with seducing spirits.

**When the false ministers took over the Pasadena headquarters, not a single evangelist, not a single one of the Council of Elders was able to expose those evil men for the heretics that they were.**

How was our ministry so weak? They had not grown, and they had not matured, because they had been doing it wrong too. They were just punching the clock. I know that some of them were sincere in their way, but why were there not some who were stronger, why were the congregations not stronger?

So much of what was so diligently built fell apart – as the church went into full fledged apostasy.

**Psalm 127:1** Unless the Lord shall build the house, the weary builders toil in vain.

If anyone knows of a congregation that stayed together, lock stock and barrel, when the apostasy came on the church after the death of Mr. Herbert Armstrong, I would like to know about them. I think that we could learn something from a congregation that stayed with the truth. Maybe there were a few that did. Maybe you can chalk up the congregation staying together because they had a charismatic leader. But, brethren, for the most part, all of the ministry, those professionally trained men, were unable to deal with the wolf (Matthew 7:15). How could the brethren in the congregations be expected to deal with false ministers or false doctrine?

The congregations had not been given the opportunity to judge the smallest matters – so they were immature and weak.

Brethren, if you think that God speaks down to you only through a hierarchy of men, and that you have no input in congregational matters, then you are not getting your understanding from the Scriptures. Jesus tells us that His sheep hear His voice in John 10.

We are our brother's keeper, and that includes re-educating ministers who think that they have a mandate to rule over congregations with a heavy hand.

Let us begin in I Corinthians 5, and see if we can discern what God is saying to us.

I Corinthians 5 is about raising up a congregation in the way it should grow (That is a play on words of Proverbs 22:6).

Congregations are to grow from babes to spiritually mature.

**I Corinthians 5:1** It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife.

Catholics do not read these verses at church. The Catholics pick and choose, and they keep their people the dark. It is not supposed to be like that in the Church of God. We read these scriptures because they save the congregation and they **save the sinner**. People in the congregation were saying things like, 'We are forgiving, and the more we forgive, the greater our virtue is.'

Paul addresses that, "Forgiveness requires repentance first." Paul is talking to the congregation. The sinning fellow is probably not even at church the day that this letter comes and is read. Paul tells the congregation:

**I Corinthians 5:2-3** You are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you. For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed,

Notice that Paul did not disfellowship that man from a distance. Paul is simply saying, "It is clear to me that that man is sinning." Paul told the Corinthian congregation, "I know that sin is wrong, and so should you." Here is my recommendation as to how this should be handled.

Here is my advice to you: "You take care of it." This seems to be a clear pattern in the New Testament of congregational self-rule. The congregation is supposed to deal with the problem, as the minister cannot be there all of the time in every place. Paul says that even though he is far away, he has already passed judgment on this man as to whether or not he was sinning and how should be dealt with.

He does not need to be there in person to know the man has committed a serious sin. When Paul says, "but present in spirit" he means that he has the same mind on a subject as Christ has.

Notice, brethren, that Paul did not disfellowship that person from a distance. Paul is simply saying, 'It is clear to me that that man is sinning.' Paul told the Corinthian congregation in effect, "I know that sin is wrong, and so should you." Paul would say to them, 'Here is my recommendation of how this should be handled. Here is my advice to you'. Paul told the congregation to take care of it.

Our conscience must be educated to the point of having the Mind of Christ, also. We should see things the exact same way, if that were possible, that Christ sees things.

**1Corinthians 5:4** In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ,

Verse 4 makes it clear that this was an action to be carried out, and performed by the congregation.

Here is where the title comes from:

**I Corinthians 5:5** To deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

If you look up Satan, it is almost the exact same word in the Greek [*'satanas'*], and it means the accuser, the devil. This is the purpose of this; we want to **save the sinner**.

Paul says that this issue calls for suspension of the sinner from the greater body. Why does he have to be separated from the body? Because this kind of sin is a bad example that will cause spiritual "rot" throughout the congregation. While he was sinning, he was no longer welcome to fellowship with the church brethren.

When Paul says to *'hand this man over to Satan'*, he means to suspend him as a church member — remove him and his sins from the assembly of Christians.

God's word dictates that we always do what is scripturally right, and best for our brothers and sisters, in Christ. That is not hate, it is Godly love. That is another one that we get wrong, and people say it would be so mean to kick him out of the church. No, let us not love more than God loves, let us not forgive more than God forgives, or where God does not forgive. We cannot be more compassionate than Jesus Christ.

The hope is that in separating the sinner from the congregation he would miss the fellowship, and be motivated to repent and return. Thus if he came back to church, and was repentant, his spirit may be saved in the resurrection.

This letter from Paul was written at the time of the spring Holy Days. There is a great deal of New Testament evidence that the apostles and the entire Church of God kept the annual Feasts of the Lord of Lev 23, and they taught the Gentiles to keep the Feast as well!

**Acts 20:6** We sailed away from Philippi after the **days of unleavened bread**...

So we find Paul using a Passover/Unleavened Bread theme and analogy that is analogous to one rotten apple spoiling the whole barrel of apples. Notice:

**I Corinthians 5:6** Your glorying [boasting] is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?

That is where they are saying that they cannot kick him out of the church because they had made mistakes themselves.

In the same way that leaven goes through the entire lump of dough, sin will permeate the congregation, jeopardizing the spiritual health of everyone.

**I Corinthians 5:7** Purge out [put out] therefore the old leaven [bread], that ye may be a new lump [loaf], as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us:

Paul is not talking about yeast in the kitchen any more, but he has switched gears, and he has jumped to this higher spiritual plane. He is talking about sin, about the sinner in this case.

They had put bread out of their homes, now they needed to put sin out of their congregation, is what Paul is saying. That congregation is the lump, and the sin is going to spread through and rot the whole barrel of apples (to switch metaphors).

**I Corinthians 5:8** Therefore let us keep the feast [Passover and Unleavened Bread], not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

Let us do it God's way. Let us put the sinner out of the mix, and let us have a clean congregation. Then when we go to take the Passover we are clean, and the Days of Unleavened Bread we will come completely out of sin. We have not come completely out of sin because we have a sinner in our midst and nobody has really addressed it in the way that they should have. These Corinthians did not understand how sin was having an adverse spiritual effect upon them.

**I Corinthians 5:9** I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators (in a previous letter that Paul had sent to the Corinthians):

When he says 'keep company' he means socializing, palming around together, going out and having a meal together, and that sort of thing.

**I Corinthians 5:10** Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world.

For then you would have to leave the planet because there is so much sin out there in the world. Paul is talking about not being accepting of sin in the congregation, the church.

**I Corinthians 5:11** But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator [concupiscent, filled with lustful sexual desire, licentious, lascivious], or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; [that is who you do not socialize with] with such a one no not to eat.

That is where you draw the line – among the brethren. You do not encourage someone in their sin.

**I Corinthians 5:12** For what have I to do to judge them also that are without [in the world]? do not you [you all] judge them that are within?

Paul is speaking to the entire congregation here. He did not say it was the duty of some head man, deacon, or pastor, to disfellowship the sinner forever.

We do not see the scriptures advocating pastoral rule here, but congregational rule. But notice again, *'do not you [the entire congregation] judge them that are within?'*

Here is where we got caught by one of Satan's devious traps.

As the apostasy was being unleashed on the church, the Pasadena hierarchy taught that "we should not judge others."

By that, they meant for us not to say that those going to Sunday worship were wrong.

Pasadena did not distinguish between do not condemn others on one hand, and discerning righteous judgment on the other hand.

Those false ministers from Pasadena disfellowshipped the faithful brethren who refused their heretical politics and false doctrine.

**I Corinthians 5:13** But them that are without [in the world] **God judges**. Therefore [you] put away from among yourselves that wicked [evil] person.

Paul tells the congregation to take care of the problem and deal with it. God has already given His judgment on sin – put it out from among you.

**Deuteronomy 24:7** If a man be found stealing any of his brethren of the children of Israel, and makes merchandise of him, or sells him; then that thief shall die; and thou shalt **put evil away from among you**.

**I Corinthians 5:12** ...do not you judge them that are within [the church]?

The answer is, "Yes – we judge the church brethren ourselves." There is the answer to those who went astray when the apostasy hit the church. God has already judged that behavior as wide of the mark, and sinful. When Pasadena said that we were not to judge them, we did not have to judge those people, **God already had**.

There is a clear pattern in the New Testament church, and it is that of congregational self-rule.

There is certainly no chapter break as we go into Chapter 6. The same subject continues:

**1 Corinthians 6:1** Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?

This is to be carried out within the congregation, like the two brothers looking for their inheritance. Notice who Paul says is supposed to take care of the problem – he says, “You deal with it.” They were to deal with this man who had brought this incestuous affair into the church, *and not before the saints* – that is where the matter is to be judged.

**I Corinthians 6:2** Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? And if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?

“No.” We have to learn now how to judge the smallest matters.

**I Corinthians 6:3** Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?

Yes, we are going to judge angels.

**Psalms 8:5** For thou hast made him a little [while] lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour.

Also, Jesus Christ was made a little lower than the angels.

**Psalms 8:6** Thou made him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet:

We are inheritors with Christ. Yes, we will judge the angels and all things. Right now is the time to learn to rule over the smallest matters.

**I Corinthians 6:4-5** If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church. I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren?

You do not just give it to one person, and you do not give it to the ministry. But, the congregation has the ability to judge the matter, is what he is saying.

Paul is going to bring out another very important truth here, and he is speaking about the congregation:

**I Corinthians 3:16** Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?

There is a greater responsibility. The church is the temple of God on earth, right now. God dwells in us. Christ dwells in us. That enables them to judge things according to the word of God. To rule as a congregation, for the congregation's sake. The spirit of God dwells in the congregation, as well as the individual. The congregation is the Temple of God collectively.

**Acts 6:2** Then the twelve called [summoned] the multitude [whole congregation] of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reasonable that we should leave the word of God, and serve [*diakoneo*] tables.

This is an example where we can see how the congregations were working, how they were respected, and how they were looked upon by the apostles, and what esteem they were held in as the Temple of God. Paul was telling the congregation that they, the apostles (Acts 2:42), were establishing doctrine in the church, and we need some help in waiting on the needs of the elderly, and so forth.

Notice that the apostles deferred to the judgment of the congregation in selecting seven men to serve.

For just a moment, let us examine the decision-making process here in Acts.

**Acts 6:3** Wherefore, brethren, [you] look ye out among you seven men of honest report [good reputation], full of Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint [put them in charge] over this business.

Even there, the apostles came in and they could have picked the men that looked good, the bankers and the lawyer types and make them the deacons. No, the apostles looked to the congregation who knew everybody, and knew who had a serving spirit. There was a look to the congregation, as the congregation is the keeper of the faith in the individual areas.

Congregations are important, and they are not to be demeaned, or run over by some strong-handed tactic.

Brethren we, the congregations of the Church of God, are our brother's keeper, and we go after the one who is lost.

We are to **save a sinner**.

WZ/pp/sl