

Dr. Gary Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Lecture 15, Paul's Response to Certain Oral Reports/Rumors, 1 Corinthians 5:5-13

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This is Dr. Gary Meadors in his teaching on the book of 1 Corinthians. This is lecture 15, Paul's Response to Certain Oral Reports/Rumors. 1 Corinthians 5:5-13.

Well, welcome to lecture 15 as we continue in 1 Corinthians 5 and move toward completing this chapter. We looked at verses 1 to 4 particularly, and now we're up to verse 5, which we're going to do a little bit of what I call an expansion on here of the notes on this. But 5 says, hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh.

I'm reading the 2011 NIV. If I were reading the 20, excuse me, if I were reading the original NIV, it would say for the destruction of the sinful nature, which I'm thankful that the new NIV, the revision has gotten rid of that because that was not a good translation because it implied something different than I think this text is about. The destruction of the flesh so that his spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord.

All right, so we've got this man who married his stepmother and has been found guilty of incest by Paul, even by Roman society standards. The church was arrogant about this man's behavior, probably because he was arrogant. It's very likely that he could have been either a benefactor or a person of status, which slowed down the church's moral judgment.

He got most likely remarried to the woman, which seemed to justify everything, and everybody said, well, whatever, and we'll move on from there. Paul didn't buy that line, and he's said that very clearly. Now, he comes to 5.5, where he instructs the church on what they should do.

He said you should gather together, and when you are, in verse 5, you should hand him over to Satan. Well, the realm of discipline, page 70 in the middle, is expanded in the notes, and the realm of discipline is to deliver to Satan. This is an interesting phrase that's used.

The exact phrase is only used elsewhere in 1 Timothy 1:20. You can compare some other places that have similar contexts, but this phrase of delivering to Satan, it seems that the plain meaning of the phrase in Corinthians and Timothy means excommunication. Satan, as an agent of God, occurs in other situations as well, whether you're in Job or you're in other parts of the Bible.

Satan can be used as an agent of God, but what does it mean for the church to deliver the man to Satan? And if they deliver him to Satan, is that to the person of Satan, or just what is it? The correlation between Greek and her Quran curse formula. Some have talked about how this is a curse formula in a sense, and scholars have looked at that. We won't be digressing into that.

In what sense does Satan figure into this? Well, I would like to say that I don't think that the majority of scholars view this as God sort of having a pact with the devil to take care of wayward Christians. God's not in collusion with the devil. The devil is a created being, in no way equal to God, and as a God, does God's bidding.

And yet at the same time, there is no light and darkness going on here. Satan is darkness, but I think that it's more of a metaphor to hand him over to Satan. Because in the Bible, to be outside of the domain that God has defined, for example, the church, let's think of it as an umbrella, you know, nice umbrella.

And the church is the umbrella, and when we come to know Jesus, we come into the church, we're baptized as it were by the Spirit into the church forensically, we're members of the body, we're under the umbrella. Okay, so we're in, and then we have a major violation like this. Not only is it a moral violation, but the arrogance takes it to another level, and there doesn't seem to be any repentance.

And consequently, this person needs to be put out of the church to be excommunicated. Now, what is it that's outside this umbrella? Well, outside the umbrella is the world, the church, the world. We are in the world, but not of the world, but we're under the umbrella of God.

And so, when this man is taken from the church and put out into the world, he's no longer under the umbrella. Now, the world is the domain of Satan. He is the God of this world, of the world system.

And so, this person who, you know, we could ask the question, is he even a Christian? But he seems to be dealt with as if he were. He is put out from the protection of the umbrella into the elements of the world. The implication, I think, in the text is that that's going to do something to make him think about his actions.

This event of putting him and delivering him to Satan, to the domain of Satan, and I've given you a number of passages here where the church is the domain of the church and the domain of Satan text you can read, and you'll see what we're talking about. But this is not the analogy of the old Johnny Carson evening show, hello Johnny, or excuse me, here's Johnny, is what Ed McMahon used to say. Well, this is not a hello Satan, here's John, here's this sinner man.

It's not that sort of thing at all. Rather, Satan's realm is that which is outside the circle of the church. Out from under that umbrella puts the man in the world, and Satan is the God of this world.

He's been handed over to Satan's realm, and he's outside. In the circle, there is God's protection and care. There's the community.

But outside the circle, one is vulnerable. Now, he may have had other friends of status who said, well, you finally got out of that mess over there, didn't you? But if his inner being has been truly converted and changed, being kicked out causes pain. Hearing his former pagan friends think he's done something good for a change when he knows he hasn't is pain.

And all of that can build up and get his attention. He's outside the protection of God. This is not an issue of salvation.

To hand him over to Satan is not a soteriological passage. To hand him over to Satan is a disciplinary passage. He's going to be saved from damage, hopefully, as a result of being put out from underneath the umbrella of protection, and he's on his own.

It's an issue of discipline that is designed to bring an erring believer to see the error of their way. So, that's the phrase's usage. Now, the phrase's significance.

The significance is that it's a phrase of communication, just like it is in Timothy. The new community rested upon Jesus' preliminary defeat of Satan. To be excluded, that is excommunicated, from the sphere in which Christ's work was operative was to be thrust back into that which the realm of Satan still exercised authority, according to Kelly's statement here.

All these are saying the same thing. The excommunication may be accompanied by a supernatural demonstration of judgment from time to time. When Annias and Sapphira were found to be lying, God judged them by death.

It may be that the destruction of the flesh will go as far as this man dying. I know of personal stories of people in the church who have committed atrocious sins, not repented of them, and even sometimes buried those sins from the public and mourned themselves to death. Frankly, that's the sign of a true believer.

A sinner doesn't mourn themselves over sin. A true believer does, and that has happened on occasion in the church. It happened in Acts chapter 5 and other places as well.

The explanation of this discipline is that it is the destruction of the flesh. I've called this an objective genitive, that is, the flesh receives the destruction, but in what

sense? Now, this is the point at which the original NIV translated flesh as sinful nature. People who held that particular view argued that if you put this person out into the world, and if they're truly a Christian, they're going to feel so bad that their sinful propensity is going to be addressed, going to bring them to repentance, and they'll come flying back for forgiveness in their repentance to the church.

The consensus of scholars is that the sinful nature metaphor is not the best way to think of this. We should think of the standpoint of flesh as flesh, that they are going to suffer physically in different ways. Even the psychosomatic aspect of physical suffering could be at work here if this person's a true believer.

They could mourn themselves but, in their own stubbornness, refuse to repent and confess their sin. The ESV reads, deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, and then the NIV hand this man over to Satan so the sinful nature may be destroyed. Both of these views actually assume the same result.

The man is going to repent, all of this judgment and excommunication is going to get his attention, and he's going to come back to the church and be redeemed in the sense of being safe from damage. It's not an issue of damnation, but it's an issue of damage. Well, we don't know totally the ultimate outcome of all this, although, as we will mention a little later, 2 Corinthians may actually refer to this person at a later time.

All right, so let's think about a couple of issues about the explanation. First of all, the individual body view. You could call this the formal view, the curse, and the death.

This is very much the traditional view. I've listed a number of names. Destruction equals sickness and sickness that even goes to the point of death.

This view is based on the flesh referring to the physical body, which is turned over to Satan with a formula analogous to the curse formula found in things like Qumran and the magical papyri. The physical punishment, consignment to death, is viewed as remedial, salvaging the person for the eschaton. That's also that phrase that they might be saved in the end.

In other words, discipline is something that gets their attention, and if they're truly a believer, they're not going to get away from it. It's going to hound them, even if they do not immediately repent. It is handy if the 2 Corinthians reference to the person who's been brought back into the fold is the same person.

That's very handy for this interpretation so that we can see the effectiveness of the excommunication, but that is an interpretation that is up for grabs. Garland criticizes this view in some detail. He says the parallel texts are not the same kind of context

when you're talking about the person who died in relation to the communion in 1 Corinthians 11 or you're talking about Ananias and Sapphira.

Well, that's the way one person sees it, the way another person sees it. The claimed cursed texts are not true parallels, and this would be a legitimate criticism. Paul may actually have influenced the cursed texts that come later in the mystery religions rather than being influenced by them.

The later rabbinic idea that suffering and death actually expiate past sins is contrary to Paul's view of salvation and forgiveness. In ancient culture, ostracism from the group was very, very serious. Because in those ancient cultures, whether it was ostracism from a guild like the Guild of Silversmiths, or the Guild of Tentmakers, or the Guild of Orators, to be ostracized from your guild puts you out in darkness, as it were.

You no longer have a trade. You no longer have access to your livelihood because you've been ostracized. In the ancient world, you couldn't move around as freely as you do today and bury your past as if it didn't exist.

That was not easily achieved. In ancient culture, this ostracism was very serious. Merging into a new group would not be natural.

Today, you can disagree with your church, or be condemned by your church, and go across the street and be welcomed with open arms. It's a sad state of affairs, I think, in the church. Furthermore, there is a second idea of the corporate body view, which is not just the individual body.

A statement of expulsion of the man from the community and thus into Satan's realm in order to purge the leaven from the group. It's purifying the group as a community. This makes sense as well.

Sexual sins are not private matters. In fact, of all the sins in the Bible, the sexual sins are seen the most to be connected to other people, sometimes the limited group, and then to the larger group as a whole, both in the Old and in the New Testament. This view, the corporate body view, accounts for Paul addressing the group rather than the individual, which is very dominant in the details of the text.

The Old Testament teaches exclusion to expulsion for the sake of purity of the whole. This is a motif that's very common within the Old Testament. Putting the man outside the sphere of God's protection makes him vulnerable to Satan's forces.

He's out from under the umbrella, as we talked about, from which Christians have been rescued. The flesh is a metaphor for sinful nature, and the flesh is a metaphor for the body. This flesh is one statement, but we are a body of flesh.

But it covers a wide range of meanings. This corporate view may have a little more to do with the sinful nature view of sinful orientation. It destroys sinful lusts that cause the problem and thereby causes the person to repent.

The flesh in this setting is the sin-bent self-characterized by self-sufficiency that wages war against God, which is true. I mean, this was going on with this person. This sinful nature is to be put to death as part of the sanctifying process.

When we fail to do so, we do this as a pattern of life; we need extra motivation to do it, and the community gives us the motivation. But there is no mention of repentance in this context as the goal, although it surely is assumed. It seems odd to have Satan as the instrument to cause repentance, to hand him over to Satan.

But he denied such parallels in his critique of the death view. This is referring back to Garland. I didn't read it very well for you there.

So, there are a number of issues about the corporate view. So, you got the individual view of the person's body being buffeted, driving him back. You've got the corporate view, get the leaven out, and being out, he'll come into contact with his sin, face it if he's a true believer, he'll repent and come back.

There is some logic to taking either one of those views. Consequently, as you might imagine, there is a third proposal, a more holistic understanding where both of the views are considered to be represented, that it's not simply one or the other, but it's a collation of the two. Western interpretation always likes to pigeonhole things into one thing as opposed to another.

Perhaps, in this case, both things are true. The Bible does not bifurcate the physical and the spiritual, which these views could tend to do. So, I would say that the Bible says flesh; it doesn't mean it's not thinking about sinful nature, but it doesn't divide all this stuff out.

And so, flesh is good enough. Flesh covers it all. So why do we want to complicate it and even bifurcate it by looking at sinful nature and not thinking about the physical side? The Bible is always holistic about life.

It never bifurcates things out into separate entities. Perhaps all of the above could have been in Paul's mind, but he uses the word flesh, which was the natural thing to do in terms of the verbal description. So, pay your money, take your pick, as Leon Morris used to say, but the fact is that each of these has something to contribute to the understanding of the whole, but I would rather revert to the that Paul would more naturally just use the word flesh.

And if you said, Paul, do you mean by that that he's going to get in touch with his sin? Paul would say, well, sure, when you're hurting physically or emotionally, but none of that is separated into categories. It's the whole thing. You hurt emotionally, you hurt physically, you hurt interior, and your interior, where your propensity has been against God by your behavior, it's going to bend that propensity back to being in touch with God.

With a true believer, the community saying you have been wrong, you have been non-repentant, we cannot tolerate that, it is not okay, there is no whatever to cover this, you're out, that sends quite a message. I don't know if I've ever witnessed it in our culture, our Christian culture. That's a pretty tough thing for a congregation to do, and it can always be misunderstood in legal terms.

There are some settings where people love to judge others. We are to judge each other, but pulling off this judgment, this judgment seems pretty clear, but to pull off dealing with people's sin while still caring for the people and looking for repentance is a very difficult thing to do. But the Bible doesn't give us the option to opt out of doing that.

It is our responsibility, but we must do it with all humility. With love in the sense of hoping the person can come to see they're wrong and not get too high-minded ourselves, but for the grace of God, there go I. And the purpose of all this is so that the spirit may be saved in the end. It's not clear how the destruction of the physical side of man's nature, that is, even death, can affect the salvation of the immaterial side.

The death view has to view this as the final eschaton. It could reflect 1 Corinthians 3:15, in principle, man's essential self is saved, but there is no reward. That's the statement about wood, hay, and stubble.

At the end of the day, the thing we can say with clarity and confidence is that the goal of the discipline of a believer is repentance and restoration. The nature of restoration is always going to be guided by other texts as well, depending on the person's role in the community. The status of the person is that they're disciplined.

Some have raised that question, was this person an unbeliever? The answer to this question is influenced by the interpretation of 5:5 and the issue of whether he was or wasn't by your judgment on 5:5 as well. I think he was a believer myself. I'm not sure Paul would have proceeded in exactly the same way that he did or said the things that he said.

Furthermore, if you held a sinful nature view, that would be completely out of place with an unbeliever. We can't get out of the challenges of this text by just saying the

dude was not saved anyway. No, he was a believer who needed to be awakened to his decisions.

That was pretty tough. It was pretty external. We hope that in 2 Corinthians, the person who had been brought to sorrow and did come back into the community is the same person.

In fact, this comes up in the text that's here at the top of page 73. Is this the same person as 2 Corinthians 2, verses 5 to 11? Since we've been thinking through this so much, why don't I just read some of that to you? 2 Corinthians 2, verses 5 to 11. If anyone has caused grief, Paul says, he has not so much grieved me as he has grieved all of you to some extent.

Not to put it too severely. The punishment inflicted on him, is that him, this man we've been talking about? By the majority is sufficient. Now, instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow.

I urge you, therefore, to reaffirm your love for him. Another reason I wrote you was to see if you would stand the test and be obedient and everything. Anyone you forgive, I also forgive.

And what I have forgiven, if there was anything to forgive, I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake. In order for Satan to be interesting, isn't it? He does mention that. That Satan might not outwit us, for we are not unaware of his schemes.

Well, it is impossible to prove that these are the same people. There is a bit of implication in my mind that they are, and I think I'll choose that, to be frank. That yes, this worked.

The excommunication worked. We don't know how long it took to work. Not a long time, but long enough for this person to truly get in touch with their sin and their deeds.

I find it interesting in this case, that the woman is never mentioned. Usually, in ancient culture, being so masculine-oriented, the woman gets all the blame. Not in this case.

But in Roman Corinth, it was the men dominantly. Women were just starting to break out in certain ways. In fact, Rome itself was stressed with disobedient women.

They were breaking the codes of being controlled by the male-dominant culture. But in spite of the male-dominant culture, Paul brings the man to account, not the woman, in all of these texts. And yet, she was guilty too.

But we're not given the whole story, just this one side of the story. Lots of details, isn't there? There is no such thing as a simple reading of the Bible. The Bible is challenging, and we are called to rise to that challenge.

Let's go on. We've talked about how this issue of this man taking incest, or the man who committed incest. Paul illustrates the seriousness of entertaining such sin.

Now, he turns in verses six through eight to address the whole community a great deal more. Let's note this. In this paragraph, that is verses six to eight, Paul uses the imagery of leaven to unpack their sinful boasting.

This is really biblical, isn't it? It's really Old Testament. Remember, he's a Jew. He's probably a Pharisee.

He knows the Old Testament. He understands the metaphors and biblical imagery. Leaven was a major metaphor for sin in the Old Testament.

That's why they had to use unleavened bread in all of their festival celebrations. The sinful boasting, a boasting that reflects a disingenuous attitude influenced by status. That's the way that Winter puts it.

He pulls in the Passover imagery Paul does to stimulate the idea of purging out sin and basic obedience to divine will. The appeal to these Jewish ideas and the list in 5:11 may imply the presence of persons in Corinth who understood these Jewish nuances. We know there was a community of Jews in Corinth.

How many were around in relation to this? How had they integrated into the Roman Corinth? So, leaven out the lump. Get rid of it. I think it's important to stop for a second and reflect on the fact that Paul is using the Old Testament as an authority here.

It's an authoritative image. The Old Testament is not passé. The Old Testament has a great deal of divine moral teaching that is normative.

It transcends cultures. We live in an age where many are trying to do away with certain aspects of biblical teaching. And they love going to the Old Testament because it's easier, they think, to rid themselves of the moral restrictions that are taught within the Old Testament.

I've got disappointing news for you. It's not that easy. The New Testament comes back over and over and over again and validates the Old Testament in regard to its moral instruction.

Jesus does this as well, even in Galatians 5. Paul's rhetorical use of, Do you not know? Highlight that. Do you not know? 5:6, 6:2, 6:3, 6:9, 6:15, 6:16, 6:19, and you can compare other places. Do you not know? See, that's a rhetorical device.

What does it do? Gets our attention. Think about reading this to the congregation. The reader's up there, being a good reader.

Do you not know? And then he gets into what Paul says. It causes the interchange between the reader and the audience, between the author and his audience—very important rhetorical device.

The massive repetition and repetition are always a window into understanding. The massive repetition of this phrase would certainly ring in the ears of those who heard the text read aloud. Furthermore, most of what they do not know relates to the moral expectations of the gospel.

Consequently, they have lost their reputation and status among the saints because of their disobedience. Isn't this clever? Not only, so Paul says, okay, you're in Roman Corinth, and you're going to want to operate off status, but you've gotten into trouble over here because you've used status more than biblical mores. All right, let's talk about biblical status.

Let's talk about Christian status. Because of your behavior, you have lost your reputation in the Christian community. You've lost status in your guild of the Christian community.

What a clever criticism in light of the elitist tendencies of some of these people in Corinth. All right, so verses 1 to 8. Now let's look at verses 9 to 13. Number two, in the middle of page 73.

Paul reminds the Corinthians about the need to sever fellowship with immoral brothers and sisters, if you please. Let me read this to you, 5:9 to 13. Again, if we're going to be like them, we have to hear the word of God.

They heard it. Most of them didn't read it. They heard it.

Reading was a privilege to be able to get copies, which you had to write out by hand. So, while that circulated among the Christians, probably only the elders had access, not because they closed access but because of limited access. They just had that document.

So, most of the people got their information through hearing. Let's hear what Paul says in regard to severing fellowship with immoral brothers, immoral sisters, and

people in the church who openly are living in sin. Sin is the violation of the revealed will of God.

It's not some cutesy little single-syllabic word, I'm teasing, syllable word, but it's a word that captures everything that has to do with being in the face of God over something. 5:9, I wrote to you in my letter. This is that other letter, remember we mentioned in the introduction, that we don't have unless we have pieces somewhere else.

I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people. So, at some time, he had already instructed the Corinthian community about sexuality, and he told them not to participate with people who are openly doing these things. And at that time, those people were probably people outside the church.

We may be inside, but maybe outside. Verse 10, not at all meaning, so they must have been outside, not at all meaning the people of this, oh sorry, I reversed that, I'm getting ahead of myself, he meant people that were inside, not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral or greedy and swindlers. So, what's going on? Two people, people in, people out.

Paul told them before not to associate with people who claim to be in, living like they're out. And then Paul comes back, and this is a very important passage, and says those who are outside have to take care of themselves if they are not my responsibility. Watch what he says here, not at all meaning the people of this world, that is, the outside, who are immoral or greedy, swindlers, idolaters.

In that case, you would have to leave this world. But now I'm writing to you that you must not associate with anyone who claims to be a brother or sister, but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater, slanderer, drunkard, or swindler. Do not even eat with such a person.

What business is it of mine, Paul says, to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? God will judge those outside. Expel the wicked person from among you. So, there's outside, there's inside.

Paul also makes an absolutely clear delineation here. We are not responsible to correct in the sense of having the authority to correct. Sure, we can preach against it, just like John the Baptizer preached against Herod and his sinful behavior.

We can preach against it. We can speak against it. In certain cultures like America, we can vote against it.

We can march against it. We can lobby against it. But we are not to be naive and think that we have authority over the outside.

We have a voice, and in some cultures, more of a voice than in other cultures. In some cultures, you have no voice at all. But Paul is making a very, very important statement.

The church does not have to bear the responsibility of making the world act right. We have the responsibility to declare that the world needs to get right with God. Not to be their mother in the sense of naming all the things they should do right.

Because they're not under our umbrella. We have no authority over them. We have a voice, but we do not have that authority.

We would have to create our own little fiefdom, our own little kingdom, our own little nation, and nobody gets in unless they do what we tell them. Well, that doesn't happen in the world. It hardly happens in the church.

This is fascinating, verse 12. What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Now you know that does not mean that Paul doesn't have a judgment. Certainly, he has a judgment.

His point is clear. It's not his responsibility to make them behave. You can't make the world behave.

You can hardly make your children behave. What do you think you're going to do with those who are completely outside? If you set up that expectation, you will be totally frustrated because your expectation will be totally rejected. Hayes observes on page 88 in his volume that the list in 5:11 may reflect exclusion texts that are mentioned in Deuteronomy.

And they drive toward the exclusion statement in 5:13, expel the wicked man from among you. The Old Testament is integrated very much into chapter 5. In Deuteronomy, you have exclusions of promiscuity, adultery, idolatry, malicious false testimony, rebellious drunken sons, kidnapping, and slave trading. In Corinthians, you've got sexual immorality that correlates in greed and idolatry, revilers, drunkards, and robbers.

Isn't it interesting? There's a close relationship between those. The relationship is certainly thematic, even though it does not seem that he's quoting Deuteronomy. But remember, the apostles were filled with the Word of God.

You cut Paul, and he bled the Old Testament. And they bring out the Old Testament, even sometimes with its phrases, and they probably weren't even thinking or even trying to quote it, but they were reflecting the worldview of which they were very much a part. They oozed biblical teaching.

So, Paul clarifies the church's domain of responsibility on page 74, which we've already read in verses 12 and 13. The implication of Paul's not outside but inside. That clarification does not negate pronouncing judgment on sin.

You can pronounce it all you want. You have a voice. You just don't have the authority.

You're not a cop. You can't give them a ticket. You might wish you could, but you can't.

All you have is a voice, and you need to use that voice responsibly. It does imply boundaries on the church's authority and control. The church does not run the world, nor does the world run the church.

The church is the church. And in some of our cultures, particularly in the American culture, we need to grapple with what that means. We need to come back to these two texts.

And grapple with what it means that we're not running the world. It does not relate to the contemporary issue of legal and political involvement. In other words, you cannot use this text to say that a Christian organization against abortion is unbiblical.

That's their right as citizens. Nor can you say you must have a Christian organization against abortion, or you're not biblical. See, one side can't accuse the other, and the other side can't accuse the other.

We have the right as American citizens to have a voice in our culture, even a Christian voice. But we have to be careful how we connect to authority. God's called us to follow him.

And that involves a lot of things. And part of that involvement is a voice in our world. But if you operate under the assumption you've got to change that world without salvation, even, then you're under a wrong assumption.

Well, challenging text, isn't it? A lot more details to be sure, but that's what we're going to do with Chapter 5. Read widely. I read a lot. The more you read, the better you understand, and the more you'll be able to defend your understanding of what you think texts are teaching.

Have a good day, and we'll see you in our next lecture.

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