

"DELIVER THIS MAN TO SATAN" (1 COR 5:5):  
A CASE STUDY IN CHURCH DISCIPLINE

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*Part of understanding the difficult passage in 1 Cor 5:1-5 is the interpretation of the words "deliver this man to Satan" in 5:5. To explain this statement correctly, one must establish what the sin is that caused Paul to deliver the declaration. Then he should realize the responsibility of the local church in Corinth to deal with such a situation. The nature of the authority behind the directive needs also to be appreciated. Then details of the disciplinary action itself need clarification. The whole set of circumstances emphasizes how important it is for local churches to implement church-disciplinary actions in dealing with sinning members and to use sound principles in doing so.*

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In his second epistle, the apostle Peter remarks that some things in Paul's letters are hard to understand (2 Pet 3:16). This is surely an understatement. Anyone who has studied Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians knows that a few passages are not only difficult to interpret, they are enigmatic. Among others these include Paul's

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<sup>1</sup>This article has been adapted and enlarged from a segment of Dr. Kistemaker's forthcoming commentary on First Corinthians, with permission from Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI. Dr. Kistemaker is in the final year of almost twenty years of service as Secretary-Treasurer of the Evangelical Theological Society, a responsibility he has fulfilled with distinction to the great enrichment of the community of evangelical scholarship.

command to deliver to Satan the man who committed incest (5:5), the sign of authority on the head of a woman because of the angels (11:10), and the reference to the ones baptized for the dead (15:29). We have the text of these verses, but could wish that Paul had incorporated explanatory footnotes along with them.

In this article, we will investigate the context,<sup>2</sup> the significance, and the message of 1 Cor 5:5. By studying the text carefully in the setting of the preceding verses, we will gain a better understanding of it and, at the same time, glean some principles for local churches to follow in exercising church discipline. A personal translation of the paragraph of vv. 1-5 is in order as a start:

**<sup>1</sup>It is actually reported that there is immorality among you and of such a kind that does not even happen among the Gentiles, namely, that a man has the wife of his father. <sup>2</sup>And you are arrogant! Should you not rather be grieved? Put the man who practiced this deed out of your midst. <sup>3</sup>For even though I am absent in the body but present in spirit, I have already judged the man who has so committed this as if I were present. <sup>4</sup>When you come together and I am with you in spirit with the power of our Lord Jesus, <sup>5</sup>in the name of our Lord Jesus deliver this man to Satan for destruction of the flesh that his spirit may be saved in the day of our Lord.**

#### THE CAUSE OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE: INCEST

Paul had been told that someone in the church had committed incest but that the members of the Corinthian church had not censured this person. In an earlier letter (cf. 5:9) Paul had warned the Corinthians not to associate with immoral people. Apparently, they had paid little if any attention to his instruction because when a man had committed incest, the church failed to act. Now Paul instructs the church to remove this man and his heinous sin from their midst. Indeed both the man, because of incest, and the church, because of failure to impose discipline, are guilty of sin before God.

"There is immorality among you" (v. 1). The information Paul gives is scant. He has received a report on immorality that pertains to

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<sup>2</sup>Some issues of textual and exegetical significance in the larger context do not directly impinge on an understanding of v. 5, and so will not be treated. The focus is upon obtaining a grasp of the explicit directive, "deliver this man to Satan."

a male member of the church and the wife of the man's father. We do not know whether the woman is a Christian or the father is still living. We know only that the case of incest concerns a man and his stepmother and that this immoral conduct is of a kind that even the Gentiles condemn.

According to Paul, the members of the church in Corinth were acquainted with this case of incest. The first word in the Greek sentence, *ἅπασαν* (*hols*), is an adverb that means either "actually," "generally," or "altogether." It conveys more the concept of thoroughness than of universality<sup>3</sup> and signifies that the whole story has been reported. Because it stands first in the sentence, the adverb is emphatic and modifies the impersonal verb *it is reported*. Paul is not interested in revealing who the reporter is or how he has received the news. He only states the fact and does not provide details, except to say that in an earlier letter he had warned the Corinthians not to associate with immoral people (cf. v. 9).

"A man has the wife of his father" (v. 1). In Jewish circles, the wording *wife of his father* meant "stepmother." Although not physically related to the son, yet because of her marriage vows to his father, she would plunge the son into sin by having sexual relations with him. God repeatedly told the Israelites, "Do not have sexual relations with your father's wife; that would dishonor your father" (Lev 18:8; 20:11; Deut 22:30; 27:20). If a son purposely had sexual relations with his stepmother, the community would have to put him to death by stoning. Would a son be free to marry her if his father had passed away? In the first two centuries of the Christian era, some Jewish rabbis condemned a marriage of a proselyte son and his pagan stepmother while others tolerated it.<sup>4</sup> Is it possible that this tolerance was known among the Jewish people and proselytes in Corinth? Perhaps, but we do not know. In any case, Paul condemns the deed and calls attention to the conduct of the Gentiles in this matter.

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<sup>3</sup>The Simple English Bible has, "It is being told everywhere." By contrast, the JB reads, "I have been told as an undoubted fact."

<sup>4</sup>Str-B, 3:358.

Paul fails to point out whether the father of this church member has passed away. He does not describe the stepmother as a widow, but gives the impression that the father is still alive (cf. Gen 35:22; Amos 2:7). He writes that this sin is "of such a kind that does not even happen among the Gentiles" (v. 1).<sup>5</sup>

The mention of the name *Gentiles* is a means to emphasize the severity of the sin that the church member had committed. The writer alluded to the Gentiles to prod the Christian community to action. He did not want them to let one member put the entire congregation to shame. As one rotten apple in a box of apples can spoil the whole box, one reckless sinner was on the verge of rendering the entire Corinthian church ineffective in its witness to the Gentile community.

Why were the Corinthians negligent in chastising this immoral person and expelling him? Paul's words are biting: "You are arrogant" (v. 2). In the preceding chapter he had stated that some of the Corinthians were arrogant in their talking (cf. 4:6, 18, 19). He here addresses all the believers in Corinth, because he knows that the leaders have led the others astray. They have been haughty for some time already and continue to be proud. They think that they are free to decide not to do anything about this wickedness (6:12; 10:23), and they claim to possess superior knowledge (3:18; 8:1-2). In reality, Paul faces the difficulty of trying to reason with people who lack both humility and constraint.

With a rhetorical question that expects an affirmative answer Paul queries, "Should you not rather be grieved?" (v. 2). Having alerted them to a blame that covers the body of the church, he is asking them to begin a period of mourning. The Greek verb *penuev* (*penthe*, "I grieve") refers to a sorrow for sin that has been committed either by oneself or by others. The OT provides the example of Ezra, who mourned over the unfaithfulness of the exiles. These exiles had returned to Jerusalem and rebuilt the temple. But they had married foreign women belonging to the people around them (Ezra 10:1-6).<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Cicero condemns the crime of incest: *Pro Cluent* 5.11-14.

<sup>6</sup>BAGD, 642.

Ezra expressed grief and sorrow for the laxity these Jewish exiles displayed with regard to marriage.

In a similar manner, Paul tells the Corinthians to enter a period of grieving and thus exhibit repentance with godly sorrow. He desires that they humble themselves repentantly before God and then experience God's forgiveness and love.

### THE INITIATIVE IN CHURCH DISCIPLINE

The Corinthians must turn from their pride, show renewed obedience to God's law, and expel the evil man from the church. Hence Paul says, "Put the man who practiced this deed out of your midst" (v. 2; cf. vv. 7, 13). The Greek indicates that the man has committed an act of immorality, not necessarily that he continues to practice it.

The time for church discipline has arrived. This painful process must take place just the same as a surgeon must use a scalpel to remove a malignant tumor from a patient's body. If the Corinthians do not dismiss the immoral man from the church, the Christian community itself will be placed under divine condemnation as outsiders are (v. 13). The church of Jesus Christ is characterized by holiness and must remove the blatant and unrepentant sinner by excommunicating him. Further, removal accompanied by the church's repentance cleanses the body of Christ.

In vv. 2 and 3 Paul gives his outspoken judgment on the matter of immorality. For emphasis he contrasts the pronoun *you* in v. 2 with the pronoun *I* in v. 3. "Should *you* not rather be grieved?" (v. 2), and "For even though *I* am absent in body but present in spirit" (v. 3). He realizes that the Corinthians will read his epistle but will not see the physical presence of Paul. He admits that a geographical distance separates him from the recipients of his letter. Paul is in Ephesus in the western part of Asia Minor and the recipients of the epistle are in Corinth in the southern part of Greece. Distance does not mean that Paul's written words can be taken lightly. On the contrary, he is with

the church in spirit and in that sense gives personal leadership. In spirit he takes the gavel in hand, so to speak, and chairs the meeting of the local church. Even though he is unable to have access to all the details, he knows that he and the Corinthians have to remove this blemish from the congregation. He does so through prayer on behalf of the Corinthians and through his written epistle.

Paul tells the congregation that he has taken action with respect to the immoral man. He says, "I have already judged the man who has so committed this as if I were present" (v. 3). He does not list a detailed procedure for church discipline, yet we are confident that the practice of confirming the truth by two or three witnesses had to be followed (cf. Matt 18:15-17).

Notice that Paul has already judged this man. In effect, he needs no additional information because he knows that this affront to God's holiness must be removed. He writes in the perfect tense, "I have already judged," to indicate that he had already made a decision as soon as he heard about the offense. "Because Paul does not speak of an action but of a judgment there is no question here of divine judgment as in the case of Ananias and Sapphira."<sup>7</sup> Paul says, "as if I were present" (v. 3). This clause should be taken with the verb "I have judged," and in Greek precedes the wording "the man who has so committed this" (v. 3). Let no one think that Paul is far removed from the scene and therefore powerless. Paul is not impotent; he wants the church to take action guided by his judgment. In proper assembly, the church must remove the man who has committed the crime.

The wording is quite emphatic in the clause: "the man who has *so* committed this." For the sake of style some translators delete the word *so*. A few translations, however, dutifully transmit it to show Paul's intended emphasis.<sup>8</sup> Paul writes a sequence of three concepts that serve as demonstratives (the man, *so*, and this deed). In the

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<sup>7</sup>F. W. Grosheide, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953) 121.

<sup>8</sup>KJV, NKJV, NASB, *God's New Covenant: A New Testament Translation* by Heinz W. Cassirer. BAGD translates the combination *so* and *this* as "so basely" (597).

Greek, he points out that the act of sinning happened in the past and has lasting effects for the church.

The intent of Paul's words is that the members of the Corinthian church must take immediate action to eliminate this evil from their midst. He instructs them to meet in assembly and to do so as if he himself were present. While they are gathered, they should call on Jesus' name, who Himself had promised that where two or three people gather in His name, He will be present (Matt 18:20). In addition, they should know that Paul himself will be with them in spirit. They ought not to minimize his presence in spirit as if his physical presence would be real and his spiritual presence illusory. No, not so for several reasons.

First, Paul assures them twice that he is with them (v. 3); he is their spiritual father, watches over them, and constantly prays for them. Second, in the Greek he uses the emphatic personal adjective *μου* (*emou*, "my") with the noun *πνεύματος* (*pneumatōs*, "spirit"). In English idiom, this adjective is deleted. Third, the phrase *in spirit* is synonymous with the phrase *the power of the Lord*. Paul speaks with the apostolic authority Jesus delegated to him; as a rightfully appointed apostle he wields divine power.

In vv. 3, 4, and 5 Paul writes a lengthy sentence that lacks fluency and so reveals his inner tension and agitation. The difficulty we face is the punctuation of this passage. The Greek original indicates that these verses can be construed as one loosely connected sentence: "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, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, 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" (KJV). This single sentence becomes unwieldy and fails to communicate Paul's intention clearly. We need fitting punctuation to separate the many clauses so as to relate them meaningfully to the individual phrases.

## THE AUTHORITY FOR CHURCH DISCIPLINE

Modern translators shorten such sentences and introduce appropriate punctuation. But even then, numerous questions remain, as is evident from the illustrations taken from several versions. How should the phrase "in the name of our Lord Jesus" be construed?<sup>9</sup> In short, this phrase could modify the four<sup>10</sup> clauses italicized in the following excerpts:

1. *I have already pronounced judgment* in the name of the Lord Jesus on the man who has done such a thing. When you are assembled . . . you are to hand this man over to Satan (RSV).
2. *When you are assembled* in the name of our Lord Jesus . . . hand this man over to Satan (NIV).
3. I as one who is present have already judged *the one who has done this thing* in the name of the Lord Jesus. When you are assembled . . . such a person should be handed over to Satan.<sup>11</sup>
4. When you and my spirit are gathered together . . . you should, in the name of the Lord Jesus, *hand over to Satan such a man* as this (*Cassirer*).

Many translators favor the first possibility because Paul, although absent from Corinth in body but present in spirit, speaks

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<sup>9</sup>In my translation, I have made the phrase "in the name of our Lord Jesus" a part of v. 5.

<sup>10</sup>Hans Conzelmann lists six choices and Leon Morris seven. Consult Conzelmann's *1 Corinthians* (Hermeneia, trans James W. Leitch; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975) 97; Leon Morris, *1 Corinthians* (rev. ed., Tyndale; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 84-85.

<sup>11</sup>Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, "I Corinthians V, 3-5," *RB* 84 (1977) 245; S. D. MacArthur, "'Spirit' in Pauline Usage: 1 Corinthians 5,5," in *Studia Biblica 1978, III. Papers on Paul and Other New Testament Authors* (ed. E. A. Livingstone; Sheffield: JSOT, 1980) 249-56; Gerald Harris, "The Beginnings of Church Discipline: 1 Corinthians 5," *NTS* 37 (1991) 1-21.

with apostolic authority in Jesus' name. His verdict, then, is not a personal opinion, but is pronounced on Jesus' behalf and with His approval.<sup>12</sup>

Conversely, there is wisdom in looking at a phrase closer in the context of the Greek text and linking it to the nearest phrase as a modifier. When church officials would read this epistle in Greek to the congregation, the hearers would have had to link the phrase in question to either the preceding or the succeeding words. As a result, the immediate context could point to either the second or the third of the versions cited above.

Many scholars endorse the second reading: "When you come together in the name of our Lord Jesus and I am with you in spirit with the power of our Lord Jesus."<sup>13</sup> They profess that believers who gather in the name of Jesus know that he is the head and they are the body (Eph 1:22-23). The objection to this reading is the repetitive phrase "of our Lord Jesus." This phrase occurs with both the nouns *name* and *power*, and therefore makes them indistinguishable.

The third translation conveys the sense that the man committed sexual sin with his stepmother in the name of the Lord Jesus. But this reading meets serious objections. First, because of textual variants it is difficult to decide whether the reading should be "our Lord Jesus" or "the Lord Jesus." Paul almost always speaks of "the Lord" without the addition of "Jesus." Furthermore, he utilizes the designation "our Lord Jesus" throughout this epistle. In light of these observations scholars prefer the reading with the personal pronoun "our."<sup>14</sup> Next, there appears to be an incongruity in the conduct of a Christian son who had illicit intercourse with his Gentile stepmother and invoked the name of Jesus to justify his sin. I suspect that the last name this sinner possibly

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<sup>12</sup>See Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987) 207-8.

<sup>13</sup>E.g., John Calvin, *The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians* (Calvin's Commentaries series, trans. John W. Fraser; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976 [rpt.]) 107.

<sup>14</sup>E.g., G. Zuntz, *The Text of the Epistles: A Disquisition upon the Corpus Paulinum* (London: Oxford, 1953) 235-36.

invoked would be that "of our Lord Jesus." Last, if the third translation were accurate, we would have expected Paul to note the misuse of Jesus' name with scathing rebuke.

The fourth reading seems best. If we take the prepositional phrase "in the name of our Lord Jesus" with the clause "deliver this man to Satan," the sentence conveys Paul's command to the Corinthian congregation to expel the man. Except for the phrase "in the name of our Lord Jesus," v. 4 should be understood as a parenthetical statement. The emphasis, then, falls on Paul's command and the church's execution. The Corinthians must obey Paul and act on the basis of Jesus' authority. Paul says, "[I have already judged], in the name of our Lord Jesus, deliver this man to Satan." He tells the members that when they come together they must take action, for both Paul's spirit and Jesus' power are present.<sup>15</sup> The words *spirit* and *power* are juxtaposed and synonymous so that when the Corinthians act, they are aided by Paul's spiritual presence and Jesus' power.

#### THE RESULT OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE: EXCOMMUNICATION

"Deliver this man to Satan" (v. 5). I have translated the Greek aorist infinitive *paradounai* (*paradounai*, "to deliver") as an imperative. Handing someone over to Satan is akin to the prescription Jesus gave His disciples: treat an unrepentant sinner as a pagan or a tax collector (Matt 18:17). The command to deliver someone to Satan has a parallel in another epistle where Paul writes about some people shipwrecking their faith. "Among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme" (1 Tim 1:20, NIV).

Paul's command to hand over a person to Satan is the act of excommunication and is equivalent to purging the evil from the church (cf. v. 13). Believers are safe in the hand of God from which no one, not even Satan, can snatch them (John 10:28-29). But if a sinner is

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<sup>15</sup>Cf. G. A. Cole, "1 Cor 5:4 . . . with My Spirit," *ExpT* 98 (1987) 205.

delivered to the prince of this world, he faces destruction. He no longer enjoys the protection that a caring Christian community provides. John C. Hurd puts it graphically: "The Church [is] an island of life in Christ surrounded by a sea of death ruled by Satan."<sup>16</sup>

When adrift and deprived of spiritual support, the possibility is not remote that the outcast will come to his senses and subsequently repent. Here are two examples from the OT and the NT, respectively, of individuals who repented and returned to fellowship. Gomer, who as Hosea's sexually immoral wife personifies Israel, exclaims, "I will go back to my husband as at first, for then I was better off than now" (Hos 2:7, NIV). And the prodigal son repented by confessing that he had sinned against God and against his father. Of his own volition, the son went to his parental home. This Jewish son came to his senses when he worked seven days a week herding pigs for a Gentile and was physically starving. He had broken God's commands, but confessed his sin before God. In the words of the father, the wayward son was dead; but when he returned home, he was alive again (Luke 15:24, 32).

What does Paul mean with the word *flesh* in the clause "for destruction of the flesh" (v. 5)? We understand the term to signify not part of a human body but "the whole person from the material point of view."<sup>17</sup> The translation "sinful nature" (NIV) or "sinful self" (NCV) fails to correspond as the counterpart of spirit in the text and, therefore, is less than satisfactory. Moreover, the text does not warrant the interpretation that destruction of the flesh results in immediate death because, in a subsequent verse, Paul forbids the Corinthians to have table fellowship with such a man (v. 11). Because of the brevity of the clause "for destruction of the flesh," the question of mode or manner remains unanswered. For lack of pertinent detail, we are forced to resort to either of two hypotheses: first, Satan is permitted to destroy a person's sensuality; or second, he weakens man's physical

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<sup>16</sup>John Coolidge Hurd, Jr., *The Origin of I Corinthians* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer, 1983) 285.

<sup>17</sup>Adela Yarbro Collins, "The Function of 'Excommunication' in Paul," *HTR* 73 (1980) 257; cf. also Eduard Schweizer, "srj, sarkikw, srkinow," *TDNT* 7:125.

body.

Those scholars who resort to the first hypothesis explain that the term *flesh* pertains to the baser part of man's physical life that causes him to sin.<sup>18</sup> In the hands of Satan, they say, this part of a person's being perishes while his spirit is being saved. Consequently, they do not see Satan in an adversarial role to the cause of Christ, but as a helper. We demur. Satan is permitted to destroy only that which God allows,<sup>19</sup> but he never leads a sinner to repentance and a saving knowledge of Christ. By contrast, he is set on leading a sinner further away from God for Satan restrains rather than promotes the cause of Christ. Therefore this explanation fails to merit favor.

The second hypothesis is preferred. It holds that in addition to the act of excommunication, God permits Satan to attack and gradually weaken man's physical body (cf. Job 2:5; 2 Cor 12:7).<sup>20</sup> Paul is not referring to a sudden demise (as e.g., in Acts 5:1-10), but to a slow process of physical decline. During this process the sinner receives ample time to reflect on his condition and repent (cf. 1 Cor 11:28-30).<sup>21</sup>

The clause on the destruction of the flesh is grammatically subordinate to the main purpose clause, "that his spirit may be saved" (v. 5). Even though the Greek word *pnema* (*pneuma*, "spirit") in translation can be capitalized as "Spirit" or refer to man's "spirit," translators understand the term to refer not to the divine, but the human spirit. Nevertheless, one scholar has suggested the

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<sup>18</sup>N. G. Joy, "Is the Body Really to Be Destroyed? (1 Corinthians 5:5)," *BibTr* 39 (1988) 429-36; A. C. Thiselton, "The Meaning of *Sarx* in 1 Corinthians 5:5: A Fresh Approach in the Light of Logical and Semantic Factors," *SJT* 26 (1973) 204-28; J. Cambier, "La Chair et l'Esprit en 1 Cor. v.5," *NTS* 15 (1969) 221-32.

<sup>19</sup>Cf., however, T. C. G. Thornton, "Satan`God's Agent for Punishing," *ExpT* 83 (1972) 151-52.

<sup>20</sup>Colin Brown, among others, states that "physical destruction is not envisaged" ("leurow," *NIDNTT* 1:466). Morris notes that Paul sees the man's expulsion "resulting in physical consequences" (1 *Corinthians* 86).

<sup>21</sup>Frederic Louis Godet, *Commentary on First Corinthians* (1889; reprint, Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1977) 257; Morris, *1 Corinthians* 86.

interpretation that the Christian community had to expel the incestuous man "to avoid offense to the presence of the Holy Spirit."<sup>22</sup> Certainly Scripture teaches not to grieve or stifle the Holy Spirit of God (cf. Eph 4:30; 1 Thess 5:19). But that is not the point of the current passage. We reject the scholarly interpretation for at least three reasons: first, v. 5 contrasts man's flesh and spirit, not human flesh and the Holy Spirit. Next, Paul states that man's spirit may be saved, not that the presence of the Holy Spirit may be kept. And last, in the preceding verses (vv. 3, 4) the word *pneuma* occurs twice and refers to man's spirit, not to the Holy Spirit.

The destruction of the flesh serves the purpose of making possible the restoring of the sinner's soul before he dies. The gift of salvation depends on repentance, which takes place during a person's earthly life, not after his death. Scripture clearly teaches us that repentance must take place on earth, not in hell where the rich man implored father Abraham for help. Physical death irrevocably closes the door to a second opportunity for repentance and salvation (Luke 16:19-31).

Yet Paul writes that the man's spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord, which seems to point to the judgment day.<sup>23</sup> He does not imply that the man will have to wait until the end of time to be saved. Rather, Paul means that in this life the forgiven sinner receives salvation and in the day of the Lord is counted among those who are glorified. "Salvation is primarily an eschatological reality, experienced in the present to be sure, but to be realized fully at the Day of the Lord."<sup>24</sup> Also, the interpretation of the phrase *day of the Lord* is broader than a reference to the end of time when the judgment will take place. It can also mean a unique period during which God's people rejoice in the Lord. The OT prophets understood the phrase to mean a time in

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<sup>22</sup>Yarbro Collins, "Function" 263.

<sup>23</sup>The variants that read "the day of the Lord Jesus" and "the day of our Lord Jesus Christ" do not substantially alter the results of this study. The point is that the reference of the expression is to something eschatological.

<sup>24</sup>Fee, *First Corinthians* 213.

which God claims victory over the world and His people triumph with Him (Isa 2:11, 17-20; Zech 14:7).

In His infinite wisdom, God brings a sinner to repentance through various means and methods (cf. 11:32; 1 Pet 4:6). He is interested in the salvation of man's soul and earnestly desires that all people come to repentance (2 Pet 3:9).

With respect to the man who committed incest, Paul hopes that even though Satan may destroy the physical body, the man's spirit may be saved "in the day of the Lord" (v. 5). From Paul's epistles, however, we have no positive proof that the man was restored physically or spiritually.<sup>25</sup>

## CONCLUSION

When the Israelites entered Canaan and conquered Jericho, Achan transgressed God's command by taking items devoted to God. The people stoned him and thus removed God's wrath against sin (Josh 7:25-26). God calls His people to be a holy people.

In the Jerusalem church, Ananias and Sapphira purposely tried to deceive the Holy Spirit. Peter uncovered their deception, and God removed them from the Christian community by taking their lives (Acts 5:1-10). God wanted the followers of Jesus to honor the truth.

Paul confronted the Corinthians with the incestuous behavior of one of their members. With a direct command he instructed them to expel the man from the church in the name of the Lord. The man's excommunication consisted of being delivered into the hands of Satan. Paul charged the church to purge itself of wickedness and evil and to embrace the virtues of sincerity and truth (v. 8).

If Paul had not acted forcefully to exclude this man from the church, the man's sin would have continued to infect the entire congregation. Indeed, the man's immoral conduct posed a direct

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<sup>25</sup>Cf. E. Fascher, "Zu Tertullians Auslegung von 1 Kor 5, 1-5 (De Pudicitia c. 13-16)," *ThLZ* 99 (1974) 9-12. Whether 2 Cor 3:6-8 is referring to this same individual is uncertain.

threat to the existence of the church itself. The church dwells figuratively in a glass house, and the world is free to observe the people within this house. When the church fails to check a sin that the world condemns, the church has become ineffective because of disobedience and spiritual defilement.

The church must deal decisively with sin. It must attempt to bring the offender to repentance and salvation or else resort to excommunication as Paul instructed the Corinthians. In word and deed, the church must exhibit an intense hatred for sin and a genuine desire for holiness. Such holiness demands ardent love for Jesus Christ and total obedience to His commands.