

## Paul's "Judgment"

*"For I verily, being absent in body but present in spirit, have already as though I were present judged him that hath so wrought this thing, in the name of our Lord Jesus, ye being gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus, to deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of our Lord Jesus" (1 Cor. 5:3-5).*

Some see a discrepancy between instructions here and the words of Jesus in Matthew 18:15-17. There is none. Matthew's account begins with an individual's private sin against another (*"If thy brother hath trespassed against thee ..."*). The account in our text had progressed to a public affair. This sin was known -- brethren in Corinth were *"puffed up"* about the matter. Unbelievers were aghast at it -- something needed to be done -- NOW. Paul had already judged his brother. He was to be taken *"away from among them"* and delivered *"unto Satan"* -- all this in the name of our Lord Jesus.

To do something *"in the name of our Lord Jesus"* was to act by His power or authority. His name is above all names (Phil. 2:9); a more excellent name than angels (Heb. 1:4); and there is salvation in no other name than His (Acts 4:12). Already Paul has appealed for unity -- in the name of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1:10); and in addition to this, the Corinthians had, as all are to be, baptized in the name of Jesus (Acts 2:38). Withdrawal (for such is in essence what the apostle commands) is to be done; however soul-wrenching or distasteful as it may be.

The brethren were to deliver the errant brother *"unto Satan."* In a later letter to Timothy, Paul said he had delivered Hymenaeus and Alexander *"unto Satan"* (1 Tim. 1:20). The sinful brother at Corinth was delivered to Satan *"for the destruction of the flesh;"* Hymenaeus and Alexander were delivered to Satan *"that they might be taught not to blaspheme."* The action on the part of both Paul and Corinthians was to bring repentance to the sinful persons. The *"destruction of the flesh"* signifies the destruction of sinful desires that brought him so low in morals; to be taught not to blaspheme also would suggest action to lead such to repentance. The Thessalonians were commanded to withdraw from every brother that *"walketh disorderly, and not after the traditions"* which had received from the company of Paul (2 Thess. 3:6). Again, this latter action was to cause repentance, that, rather than being idle and busybodies, they would *"work with quietness and eat their own bread"* (2 Thess. 3:12).

Was there miraculous suffering or pain inflicted when these were "*delivered unto Satan*"? Paul certainly had the power to do so, as seen by his striking a false teacher with blindness (Acts 13:6-12). Peter likewise pronounced a death sentence on Ananias and Sapphira because of their sin (Acts 5:3-10). Paul asked the Corinthians whether they wished him to return to them "*with a rod or in love and a spirit of gentleness*" (1 Cor. 4:21). Still, while some injury or suffering could have been inflicted by the apostle, such is not inherently part of the commanded action. The need to be taught not to blaspheme or that the destruction of the flesh might be destroyed is as needful today as in the first century, and we cannot inflict suffering and pain miraculously on others. "*Delivered one to Satan,*" then, must involve something else. From the whole of the passage of 1 Corinthians 5, the Corinthian brother was to be excluded from their fellowship.

"*With such a one, not to eat*" (1 Cor. 5:11). Such is the nature of withdrawal -- not just reading a letter or statement, but ceasing to have social relationship with the erring one. This "shunning" of a sinful brother is designed to make him realize he is in Satan's grasp and control, and because he is, he no longer can have fellowship with the people of God. To one who longs for such bonds with brethren, and who has been excluded from that fellowship, the exclusion may make him repent of his wrong doing. Such is its purpose, and, as one concludes from the second letter to these brethren, their subsequent "withdrawal" of the sinful Corinthian brother wrought its desired action.

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