

## *“For Christ Our Passover also has Been Sacrificed”*

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*“Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed.” (1 Cor 5:7)*

Read 1 Cor 5:1-13

In chapters 1 through 4, the apostle has dealt with division within the local assembly. He now turns his attention toward the failure of the body to minister to an unrepentant sinner. Paul opens chapter 5 with a statement of astonishment that the Corinthian Church is tolerating gross immorality in their midst (v.1). He is shocked at their arrogant attitude in the midst of coarse debauchery (v.2). His response is swift and final, “The one who had done this deed [should] be removed from your midst (v.3).”

In verses 3-5, Paul exhorts them to come alongside of the individual (i.e. “**Paracletos**” ministries) and put them out of the body. Such action is viewed as a “delivering over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh (v.5).” By putting them out of the local assembly, they would be removed from the protective influence of the body of Christ. This action of putting out was redemptive. Its intent was directed toward the individual’s future salvation. The action was to awaken in the unrepentant a spirit of repentance with the hopes they would come to Christ for the salvation of their soul.

In verses 6-8, Paul once more returns to their arrogant boasting as seen in their unwillingness to deal with gross immorality (v.6). Paul explains why such action by the body is essential. Tolerated sin in the midst of the fellowship can permeate the whole fellowship if left unchecked, thus the exhortation to “Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump (v.7).”

Paul’s next statement in verse 7 is often overlooked but absolutely telling, “Just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed.” The exhortation to purge is not working to gain holiness; the exhortation to purge is working from holiness. Because they are already unleavened, the introduction of leaven is to be met with strong resistance and where present is to be removed. Our unleavened status was won and secured by Christ our Passover. He did what we could not do and in so doing secured for us a position that was previously unattainable and only a distant land and an impossible dream.

In verses 9-13, Paul gives further instruction as to how this “cleansing of the body” is to take place. Paul’s initial instruction speaks against the idea of asceticism or monasticism whereby we remove ourselves from contact with the defilement of this world (vv.9-10). Our Lord prayed in John 17, that His people are “in the world,” but they are not “of the world.” We are not to be “conformed to the world” (Rom. 12:2), but because we are in the world we must interact with its inhabitants. The exhortation is directed toward those who would be living like the unsaved and are a “so called brother.” These are the people whom the body is not to associate with; even to the point of not sharing a meal with them (This could be

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referring to the Lord's Table). It is not that a so called brother has sinned, but that they and the fellowship they attend have embraced the sin, shown no repentance, and have actually boasted of their defilement.

His statement in verses 12 and 13 are revealing. The body of Christ represented by local assemblies is to judge those whose practice betrays their position. We judge them. God judges them through the judgment of His people. God, however, will judge those who are not His people through the government, the inherent demerit of sin, and ultimately at the Great White Throne Judgment.

Paul's verdict is stiff and direct, "REMOVE THE WICKED MAN FROM AMONG YOURSELVES (v.13)." This, then, is the gracious response of God's people toward those who profess Christ but live in unrepentant sin. Any response that is less than this is a failure to practice a grace that reigns. May God create within us sensitivity to personal sin so that our hearts would break at our moral failure and the failure of our fellow believers. May we reach out in a gracious love that seeks to uphold and restore the fallen and may we continue to rest in the faithfulness of God to finish the work that He alone began.