

NOTE: The following is from *Comments on First and Second Corinthians*, Leslie M. Grant, chapter 5, pp 29-32.
(He says it better than I can. Ron.)

The emphasis on human wisdom in Corinth was sadly accompanied by a case of revolting moral corruption. Philosophy is far removed from spiritual power, very commonly. Paul speaks here of a case well known, that of a man having his own stepmother. Such fornication as this was not even considered among the ungodly nations. This illustrates the fact that grace, once known, may be taken advantage of in a most unholy way, if it does not hold living power over the soul. And a believer may slip into such evil as even scandalizes the conscience of an unbeliever.

But more serious still is the self-complacent indifference of the Corinthian assembly to such evil in their midst. Proper moral sense would have humbled them in brokenness of heart before God, and in prayer for His intervention at least. If they did not know how to handle the case, yet certainly they could entreat the help of the Lord, that the offender might be taken away from them; for it was evident that the whole assembly was corrupted by this evil.

The facts of the case being unquestionably established, Paul had, though personally absent, judged absolutely, as though he had been present, in regard to this matter. If there had been any question of doubt as to actual facts or circumstances involved, he would not of course have written so positively. But when the case is clear, then action must not be delayed.

But it is the assembly that must act, not simply as complying with Paul's word, but "in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ," that is, as directly representing Him. It is their solemn responsibility, with *His* authority behind it. No assembly can be excused from the responsibility of judging evil when it is manifestly present. And *all* the saints are held responsible: the matter is not to be delegated to just a few in the assembly. The assembly is to be "gathered together" to express a united pronouncement on excluding from among themselves the person guilty of this evil. In this case too, Paul takes full responsibility for the instruction he gives them: his spirit would be thoroughly in concord with their judgment, along with the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Putting this man away would be to deliver him to Satan. For he would be put outside all Christian fellowship, into Satan's realm. He would have place in no Christian assembly, for there were no denominations into which he might carelessly be received, as is the case today. So that we today could not claim to be delivering one to Satan, though to put

away such a man is certainly as binding now as then.

Yet it cannot be too strongly insisted that the good of the offender is most important in this case. Such discipline should properly tend to humble and break down the flesh with its evil activity, so as to cause in the end a proper restoration to the Lord, and to the assembly. The welfare of the spirit is a vital need here, and to this end the flesh and its lusts must be judged. To some people this may appear to be cruel, but it is actually the only way that true love can honestly take for the eventual good of the offender. It is God's way, and He allows no substitute. At such a time their glorying was unbecoming, a mere show that ignored serious responsibility. Did they not know that a little leaven would permeate the whole lump? Leaven is clearly evil allowed to act. If manifestly evil practice is allowed to be indulged, with no restraint on the part of the assembly, then the assembly becomes party to the evil. To become a new lump they must purge out the old leaven, and in this case the evil could not be purged out except by putting away the guilty man. The expression, "as ye *are* unleavened" is a reminder to them that their proper character as "in Christ" is that in which sin has no place whatever; and to be consistent with this holy character, they must judge and put away the evil.

Then Christ is spoken of as "our Passover . . . sacrificed for us." Leaven was utterly forbidden in the Passover feast (Ex. 12:8). For in the sacrifice of Christ sin is totally judged; and in keeping the feast that is a memorial of that blessed sacrifice, we are certainly called upon to do so consistently with the blessedness of the sacrifice itself. Of course, it is the Lord's supper that is such a memorial feast, and "the old leaven of malice and wickedness" must be fully judged and refused as we are privileged to remember the sufferings of our Lord. "The unleaven of sincerity and truth" is only right and consistent here, and the assembly must be exercised to see that this is practiced. It is the Lord's supper, and He certainly serves no contaminated food; but it is a feast that can give purest delight to the partakers, though our prime object there is to give *Him* delight.

End of extract by L. M. Grant

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