



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

1 Corinthians 5:1–13

1 Corinthians

“When Satan Has Power over Believers”

TRANSCRIPT

It’s time for us to begin. Let’s open our class with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] O Heavenly Father, we turn to Thee with thanksgiving for the Scriptures. We are grateful for the help that they are to us in our daily lives. We thank Thee that such a clear picture is given of the need that we have and of how the need is met by the ministry of our triune God in heaven. We want to worship Thee as our God, beside whom there is no one else. We thank Thee for the confidence we have as we turn to Thee that our sins are forgiven. That Thou hast in marvelous grace given us a righteousness that is satisfactory to Thee wrought out by our Lord Jesus Christ in his bloodshed on Calvary’s cross.

We thank Thee also for the constant ministry of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, who has brought us to the conviction of our sin, has wooed us by effectual grace, brought us to embrace our Savior, and to the possession of the forgiveness of our sins, and now resides within our hearts to constantly guide and direct us and to continue to stir us by the Scriptures and by the will of God as expressed in them.

We pray particularly for each one present in this room. We ask, Lord, for the needs that exist, for there are many of us who have great needs. And we ask for the families of those who are here and their friends for whom they are concerned. We pray, Lord, that Thou wilt so work in our

lives that we have further reason to rejoice in all of the provision of our great Christian God, the triune God in heaven.

Again, we acknowledge, Lord, that there is no other hope except in Thee. And we pray that now as we study the Scriptures, we may clearly see how much we are indebted to Thee, and how marvelous has been the provision that Thou hast made. Enable us to respond effectively and fruitfully.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] Well, the subject for tonight as we turn to chapter 5 of 1 Corinthians is “When Satan Has Power over Believers.” Now, obviously the reason for the title is to have you look at the chapter and see if you can find any possible reason why there is an occasion in which Satan might have power over believers. Because we are taught in Scripture that greater is he that is in us who—than he who is in the world, so consequently we rest in the confidence of the fact that our God is greater than Satan, and therefore, he can have no power over us. There is, of course, an exception, and we look at the exception tonight when we discuss the question of biblical discipline.

Roy Lauren is a modern pastor. I'm not sure that Mr. Lauren is still living, but he wrote a number of helpful expository books of a rather simple character but ones that most of us could understand. And he has spoken, in one of his books, of the need of “a mission of evangelism to the world of natural men.”

And then he went on to say and ask for an equal need for a mission of correction to the church of carnal men. Well, that's a timely suggestion because the church is filled with carnal men. And the church at Corinth was filled with carnal men. I think many of us think that when we read 1 Corinthians we're looking at an unusual church and that the things that existed in Corinth could not possibly exist in our more enlightened Christian day. But I think we'll read it over and ponder it and then think about the things that have happened in our own Christian churches with which we are familiar. We'll see one of the reasons why the Holy Spirit has included this marvelous epistle in the inspired Word of God because it still ministers to us today, because the conditions of which it speaks

are conditions that are with us. We always need orthodoxy, straight thinking, but we also have much usefulness for orthopraxy, or straight practice. And Paul is talking about orthopraxy here and in this epistle.

It's also been said that the world does not have a Bible, they don't consult Bibles, the Bible of the world is the church, and then usually it's added and what we need is a revised version. Well, I think I can understand that because if the church as we know it today is the world's Bible, they are getting a very murky picture of the truth of God. If the world looks at us, the Christian church, for a Bible, there are things, of course, that the world can learn from the Christian church if they just look, if they just study, if they just pay attention. But there are many things about which the church is rightly criticized and the world, of course, picks up on that because it a means of defense for themselves.

Well, this chapter has some interesting light on a number of these points. And one of the interesting ones, and I'll just mention it because it's not a major point here, is the application of the Mosaic Law to us today. For the apostle deals with a problem here, and instead of citing some New Testament truth, he refers to the Old Testament. And it raises the question of the extent of which the Old Testament is our guide today in our Christian life and living. We don't have time to discuss that in detail, but it clearly comes up here. And then also in the last verse of the chapter, if anyone were to say, well, this would indicate that the Old Testament is just as much and in the same way a guide to us today.

Well, notice that in verse 13 when Paul talks about this case of incest in the church at Corinth that he concludes with a Scripture text from the Old Testament, therefore, put away from yourselves the evil person, and does not call for the taking of the life of that person, because in the Old Testament adultery was punishable by death. So those are questions that come to our minds as we read this chapter, but we're not going to stress those things, but rather look at the more obvious things that the apostle speaks about.

In the first two verses, he tells us the situation and specifically of the Corinthians’ sins. And I mention sins, because it’s clear that the sin of the one man and the one woman involved is a sin that involves the whole of the church. We’ll talk about that a little later, but he writes in verse 1 and verse 2, 1 Corinthians 5, it is actually reported. Now, that word, that adverb “actually” is a word that probably would be a bit more accurately rendered “generally.” “It is *generally* reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles, that a man has his father’s wife. And you are puffed up and have not rather mourned that he who hath done this deed might be taken away from you.”

Now, it’s clear that the sin problem involved not simply the man who was guilty of the incest and the woman involved, but also the people are involved. And they are not only involved in the sense that when a member of the church commits sin, it’s the sin of the church. Please remember that. The church is a unified body in Christ. And so the things that individuals do affect all of us. Just as in the Old Testament, in the case of Israel’s sin, when one person sinned the Scriptures often plainly say, Israel has sinned. Of course, the case of Achan is the case, particularly, in mind when one makes a comment like that. But in this case, we have the case of incest, and then we have the Corinthians not mourning over it but actually puffed up, filled with self-esteem, even though this unusual, horrible sin has been committed in the midst of them.

Now, the Scriptures make it very plain that what takes place here is wrong. We don’t really have to read the Bible to figure this out. But I’m going to look at a passage or two in the Old Testament because it is important for us to realize that many of the things that we believe, we believe because ultimately we’re acquainted with what the Scripture has said with reference to them. Back in Leviticus chapter 18 in verse 8 we read, “The nakedness of your father’s wife, you shall not uncover: it is your father’s nakedness.” In Deuteronomy chapter 22 in verse 30 we read these words similar to the words we just read in verse 30, “A man shall not take his father’s wife, nor uncover his father’s bed.” And then in chapter 27 in verse 20, we have another statement with reference to it, “Cursed is the one who lies with his father’s wife; because he has uncovered his father’s bed.”

Now, Paul says that this sin is generally known among the Corinthians. It’s specifically not sexual immorality. Let me tell you precisely what this word means. This word translated sexual immorality—incidentally there was a man who lived in the 19th century, died in the early part of the 19th century name Bowdler. And Bowdlerism is the transformation of things that might be thought to be too vulgar into language that would be more acceptable. The term sexual immorality is a Bowdlerism. The word means fornication. But the translators themselves have done a bit of Bowdlerizing of the text by translating it “sexual immorality.”

Well, now, [there are] lots of things that are sexual immorality that are not nearly as bad as fornication, and particularly, fornication between a man and his father’s wife. This is something that one should—in my mind, one should face squarely in the literal language that has been used by the Apostle Paul. It is fornication. That is the sin. It’s specifically that. Traditionally disapproved by the Greeks and the Romans as well, not simply in the Old Testament but the Greeks speak against this; the Romans as well. So, it obviously was sometimes common in particular places. And remember this, that it is possible that the father’s wife might have been younger than the person who has committed fornication with her. So we are not to think in our society, a bit more ordered society perhaps, of someone much older might have been a young wife of the father of the individual. There are features about it that we don’t understand, of course, fully. So I cannot say anything more than simply that.

So Paul says that it’s generally reported that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not even named among the Gentiles that a man has—and that’s the present tense which means “goes on having.” In other words, this is a relationship. It is not simply once. This is a relationship that exists between the man and his father’s wife. And again I don’t know if the father was living. There are many features about it that we don’t understand. But, nevertheless, the Scriptures have spoken specifically against it according to the Apostle Paul, and you might also say this, that society, the Greek society, the Roman society also specifically spoke strongly against it.

But that's not all. Notice the reaction of the Corinthians, and you are puffed up. You're puffed up. This has not caused you to mourn, the testimony of the church being involved in this. You are not mourning. You actually have accepted this, and now are living as if it has not happened. And I've inserted my own words there, filled with your own self-esteem. In the midst of this horrible sin, you are puffed up. And have not rather mourned that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you.

Now, this particular thing introduces what I'd just like to call to bring it to our attention, the Achan principle. And what I'm talking about of course is the incident that happened in connection with the children of Israel when they came into the land, and God told them specifically that when Jericho was overthrown, they were not to take any of the properties of the Jerichoites to themselves because they were placed under the ban. As I remember, the gold, the silver and things like that which were valuable were to be brought into the common treasury. And you know that what Achan did was he accepted something that was accursed or under the ban, took it to himself and hid it. And the children of Israel in their next military activity were to go to Ai and attack the people of that city. And they were disturbed to find that the people who were in Ai defeated them and caused them to flee, and they came back mourning in the face of the Lord, complaining to the Lord that he brought them in the land to destroy them and all of that. And the Lord simply said to them, what you've done is you've sinned. You've taken of the accursed thing. And as a result of that, all Israel had sinned. And Scripture says that specifically. It doesn't say because of this Israel sinned. It just says all Israel has sinned. But only Achan had sinned. No one knew where it was and then finally, you remember, engaged in a process by which they discovered a cursed thing was in the tent of Achan. So, nevertheless, Israel has sinned because of the bond that exists between Israel and the members of Israel. And when one member sinned, they all sinned. And Paul, in effect, is doing the same thing here. You are puffed up, you've not rather mourned that he who has done this deed might be taken away from you. Why should they mourn, if it is just that person's sin?

When a member of the church sins, it's the sin of the church. And if you want to see the effects of it, just think of the ways in which the world speaks of the church as a whole when a member sins publicly. I think it's quite obvious that we are a body united together and, therefore, the things that we do individually are things that effect, not simply us, they affect the whole body of Christ. And so, these proud contaminated members are puffed up as a result of this *mésalliance*, to use a French term, this bad union that exists between the two. Mourning would have been proper.

William Kelly in his little commentary on 1 Corinthians says the church cannot prevent evil, but the church must practice discipline. That is so important. Let me put it this way: That is so important in Believers Chapel. We cannot prevent evil from taking place within the body. Those are—that particular ability is beyond the power of the elders. It's beyond the power of the deacons. It's beyond the power of the members, but the elders' responsibility is to practice discipline. And if they do not practice discipline, then the same thing that happened to the Corinthians will happen to us. Our testimony will go. The glory of our Lord is affected. All of the things that are significant are affected by that. So it's true. We cannot prevent evil. But we must practice discipline. And I think that I might say this, too, that the elders are responsible, of course, for the discipline, but the members are responsible to support the elders in the discipline that they feel God has directed them to set forth.

Now, how will Paul respond to this? Well, he tells us in verse 3 through verse 5. And you'll notice right at the beginning, and here the English text is a perfect representation of the Greek text because he says, “For I indeed.” That “I” is emphatic in the original text, “For I indeed as absent in body, but present in spirit, have already judged, as though I were present, him who has so done this deed, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.”

You know, the New King James Version that I have here has a grammatical error in it. They needed to have the translators review this a little bit more. But he says, I have judged, and then in

verse 5 the “deliver” doesn’t depend on anything in the English translation here. “I have judged and then deliver such an one.” If it said “to deliver” than that would have been all right, but the “to” is left out, and so consequently, I can’t use this version anymore [laughter]. No. But it’s very unusual you will find such a grammatical error in a translation. But this one escaped the translators. At any rate, Paul speaks and says, as soon as he has heard of this, he has engaged in the practice of discipline though he’s not there. He said, “For I indeed, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have already judged.” I can see the apostle when he heard the news, the horrible news that came to him, because these are the ones whom he has brought to the knowledge of the Lord. I can see him getting down upon his knees and confessing to the Lord the sin of the church of Jesus Christ. And then also, knowing the need for discipline, going through the process by himself though absent of exercising the discipline that needs to be exercised, in other words, going through the mental motions of the discipline of this particular member for the heinous crime that he has committed. “So I indeed, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have already judged, as though I were present, him who has so done this deed.” The path of duty for the apostle was very, very plain and clear. It was discipline.

Many years ago, Clarence Edward McCartney was the Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Pittsburgh. And that’s—I happen to have spoken once in that church but in another series of meetings in the Philadelphia Conference on Reformed, not when Mr. McCartney was there, Theology which was held in that particular place. We went in the church and looked at it. It’s a marvelous church.

But Dr. McCartney was one of the outstanding evangelical ministers in the earlier part of this century and has written probably twenty to twenty-five books. They’re all simple, clear, interesting expositions, and he was well-known in the Presbyterian Church, at one time was moderator of church. And later on in the Presbyterian Church, you may have remembered Harry Emerson Fosdick. Fosdick, when I first became a Christian, was the leading liberal of the day. All of us who were Christians in the ‘40s, ‘50s, knew of Harry Emerson Fosdick, pastor of a great church in New York City, who also was involved in the New York Presbytery at one time.

Clarence Edward McCartney and the Presbytery of Philadelphia stood up on the floor of the Philadelphia Presbyterian—requested and put out a motion that the Presbytery of Philadelphia request the New York Presbytery to discipline Harry Emerson Fosdick for his liberalism. Well, in the report that I read of this, the individual who was telling it said when he asked the Presbytery to investigate this outstanding liberal, the liberals in the Presbytery all stood up on their hind legs and told how unscriptural it would be for them to vote for McCartney’s motion until McCartney had personally interviewed Fosdick. And one of the liberals, the person who reported this said, one luckless liberal said I would vote for the motion if only Dr. McCartney had observed the scriptural regulation.

Hypocrisy among Christian people is remarkable. We are some of the best hypocrites the world has ever been able to manufacture. And they are particularly good in Presbyteries and church meetings and board meetings and so forth, some of the great examples of hypocrisy, if they were recorded, could be found there. So this individual speaks up and says I would vote for that—he didn’t want to vote for it—I would vote for it if they had followed the scriptural recommendations. And he didn’t believe the Scriptures should be followed, but he knew that that was perhaps a reason why he could embarrass Dr. McCartney and also not vote for such a motion. Well, Dr. McCartney then produced extensive correspondence that he had had with Fosdick and the liberals, so the report said, collapsed in embarrassed silence. Strictly speaking, of course, there is no injunction regarding public heresy that a person speak to the individual. If it’s public heresy, it’s known by all and therefore there would be perhaps no reason to go personally to the individual who has already broadcasted his sin to the whole of an audience, over the country for that matter.

So discipline is something that is of the greatest importance for us. And one of the reasons, no doubt, that the Christian church today in its various branches like the Presbyterians, the Methodists, the Baptists, also one of the reasons the conditions exist in them that do exist in them with liberalism and the apostasy in them is because fundamentally, at the beginning of the practice of the sins, discipline was not exercised. And when discipline is not exercised, as Paul will say in a

moment, the sin spreads and ultimately those who practice the sin, believe the sin, follow the sin, become the majority, and then the process putting out of the church of those who object takes place and the church becomes a liberal church. That’s the story of so many of our churches today in very simple form.

So Paul says, The minute I heard it, I got down upon my knees before the Lord in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ—because all discipline should be in his name—with you gathered together along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now, that’s an interesting thing because what our Lord had said, remember, was where two or three are gathered together in my name there am I in the midst in a disciplinary context and Paul refers to that here, “I got down upon my knees and in spirit with you in the name of the Lord and with the power, the disciplinary authority of the Lord Jesus Christ present, I have personally acted on this particular case of sin.”

Now, you might want to take a look more carefully at what Paul says is proper discipline. You notice he says with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ who deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Now, what does he mean when he says, “To deliver one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.” Incidentally, the term “Jesus” is not found in many of the manuscripts, and it may be simply in the day of the Lord. We don’t have to settle that question. Now, the apostle, in another place, uses the same expression, so I’ll read it because I think we ought to know that, although it doesn’t bear too directly upon this instance, but in 1 Timothy chapter 1 in verse 20, the apostle is talking about those who’ve made shipwreck concerning the faith. Verse 20, “Of whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander,” and Harry Emerson Fosdick, “whom I delivered to Satan for the destruction,” he says delivered to Satan, “that they may learn not to blaspheme.” So the apostle spoke of discipline as inclusive of delivering to Satan at least apostolical authority to do that. But what is the sense of it?

John Calvin and many others—and I mention Calvin because I’ve said that I’ve been reading Calvin commentaries through as I’ve been doing this exposition. John Calvin and many others say

that what is meant by this is nothing more than excommunication. No doubt it includes that and when he says, “to deliver such an one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus,” there is no question but that excommunication is involved. In fact, the chapter concludes on the note, therefore, put away from yourselves that evil person. So excommunication is involved. What is excommunication? Put a person out of the church? No, it’s not to put a person out of the church. That’s impossible. If the person is really a person who is a brother, it’s impossible to put him out of the church. But there is one thing you can do, and that is you can prevent him from partaking of the Lord’s Table. That’s the discipline that the early church would have recognized if the elders believed the individual was a believing man. If he were an unbelieving man, that’s another matter. We don’t have a sure answer to the question here. We just assume that he is a believing man who is gone astray. That’s only assumption. But anyway, discipline is that.

And it’s very interesting you know that that is a viewpoint that is practiced in many of our denominations. In the Presbyterian Church, for example, where you have believing people, it’s almost impossible once you’re on the roll to be removed from the roll. In fact, the only way you can be removed from the roll, the only ways you can be removed from the roll is to die, and that’s not a happy way to move from the roll. And the other is to move from one locality to another or from one church to another. Then you can have your letter transferred. Well, I have a personal experience with attempting to have membership in a Presbyterian Church where there were believing people move from a Presbyterian church to another church. One not of similar life and order, and it’s practically impossible to do that because Presbyterians believe once you are saved you always are saved. So how is it possible to move your membership from a church unless you are going into one that is truly a church that we recognize, and we don’t recognize too many other churches other than those that are Presbyterian.

Well, anyway, the discipline of the early church was the discipline of preventing them from partaking of the Lord’s Table. And that’s been the discipline practiced by many of the bodies of

Christian churches down through the years. I’ve mentioned this before, but in my church in Charleston, the First Presbyterian Church in which I grew up back in the older days, before my time, they used tokens for the Lord’s Supper. And so when the Lord’s Supper was to be served, you were issued a token which signified that the elders regarded you as being in good standing in the membership of the church. And when the Lord’s Supper was observed, you presented your token, if you didn’t have a token then you could not participate. Discipline was practiced. And I must say I heartily approve of that, but I’m sure that there were many difficulties that doing that in such a strict way brought about.

At any rate, when Calvin and others have said that this is a reference to excommunication only, it does raise this further problem. What then is the meaning of destruction of the flesh? Now, this particular term “destruction of the flesh” would seem to argue that more than simple excommunication, prevention from participating at the Lord’s Supper is involved. And many, many of the commentators feel that way, and I do too. I do feel that the expression “destruction of the flesh that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” refers to more than simply excommunication.

As a matter of fact, even in this very epistle in chapter 11 in verse 30, the apostle talks about those who are disorderly at the Lord’s Table, and I know you know this passage, most of you at least. He says, “For this reason many are weak and sick among you and many sleep.” That’s Christian death. Many have been disciplined by the fact that they are disorderly at the Lord’s Table, arriving, drinking their wine and becoming a little tight or drunk. And as a result of it some of them are weak, some are sickly, and some have actually died in divine discipline. So the apostle knows about divine discipline. And in saying destruction of the flesh, I personally feel that we must think of this in some other way than simply excommunication.

It’s possible, and some have taken it this way, that this is the destruction of the flesh in a moral sense; that is, not a physical sense, but that Paul is delivering them to Satan in order that their appetites might be annulled by this divine judgment. Well, now, if it were simply delivery to Satan

that their appetites might be annulled, one might ask why deliver to Satan to start with? I don't think that he has a vested interest in annulling the appetites of individuals sexually; at least, I haven't read that in the Bible. In fact, it might seem the opposite. But there are other expressions in the Bible that would be much more suitable for that, the Greek term *{katargeo}*, which means “to make idle, to annul,” specifically might be expressive of that very accurately, or even *{nekráo}*, to put to death the appetites of the flesh, or *{thanatao}*, which means to slay the appetites of the flesh. And usually destruction has a bad sense. So that doesn't seem to make much sense. And, further, if we speak about annulling now by delivery to Satan it cannot be easily harmonized with the last phrase that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Why not in the present day? But why is this reserved for the day of the Lord Jesus, the coming of the final days of this age at least?

So spirit, also I might say, refers to the organ and not to the life of the spirit being parallel with flesh. And so to deliver to Satan for the destruction of the flesh would seem to be specifically what we mean by flesh and not simply the life of the flesh. That the spirit—not simply the life of the spirit—but the spirit may be saved, the spirit that has been made alive by God through conversion, might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. So let's combine it by simply saying this, that what Paul is saying is to deliver to Satan is excommunication, but it also involves bodily chastisement. In other words, the delivery of the individual to Satan is the turning over of the individual to Satan for the exercise of physical judgment as well as the experience of being separated from the body of the believers and unable to be a part of them in the prime meeting and activity of the church when they meet together as a church and observe the Lord's Table. So excommunication and bodily chastisement, it seems to me, are clearly in view.

Passages like 1 John 5:16 where the apostle speaks of sin unto physical death, if that's the sense of that passage, as many believe, his would be harmonious with this. And incidentally the verb “to deliver” here is constructed with a certain root, *{paraditomy}*, in which family there is the same *{ditomy}*, combined with another prefix, *{ecditomy}*, *{paraditomy}* is much gentler in tone than *{ecditomy}*, according to usage. So to summarize then, to deliver to Satan for the destruction of the

flesh is to turn the individual over to Satan for the carrying out, not simply of excommunication—that’s by removal of the person from the right of the Lord’s Table—but also to begin a physical judgment as a result of his sin. Now, of course, if he were to repent and confess his sin that particular destruction of the flesh would, so far as we can tell, would immediately stop and he would be restored, not only to the body, but also delivered from the judgment of Satan. My title was that when Christians are under the authority of Satan—I’ve even forgotten exactly what my title is but anyway, it’s essentially that—that of course is the answer to that question.

By the way Joseph Klausner, the Jewish author, so well-known because he’s written on Jesus Christ, and he’s written on Paul in his book *Jesus and Paul* suggests that perhaps this was for a secret execution of the individual. And you might understand why he would say that, because being a Jewish man when a person committed such adultery, he was put to death. And so, he just simply suggested that to deliver to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus, might have been a secret execution of the individual, but we have no real biblical support for that, and so we’ll have to let that be for something else.

Now, as a result of this, the apostle goes on to exhort the Corinthians. And so in verse 6 through verse 8 he writes, “Your glorying is not good, do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?” That’s what we’re talking about. A little leaven leavens the whole lump. That principle, Paul quotes it again in the Epistle to the Galatians, a little leaven leavens the whole lump.

Now, I’m not a person to talk about leaven. Leaven has to do with the kitchen. That’s one place I never like to be in. I particularly don’t like to be when I have at home such a magnificent master of the kitchen. And I don’t want to disturb anything that she says or does because everything is marvelous that comes out of that kitchen. I can only pat myself on the back for having become the husband of Martha who is such a magnificent cook. So I don’t know anything about leaven. I didn’t ask her about this either. So I’m embarrassed. She’s embarrassed, too, now with what I said [laughter]. But I’m embarrassed because what I’m going to say is probably not altogether true.

One of the commentators that I read many years ago—I haven’t verified this, said “What’s the nature of leaven? You have a great pan of dough and insert a little leaven and if you leave it all night the whole thing runs over on the table by the morning.” Very well. I don’t know whether that’s true, I’ve never seen that. Somebody put leaven in something and wake up the next morning and find it growing falling out over the table on the floor. Sounds interesting as a kid, might try to do that some time and see what happened. Very well, you allow one wicked man to go unrebuked and undealt with after the wickedness has been fully manifested, and the thing will go on like an infection, working, working, working to the ruin of others and to the harm of the entire testimony. That, I do know about. I know from experience that it is possible for one individual to cause great trouble in the assemblies of the saints. And that is what Paul is talking about when he says your glory is not good but do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?

We have so many historical illustrations in the Old Testament. Israel coming out of the land of Egypt, it wasn’t long before those sinners, now belonging to the Lord—that’s you and me of course, those sinners started murmuring and complaining. They even talked about going back to Egypt when they were in bondage. How easy it is for us to forget what God has done for us and to start complaining, personally and in the local church. It’s one thing that we as an assembly must keep our guard up against constantly, murmuring and complaining. There are always things in this assembly that one can murmur about. If you want to be critical you can find things that do need some fixing. But to murmur and murmur and not go to the elders or the deacons, as the case may be, about it and do it in the biblical way is to work like leaven in the assembly of the saints. In other words, the Achan principle goes into operation, and the whole of the body is affected by it. Paul says therefore, purge out the old leaven that you may be a new lump since you truly are unleavened.

Now, why did he say “truly are unleavened”? Some of your translations have “really unleavened.” As a matter of fact, they are really leavened. They are truly leavened, because they are sinners. I know what he’s saying. He’s trying to say that our position is this, our practice is on a different level. That’s what he’s trying to say. But he should never—the translator should never have

added the word “truly” since you truly are unleavened because we are truly leavened. We are ideally unleavened. We are positionally unleavened by what Christ has done, but we are truly leavened. We are truly sinners. We really are. We are justified, and that’s our position now, and that’s the ideal that we will ultimately experience fully, but we are still leavened. We are still sinners.

Now, you see I’m laboring a small point, and I don’t want to make more out of it than one ought to make out of it, but what he’s talking about is what is *de facto*, what is *de jure*, that is, what is actually according to the situation and that which is by or concerning law. So we have been by God’s grace justified, and thus we, in that sense, are ideally unleavened because we are righteous. We have received a righteousness as a gift from God, a righteousness of God through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and that righteousness is received through faith only, not by works of the Lord.

Now, as a most marvelous illustration the apostle uses—I hope I can do justice to it in five or ten minutes. He says in verse 7, “Therefore purge out the old leaven that you may be a new lump since you truly are unleavened for indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us, therefore, let us keep the feast, not with old leaven of malice and wickedness but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”

Now, those of you that read the Bible you know, that when the children of Israel were told to observe the Passover for the first time, one of the things that they were specifically told was all leaven is to be removed from the homes of the children of Israel. Leaven is suggestive of evil. That’s still done incidentally in the synagogues nearby where the Jews meet. We have one down this street and one over on the corner of Preston and Alpha, the same thing is done. There is a little ceremony they engage in before the observance of the Passover: remove the leaven from the houses. Occasionally I see it in the today section of the paper where the funnies are. And one will, of course, see about what they do. It’s all ceremony now, but God said the leaven was to be removed. And so they removed the leaven, the Passover was observed.

Now Paul, using that as the background, says, “For indeed Christ our Passover,” in other words, Jesus Christ is the lamb. And notice he says, was crucified—not is being crucified and will go

on being crucified—this is for Romanists who like to tell us that the sacrifice of Christ is either continued or every Sunday in the Mass our Lord is sacrificed again. No, no, no. That is contrary to the Word of God. Christ our Passover has been sacrificed. It is very plain. The apostle refers to the once-and-for-all sacrifice of Jesus Christ. I’m not arguing on the basis of the aorist tense. It’s a reference to a past event, and that’s simply what the apostle speaks about. So the Passover has taken place.

Now, what did Israel do for seven days thereafter? Incidentally, they did it for seven days because in the case of the seven days, seven days is the circle of time, is it not? On Sunday is the Lord’s day, the first day of the week, second day, third day, fourth day. What is this? The first, second, third, fourth day—today is the fourth day—fifth, sixth, seventh day. And then what do we do? Eighth day? No, first day. So they were to do this for a week, a week of days, that’s a circle of time. In other words, this is to be done continually. So just as Christ has been sacrificed once and for all, we are to go on keeping the feast, present tense, go on keeping the feast as long as the Christian church is on this planet.

What are they to eat? Their food is different. They need a new diet. The diet is different. It’s not the old leaven, the leaven of malice and wickedness, but it’s the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. That’s what we eat. Christ has been sacrificed once and for all, the feast of unleavened bread continues for seven days. The circle of time—it’s typically of all of Christian experience, and we feed on a new diet: sincerity and truth. And so consequently, the kind of wickedness that has taken place in Corinth is ruled out entirely by the fact that Jesus Christ has been crucified, and we now, being ideally unleavened, are to feed on a different kind of food entirely, the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. The intent of this illustration, of course, is to indicate the Corinthians had the wrong diet, that leavened bread of malice and wickedness is to be done away with, and that they are to observe truth and truth first of all in the discipline of the individual who has committed this great sin.

Well, the remainder of the chapter is rather incidental because—I say incidental, I don’t like to say that about anything in the Bible, but with reference to what precedes it is because Paul in the

verses 9 through 13 talks about an earlier letter that he wrote and we’re not sure exactly what this is. Scholars still debate exactly the meaning of this. I’m going to take it as just the fact that he wrote an earlier letter to them. You may remember all—that’s too great a tax on your memory—but I did give a number of expositions through 2 Corinthians and we discussed the apostle’s letters, the four letters that he wrote to the Corinthians, two of which only we know. What we actually learned from this is that 1 Corinthians is at least Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians.

So he explains with reference to it, I wrote to you in my epistle, because this is probably not a reference to this epistle, it’s not an epistolary aorist, to use a technical term, but he writes about a past letter that he had written to them and told them not to go on keeping company with sexually immoral people. Wait a minute, wait a minute, what are we talking about? With fornicators—don’t keep company with fornicators. Again, that shocks our sensibilities. We like to engage in a little Bowdlerism ourselves, don’t we? Sexually immoral people: no, fornicators. Our age is filled with fornicators and adulterers. And Paul exhorts the Corinthians not to keep company with them. Why? Because by keeping company with them, they bring the church under possible judgment for the kind of life that they live. God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit desire a pure church, a holy church, a church that follows the teaching of Holy Scripture. We all need to be exhorted about that. I surely need to be exhorted about that.

And the apostle exhorts us here. And so he says, “Yet, I certainly did not mean with the fornicators of this world or with the coveters or extortioners or idolaters.” Now, here we do have other immoral people, “since you would need to go out of the world.” And all he means by this is simply when I talk about not having company with the fornicators, I don’t mean that you’re to have no contact with the world. Because if we were to have as our principle, we have no contact with the world, who’d do our shopping for us? Who would do our working for us? We all must have contact with the world. Those are opportunities for us, incidentally, for evangelism. We wouldn’t have those opportunities. So he wants to clarify the fact that he’s talking about not having company with people who are professing Christians who have fallen into adultery and fornication, and we are not to have

company with them, keep company with them. What does that suggest? That suggests that the judgment, the discipline of the elders, is {not} something that you support. So when the elders discipline, we must follow their discipline. We are not to have company with them. We are not to go on in company with them, which probably would affect us because we are so easy ourselves drawn into sin.

So no table fellowship for the disciplined. When a person is under discipline, we are not to invite him to our home and treat him as if everything is all right. It's not all right. And we're not to do that out of the sense of we want to be kind and nice and amiable. No, that's not being kind and nice and amiable to them. They need to think about the sin that has been committed and perhaps by the ministry of the Holy Spirit in their hearts be brought to repentance and return to the Lord.

In verse 12 and verse 13, “For what have I to do with judging those also who are outside?” In other words, our task is to deal with those who are inside the body. Those outside, it's another matter. Do you not judge those who are inside? But those who are outside, God judges. They are in the hands of God. He'll take care of those who are not part of the body of Christ in his own way. Therefore, Paul concludes, “Put away from yourselves the evil person.” It may seem that the discipline of the apostle is very strong and very harsh, but I'm convinced that it is something that we in 1994, in the evangelical church and in Believers Chapel, really deeply need.

I close on a bright note. H. A. Ironside was one of my favorite Bible teachers. I always enjoyed—I think every message I every heard Dr. Ironside give was enjoyable. He had a great big, deep, booming voice. He was very earnest and very sincere. Maintained the interest of those who listened to him, and he concentrated on the Word of God. He preached constantly, almost every day. I asked him one time personally, “How in the world do you prepare for what you are doing?”

He said, “Well, I don't have time to prepare for what I'm doing often.” He said, “I come in, I look at the audience for the first time, I sit on the platform and I look out and say, Lord, what do these people need?” But he had made a practice of reading through the Scriptures constantly for many years and preaching through the Scriptures and so he had a fund of knowledge that he could

draw on immediately. And he had experiences in the Salvation Army and other places where he had ministered in his early years, marvelous illustrations brought to him from his own experience of evangelism. And so that’s what he would do.

Well, once he said, one of his books said he was, may have been on the commentary in 1 Corinthians, but I’ve lost my touch with it. He said he was speaking to the Hopi Indians one time, and he had tried to put before them the responsibility of the Christian. And he said they had a rather peculiar name for me. They called him the man with the iron voice. I can understand that, I remember his voice. The man with the iron voice. And he said after one of his messages where he has been speaking this way, he said a man came up to him, one of the Hopis and said, “Man-with-the-iron-voice, you have made the way very hard today. I thought I was saved by grace alone, but now it looks as though I have to walk to heaven on the edge of a razor.” Those were his words.

Well, it may impress us similarly, it may seem to be tough, it may seem to be hard, but we must remember, we have the Word of God as our guide. And we have the Holy Spirit within our hearts upon whom we may rely to give us the strength, the will, and the perseverance to seek to please him in our Christian lives and in our lives within the Christian church. May God help us to succeed in that. If there are some here who do not know our Lord, of course, your responsibility is the gospel. Christ, our Passover, has been sacrificed for us, and the fact that he’s been sacrificed for us means that the gospel is available for you. Come to him; believe in him; trust in him; and receive, the Scriptures say, the righteousness of God in Christ freely through grace. May God make that your experience. For Jesus’ sake. Let’s bow in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee and praise Thee for these marvelous statements from the apostle written so many years ago but still so vital for our society in this country and over the face of this globe, a globe that is Thy globe, this world. Lord, through the Holy Spirit touch our hearts, draw us together in a testimony and the whole church together in a testimony to the world about us that will be fruitful.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.