

# Reconstruction

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[ 0 : 00 ] carries on in 1 Corinthians chapter 5, and to get the context we'll read from verse 1 to verse 8. 1 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 1.

1 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 1.

What do you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you. For though absent in body, I am present in spirit, and as if present, I have already pronounced judgment in the name of the Lord on the man who has done this thing. When you are assembled and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Cleanse out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened.

For Christ, our Paschal Lamb, has been sacrificed. Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. Amen.

The Corinthian church had problems. And every church has problems if it's alive and going somewhere, and they come from two different sources. And in 1 Corinthians, in the first six chapters, the apostle is dealing with problems from within. And that's what this is all about.

[ 2 : 29 ] And when we get to verses six to eight, he says, Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?

This may be a bit obscure, but I'm going to attempt to explain what this means. Cleanse out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened.

For Christ, our Paschal Lamb, has been sacrificed. So the last time I spoke about this, two weeks ago, and we thought about this problem of immorality, in fact, incest in the church, the word that covers what I said then is the word exposure.

But the word that covers what I intend and would like under God's help to say this morning is the word reconstruction. Your boasting is not good.

This deals with the corruption of the Corinthians. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? This is not the only time the apostle says this.

[ 3 : 43 ] He also says it in Galatians 5, verse 9. And when you read these words, you are thrown back to the teaching of Jesus. In the Gospel of Luke, in chapter 12, we read this.

In the meantime, when so many thousands of the multitude had gathered together, that they trod upon one another, he began to say to his disciples first, Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

When we turn to chapter 5 and verse 6 of 1 Corinthians, this is how it literally comes out. Do you not know that a little yeast causes the batch of dough to rise?

Now, if you were to investigate, as I had to deal with this, the way that bread is made, it's no different then to what it is now.

Because the word yeast, or leaven, is actually a good bacteria, which is kneaded into the dough completely, so the result is that the dough having risen, is finally baked into a loaf of bread.

[ 5 : 09 ] So the impact of this good yeast, this good bacteria, is to radically alter the shape of the dough so it's not recognized as dough anymore, but a loaf of bread.

Now, the application that Paul is putting, using this simile, to the church at Corinth, is simply this, that the sin of immorality is likened to the yeast that will so alter the image of the church for the worse, so that it will no longer be recognizable as such.

In other words, what's at stake here is the credibility of the witness, the credibility of making the gospel known.

And in the New Testament, this idea of leaven or yeast is used to designate the presence of evil. Matthew 16, 6, Jesus said to his disciples, take heed and beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

[ 6 : 32 ] Now, when you read Matthew 16, you find that the disciples misunderstood what Jesus was talking about, and they thought he was referring to the fact that they had forgotten to bring bread.

Then our Lord tells them, and by asking them questions about the bread and the fishes that he broke for the 5,000 and the 7,000 and how many baskets they took up, so they now realize that he's not talking about physical bread.

They get the message. Then they understood that he did not tell them to beware of the yeast of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

In other words, Jesus is pointing out that if you follow the teaching of the Pharisees and the Sadducees, the effect is such that it will distort the message of the gospel.

That's the effect of false teaching. It's also the effect of this sin of incest.

[ 7 : 50 ] You can see that what is happening here is that Paul is talking, actually, about the law of the Passover.

Because before the Passover could be celebrated, yeast or leaven had to be removed. If a small quantity is sufficient to impregnate a whole lump of dough so that it's changed in its appearance, then one corrupt member is sufficient to corrupt the entire church.

that is, in fact, what he's saying. So the implications are this. It's not just a lesson, an obscure lesson from the teaching of Jesus that he's seeking to drive home.

He's seeking to drive home that what's at stake is the credibility of the gospel. Now let's be clear. When I spoke on this two weeks ago, I said that this was a message for the entire Christendom today. And it's not for us to take up bricks of judgment and throw up, throw them at particular churches which have failed in this respect.

[ 9 : 20 ] Because what was happening in this chapter was at the beginning we find that the Corinthians were trying to cover this up. and where this kind of abuse, this kind of sin is covered up, the credibility of the church is lost and the witness of the gospel is lost with it.

Of course, there are ways back. But where it has happened, it will take 50 or 60 years to recover the blessing they once had.

Let's think secondly of the cleansing of the Corinthians. Cleanse out the old yeast that you may be a new lump as you really are, unleavened.

For Christ, our Paschal Lamb, has been sacrificed. The literal translation is this. Cleanse out the old yeast that you may be a new batch of dough even as you really are without yeast.

For Christ, the Paschal Lamb, has been sacrificed. Now, what is the command of the apostle is this. Cleanse it out.

[ 10 : 40 ] Root it out. Deal with it. Get rid of it. And that's what he's been saying in the first five verses. In fact, in the first verse, he says, it is universally reported that there is immorality among you of a kind that is not found even among the pagans.

For a man is living with his father's wife. That latter phrase, the wording might sound odd, but it's a direct quote from the Levitical law in chapter 18 or 20.

And the person who made this report may have been the Christian slaves of Chloe mentioned in chapter 10, chapter 1 and verse 10. But there are other possibilities too.

There are other people who visited the church. They're mentioned at the end of the epistle.

Stephanus, Fortunatus, and Archaicus. They also. But you see, what the point is, it's not just the point that there's this universal bad taste, bad smell going around about Corinth.

There's a possibility of something else. Because if it is the case that universally there's this bad report, if they get their act together right, then there will be universally there will be a good report.

[ 12 : 12 ] And in 2 Corinthians, it appears that that has happened. 2 Corinthians, chapter 7. He says this, For even if I made you sorry with my letter, I do not regret it, though I did regret it.

For I see that the letter grieved you, though only for a while. As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, because you were grieved into repenting.

for you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us. In other words, something has happened that has turned this devastating situation around.

And that something is the presence of the gospel text. Christ, our Paschal Lamb, has been sacrificed.

It is through this that there is a liberating power of the gospel. Christ, our Paschal Lamb. John the Baptist spoke of Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

[13:33] And this is what they've been preaching in Corinth. We preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles. But for those who are called both Jews and Greeks, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God.

So from that scripture, you can see there is no doubt that irrespective of what the sin is, Christ can not only forgive you and give you peace of mind, he can set you free.

Jesus said, whom the Son of Man sets free is free indeed. And this is what happened in the case of Corinth.

They found this to be true. And the one who had actually caused the problem had changed his mind.

And he says this in 2 Corinthians 2. For such a one, the punishment by the majority is enough. So you should rather turn to forgive and comfort him or he may be overwhelmed by excessive sorry.

[14:53] So I beg you to reaffirm your love for him. And this has taken place by the ministry of the gospel. Jesus said, when the Spirit is come, he will convict the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.

Through the proclamation of the cross, this man had been brought to repentance. obedience. Let's think of something else now.

The empowerment in the final verse. Let us therefore celebrate the festival not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

death. So now, rather than being sad and engulfed with sorrow, the Corinthians have got something to rejoice about, to observe a festival.

And that festival centers around, as every communion service does, the death of Jesus. Jesus, this is my body.

[16:19] It is broken for you. This cup is the new covenant in my blood, poured out for many, that their sins might be forgiven.

There's a liberation that comes to you and me from the death of Jesus, that causes us to walk with a step that we didn't have before.

In verse 30, it's a difficult verse, but it says this, but of him are you in Christ Jesus, who has become to us wisdom from God and also righteousness, sanctification and redemption.

The new versions translate it as this, Christ Jesus is the source of your life, who has become to us wisdom from God and also righteousness, sanctification and redemption.

The words righteousness, sanctification and redemption are clearly important words and we rejoice in them.

[17:38] but there are two other words that are also important and these are the words and also. Because the fact is that no matter how long you've been going on the Christian road, there's an also, an extra still to be discovered in God.

God is that unfathomable well that you can't get to the bottom of. The King James Version rendering of Isaiah 6-1 also uses that word.

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord. And it was that vision of the Lord that transformed Isaiah.

So these very facts are what caused the Corinthians to celebrate all of this in a new way. There is more beyond.

Let us therefore celebrate the festival not with the old yeast, the yeast of evil and wickedness, but without yeast, in sincerity and truth.

[19:05] We've seen already that the credibility of the church here was at risk. And what was at risk was the witness of the gospel, which is why the apostle came down so clearly about it.

You have not got to cover this up anymore. You've got to do something. And so he now takes the law that relates to the Passover.

And as I've said already, the Passover law details that there is to be no eating of leavened bread. Exodus 12. seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall put away leaven out of your houses. If anyone eats what is leavened from the first day until the seventh, that person will be cut off from the community of Israel.

How does that affect the Corinthians? It means they are to take this truth very seriously. They are to remove the presence of that which would bring them down.

[ 20 : 26 ] They are to cast aside any compromise with evil practices. That's what he means when he says, doing away with the old yeast of wickedness and evil.

He says, but now what you have is the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. Now what does this mean? What the apostle is saying here is this.

All of you people in Corinth who responded to the ministry of the word when I was there and since, something profound has happened to you.

And that something is that you are a new creation in Christ. If any, we know this as well as I do, if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation.

The old has passed away, the new has come. All this is from God who through Christ reconciled us to himself.

[ 21 : 35 ] in other words, what the gospel is about, personally and for the church at Corinth is to give them a new future.

That's what it's about. A new credibility, a new power of witness, a new spreading of the gospel. Is there things that we can learn from this? Yes, I think there are. Because when we look at ourselves, we have to realize that we need to get rid of the old yeast and replace it with the new yeast.

That life that comes from God. and if we have that life that comes from God untainted and unspotted, it is this that we have to offer to the whosoever.

Whosoever will may come. Jesus said, come unto me, all you who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.

[ 23 : 00 ] That is our credibility this morning. Amen. May the Lord bless us what we've said and may be to his praise and to his glory.

Amen.