

Step #3 -- You are to take with you one or two other witnesses to your brother's sin, and have them reprove him as well, as that corroboratory evidence may be secured. If he listens to them (agrees with what they say and repents of his sin), you have won your brother. But if he does not listen to them, then you are to take step #4.

Step #4 -- You are to tell the church of the brother's sin, and bring evidence against him. If he listens to the church, you have won your brother. But if he refuses to listen, then he is to be removed from the category of "member in good standing", excommunicated, and regarded as "a Gentile and a tax-gatherer".

I Corinthians 5 is a case of extreme judicial discipline; and as such is very important.

A case of immorality in the form of incest actually existing in the church at Corinth was reported to Paul in Ephesus. A man was sexually involved with his stepmother, apparently while his father was still living! The Corinthian church, puffed up and arrogant with its party spirit, showed no signs of sorrow or indignation over the scandalous situation.

Even though Paul was in Ephesus, he passed judgment on this immoral man, and decided that excommunication was the discipline called for. The concept of delivering a person to Satan fits with this extreme discipline; i.e., the removal of a person from the realm of the church, presided over by Christ, and the deliverance of that person to the realm of the evil world-system, presided over by Satan. It is not entirely clear how deliverance to Satan's realm involves the destruction of the flesh, unless flesh is taken in the ethical sense, and this refers to taking a person out from under the restraining influences he experiences in the church which hinder the development of native depravity, and delivering him to the evil world-system where his flesh can develop relatively unchecked. How this relates to the deliverance of the spirit in the day of the Lord Jesus is also not entirely clear, unless this is speaking of the purpose of the discipline, in terms of a hopeful seeking of the reclamation of the offender and his restoration to fellowship; or unless this is speaking of the way the unchecked flesh in a believer defeats itself by bringing him to bitterness and gall, and finally to an end of himself, as in the case of the Prodigal Son.

Paul uses the figure of leaven in a bad sense. Just as leaven eventually works its way through a whole lump of dough, so unjudged and tolerated sins eventually influence the whole church in a negative way. Paul tells the Corinthians to clean out the old leaven of sin in their midst, so that they may be an unleavened lump of dough, clean and fit for use.

The application of this figure to the situation of the church at Corinth is that the believers are to Judge and remove the wicked man from their midst. Paul has given his judgment; he calls upon the church to give its judgment and to excommunicate the immoral man!

II Thessalonians 3:6-15 is a case of moderate judicial discipline; and as such is both helpful and interesting.