

# 1 Corinthians 5

by John Nelson Darby

---

*John Nelson Darby's sermon on 1 Corinthians 5 emphasizes the importance of church discipline for maintaining purity and the ultimate goal of restoring individuals to fellowship.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 18:15-17, 1 Corinthians 5:5, 1 Corinthians 5:7-8, 2 Corinthians 2:6-8, Galatians 6:1, 1 Thessalonians 5:14, 2 Thessalonians 3:6, Hebrews 12:11, James 5:19-20, 1 Peter 4:17

**Topics:** "Church Discipline", "Restoration"

---

## Description

John Nelson Darby discusses the issues of discipline within the church as outlined in 1 Corinthians 5, emphasizing the apostolic authority to deliver individuals to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, with the ultimate goal of saving their spirit. He highlights the importance of purging out sin from the assembly, as allowing it to persist can corrupt the entire body of believers. Darby stresses that the church must act in unity and humility when dealing with sin, and that the purpose of discipline is restoration rather than punishment. He also notes that while the church today lacks the same apostolic power, the responsibility to maintain holiness and discipline remains crucial. The sermon concludes with a call for the church to seek restoration for those who have fallen into sin, reflecting a spirit of love and brokenness.

---

## Transcript

Now we come to their faults and to discipline. "Commonly reported" means that it was a generally known thing. The first thing we may note is the apostolic power of delivering to Satan. He had judged that, because he could bind on earth: it was apostolic power. Its object, he states, was for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Properly there is no such thing now. If a person is now put out from fellowship, he is not delivered to Satan, though in result he might possibly come under Satan. I know nothing that is a denial of this, though there be no gift of such power. If a person is excluded, it is not delivery to Satan. That made me say he might come under Satan; he is liable to it. To be thrown out into Satan's world is not delivering him or committing him to it. I know of nobody but the apostle who had the power. If there is anybody now to do it, all well; but I do not know how. The church is not commanded to do it here. He says, I have judged already - to deliver such an one to Satan. This was his own act; he did not tell them to do so. He does tell them to put such an one out.

217 They had not been instructed as to exclusion and discipline; but still in mind and heart they ought to have been broken down: at the least they should have been humble and mourning, as we see in verse 2. If the state of the assembly is so infirm, or so divided, that they cannot act, it is bad indeed. The difficulty

is, the tendency to produce division. If the power of the Spirit of God is not acting on our consciences, one takes up one thought, and another another. That is what he means by "having a readiness to revenge all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled," 2 Cor. 10:6. But here there was power to bring the matter on; he himself could come in in power, but he was afraid, lest Satan should make a split between him and them, and that is what he means when he says, he is not ignorant of Satan's devices. Then he tells them to purge out the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. You are not a new lump if you do not purge out the old leaven. God had made an unleavened thing, and they would lose their character by not acting upon it. You are not a new lump at all, if you do not put it away. "As ye are unleavened" is their standing, and you give your character up if you do not act.

If they were not united in the assembly, they should humble themselves. I have often said in preaching to sinners even, that a man who has been brought up in a dirty house does not feel that it is dirty; and so if half the assembly be as bad as the bad one, the assembly must be cast on the Lord and mourn, and therefore in verse 2 he does not say how it is to be done, but till "he be taken away from among you." They ought to have been before God about it, for they had not got directions what to do. But when they did get them, they acted. If there is a case of flagrant sin, and the assembly does not act, what then? Practically it is no assembly at all, if its will goes with the offence. If any sided with the evil-doer after the testimony of the Spirit of God had reached the conscience of the body, then he treated them as the evil-doer. The duty is all plain; if there is a wicked person, the assembly must put him out; and a person so put out is not looked at as a brother, and they cannot admonish him as a brother, and I could not have fellowship with him as a brother. Before action I should consult with the brethren only, but should call the assembly together to act. If one had a case like this, say, or that could not be mentioned to women, it should of course be done in a way not to be offensive. But if it is an assembly, the Lord is there, and you must prove yourselves clear in the matter. If the assembly will not put the evil out when it is a case of gross sin, I should have no more to say to it: they would not prove themselves clear.

218 Leaven is the thing that defiles and corrupts; and others were involved in it because they would not judge it. Suppose you commit a sin, and I treat it as all very well, and keep your company just the same; why, of course I should be known by the company I keep. The proverb is common enough. The leaven was there; and the apostle speaks to their consciences about it. If such a person left, you cannot put a man out if he is out, or has gone out deliberately; but I should announce that he is out. That is hardly putting out, it is his going out. I should say he has left under the charge of such a sin, and gone out of the way, and is outside until he clear himself. If a man has gone out of this room, I cannot put him out, but he is out. As to inquiry, a few brothers may engage in that, but you cannot have a judgment on an individual unless the assembly does it. It is very right that one, or two, or three should inquire into the facts; but any wise godly brethren may do that, and the conscience of the assembly must thereupon be brought into action. If only some act and put him out, the rest may say they did not do it, and their conscience is not clear.

You must take each case in detail by itself; if one go away so, he has left the assembly; and if he leaves it under a charge against him, he must clear the charge before he comes back. He cannot come back without the case being judged by the assembly. It may be investigated by brethren, but not judged. Further, it should be named, if it be a case of sin and guilt. If a charge of fornication, say so; it is uncleanness; and if it was a public scandal, I should not be in any hurry to receive back. It is not a nice principle to talk about the honour of the assembly being involved; but the Lord's honour should come in. Yet, for the good of the individual, it should be done if the soul is really restored; though it be a strong case

of public scandal, let him in again; never mind what people say. Here is one: A man overwhelmed with sorrow, and the apostle tells them to receive him, though it was such a scandal that its like was not even named among the Gentiles. A man may confess his fault, but this does not say his soul is restored. If it is a matter that nobody knows, and the man consults you and confesses all the fault, and is restored, you must judge whether it is a case for the assembly to deal with or not. If it is a matter between two brethren, the two might settle it. The "old leaven" is the leaven of the old nature; the "leaven of malice and wickedness" may be a more active expression. I am not to keep the feast with the old nature at work.

219 When a man is put out from the assembly, he nevertheless belongs to the house. It is like a naughty child turned out of the drawing-room; he belongs to the family still. Though the church cannot commit to Satan, to put away abides a positive duty. We have to obey. It is a commandment of the Lord. If you speak of delivery to Satan, it is a question of power. So far as the child's present position is concerned, he is outside the sitting-room; and until he behaves aright, he cannot be let in again.

Christ is sacrificed for us, and we are keeping the feast. That leads to the fact that unleavened bread was connected with the sacrifice by which redemption was wrought. No leaven was allowed in the house at all. Redemption is not an unholy thing. I must have sinlessness along with redemption. In the type you have bitter herbs, unleavened bread, and the passover meat. Here we are keeping the passover, and we must not have leaven, for sin and Christ cannot go together. Intercourse in the main would cease between you and a person so put out. I might invite him to my house for conversation, to see if he were restored; but even that is a delicate thing to do. In my intercourse with him, it would be with the fullest sense that he had put himself at a distance. It would be really ungracious to him to let him feel at ease with me in the place he occupies. You must not weaken the action of the assembly.

220 Two might be put away together for the same thing, and one might be restored without the other, and received before the other, or dealt with differently. In withdrawing from another, 2 Thess. 3:6, I should treat him coolly. If he complained, I should say, It is quite right; there is my authority in scripture, and I must do so. Here in 1 Cor. 5:11, it says, "no, not to eat." I would not dine with such an one; I would give him to eat if he were hungry, but not eat with him. Take a wife whose husband is put out. It may seem awkward, but her action is not keeping company with him as a case of will; it is one of subjection to authority.

Matthew 18 is another thing; it is only an individual direction. If the church acted, it would be on another scripture. Refusal to make good a wrong after all these pains might be a ground for the church to put him out. Do you ask if such a brother might not keep the whole thing in his own bosom. That depends on the case. "Thou shalt not suffer sin upon thy brother." If it were merely the idea of a wrong, or he thought the brother was all right after some personal matter, he might say, I forgive you; but otherwise he would be doing him harm by not taking it up. Charity is a keen discerner in all such things. If it is merely personal, I have a title to forgive.

Verse 11 is not a list of those who are to be put out. There is no such list. This would leave a thief or a murderer in communion. How to know a covetous man may be hard; there are cases which are plain enough, but prudence in a family is so close on covetousness, that you can make no line, nor can you act on your own conscience with respect to a man that may be covetous. If a case arise, and the assembly is spiritual, the Lord will make it clear. You will find that where a congregation of saints is spiritual, what is false and hypocritical cannot last there any length of time at all. But you cannot put out any man until he has done something to act upon. He will deaden the meeting of course, but so does all that is wrong. After he is out, the assembly cannot deal with him, though perhaps an individual might in mercy. When he is

humbled, we should seek to restore. I do not think there is the power to restore that there ought to be amongst us. If there were more spiritual power, there would be more actual power over the conscience.

It is sometimes a question, How long is the assembly to go on treating as a brother one whom they have admonished? Samuel mourned for Saul to the day of his death. Some have been under rebuke, or outside for years. Such cases have arisen sometimes when young persons have been thrust forward into preaching, and had the flattery of women, etc. There ought to be an anxious desire for restoration of those put away. There must be holiness, but still a yearning of heart over such, a spirit that would induce brokenness on the offender's part. I am not conscious of any unfaithfulness as to dealing with evil, nor generally am I aware of hardness towards evil-doers.

221 Verse 5 shews that the ultimate end of discipline should be restoration. You deal with him as a member of Christ, and discipline him as such while he is within, and you put him outside that he might be broken down and brought in again. "Spiritual" has a double character. If I say that man is very spiritual, it may mean he has spiritual apprehension of divine things, or it may be spoken of the assembly. There is a dealing with things and with the conscience of the assembly. The assembly is the first thing to prove themselves clear in the matter. "Them that sin rebuke before all" might be done sometimes when people are put out, instead of doing so. "Rebuke" is convict as well as reprove; convict is before all.

---

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/john-nelson-darby/1-corinthians-5/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**