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GENUINE SPIRITUALITY: A STUDY OF 1 CORINTHIANS

#14

**DELIVERED TO SATAN
 1 CORINTHIANS 5:1-5**

INTRODUCTION

This is our 3rd and final message from 1 Corinthians 5. We have already studied the flow of thought through these 13 verses and we tried to discover Paul's intent behind these words within the context of the Corinthians' situation. Secondly, we took extra time last week to discuss 3 themes which form the foundation of this chapter: authority within the local church, church membership and the nature of sin within the church. Finally, I want to explore one phrase that Paul uses here in verse 5, *I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh*. Generally, I understand this phrase to mean that there is great benefit to being within the believing community, the local church. Obviously, Paul sees the Word, Sacraments, fellowship and accountability as wonderful privileges. In contrast, Paul sees being outside the local church as a frightening condition. He describes this state as one in which Satan is free [within sovereign limits] to do what he pleases and what he pleases to do is destroy. Paul's intent is that this frightening condition of being under satanic influence, blinded to one's self-imposed lifestyle of destruction, will ultimately produce humble confession, repentance and restoration *so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus*.

A similar passage is found in 1 Timothy 1 where Paul writes, *18This command I entrust to you, Timothy, my son, in accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you fight the good fight, 19keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith. 20Among these are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan, so that they will be taught not to blaspheme (1 Timothy 1:18-20)*. Let's carefully take notice of a few truths concerning being delivered to Satan.

1. PERSISTENT SIN WILL LEAD TO FUTURE JUDGMENT.

Paul's concern for this man is not only his present sin, but where that sin is leading. Paul makes clear that there is a future day of judgment, *the day of the Lord Jesus*. This puts everything in perspective for the Apostle; this man's soul is in danger of eternal hell.

This theme of future judgment is found throughout the Bible. *7Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. 8For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. 9Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary (Galatians 6:7-9). 27And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment (Hebrews 9:27)*. There will be a day of reckoning where every secret is made known and judgment is rendered with precision. But we are mistaken if we only understand judgment to be a future reality.

2. BEING GIVEN OVER TO PERSISTENT SIN IS PRESENT JUDGMENT.

Being put out of the local church is its own form of present judgment. The withdrawal of the blessings and protection that come through a local church is meant to be a foretaste of hell and its absence of God's love, protection and intimacy.

God provides various graces which are designed to restrain us from sin. At times, God providentially keeps us from fulfilling sinful desires [Hosea 2]. Other times, God will indirectly intervene to restrain sin through such common graces as family and government [Ephesians 6:1-4 & Romans 13:1-5]. Additionally, the Holy Spirit works within individual Christians and believing communities to strengthen righteousness and mortify sinfulness [Romans 8:5-9, 13]. But in all matters of making choices, God has equipped each man with a conscience which holds us to the highest standard we know. Keeping a clear conscience is paramount for Paul; so he commands Timothy to *fight the good fight, keeping faith and a good conscience*. To refuse to maintain a clear conscience is to shipwreck our lives. When one persistently sins against his own conscience, God may deliver him to Satan to learn the destructive lessons of sin. Paul provides us with another illustration of this by pointing us to Hymenaeus and Alexander.

Sin not only leads to judgment, it is the judgment. God's Holy Spirit restrains our sin. When we head into sin without fear of God or concern for others, we can rest assured, we have been delivered to Satan [For illustrations, see Romans 1:24-28 & Proverbs 22:14].

3. DANGER SIGNS THAT ONE IS HEADED TOWARD SUCH PRESENT AND FUTURE JUDGEMENT

I always commend the Puritans to you for your instruction in the most important matters of life and let me use John Owen's *The Mortification of Sin* as a guide to warn us of *The Dangerous Symptoms of Sin*.

- (1) *Firm establishment over a long period of time and settlement as a habitual practice.*
- (2) *The heart pleads to be thought of in a good state, yet all the while allows the continuance of a lust without any attempt at its mortification.*
- (3) *Sin frequently succeeds in obtaining the consent of the will.*
- (4) *A man fights against sin only because of the consequence or penalty.*
- (5) *Trouble over a sin or lust is a punishment from God.*
- (6) *Your lust has already withstood particular dealings from God against it.*

CONCLUSION

This leads me to often pray two prayers. The first goes like this, *Lord Jesus, thank You for keeping me from sin more often than I know*. And secondly, *Lord Jesus, do not give me over to the sinful desires of my own heart. Increase and strengthen my pleasure in You and mortify my pleasure in sin*. At this point it is incredibly helpful to be well versed in two glorious doctrines: the depravity of man and the sovereignty of God. Knowing our own depravity, we are led to give humble thanks for God's sovereign intervention to keep us from destroying ourselves.