



¿Entregarlo a Satanás?

(Serie “Las Palabras Duras de la Biblia”, #10)

[Audio del Sermón](#)

1 Corintios 5.1–5 (RVR60)

¹De cierto se oye que hay entre vosotros fornicación, y tal fornicación cual ni aun se nombra entre los gentiles; tanto que alguno tiene la mujer de su padre. ²Y vosotros estáis envanecidos. ¿No debierais más bien haberos lamentado, para que fuese quitado de en medio de vosotros el que cometió tal acción?

³Ciertamente yo, como ausente en cuerpo, pero presente en espíritu, ya como presente he juzgado al que tal cosa ha hecho. ⁴En el nombre de nuestro Señor Jesucristo, reunidos vosotros y mi espíritu, con el poder de nuestro Señor Jesucristo, ⁵el tal sea entregado a Satanás para destrucción de la carne, a fin de que el espíritu sea salvo en el día del Señor Jesús.

This instruction of Paul to the Christians in Corinth, part of his call for the excommunication of a member because of serious immorality, needs careful interpretation, or considerable distortion of his meaning is possible.

Questions such as the following are often asked: What does “handing over to Satan” really mean? Why would the apostle want anyone to be handed over to Satan? Though the man committed a grievous sin, is there no room for discipline and forgiveness within the Christian community? What is envisioned in the idea “destruction of his sinful nature” (literally “flesh”)? And how can that possibly be a means toward the salvation of his spirit?

In the preceding discussion of [1 Corinthians 3:17](#) it was suggested that Paul understood the church in its local manifestation in Corinth (and any other place) to be God’s alternative to the fragmentation and brokenness of human society. The viability of that alternative was being undermined in a number of ways in the church at Corinth.

1 Corintios 3.17 (RVR60)

¹⁷Si alguno destruyere el templo de Dios, Dios le destruirá a él; porque el templo de Dios, el cual sois vosotros, santo es.

Iglesia Bíblica Bautista de Aguadilla, PR

www.iglesiabiblicabautista.org

(787) 890-0118

(787) 485-6586

First Corinthians 5, where this hard saying is located, deals in its entirety with one of these ways.

The specific problem is the sexually immoral life being led by one of the members. The larger problem is an attitude about physical life among the Corinthian Christians which allows them not merely to be tolerant of the immoral behavior of a brother, but to exhibit a certain pride, even arrogance, about the matter.

Paul lays the matter clearly before them in **1 Corinthians 5:1**. The word rendered “sexual immorality” (NIV), or simply “immorality” (RSV), is the Greek word *porneia* (from which we derive “pornography”). Literally, it means “prostitution,” but Paul uses it, as normally throughout the New Testament, in its broader meaning of sexual impurity of various kinds. The following sentence, “A man has his father’s wife,” points out the nature of the immorality. The verb *has* is in the present infinitive form, indicating that the situation is not a single occurrence, but a continuing immoral affair. It is not defined as incest, so the woman is likely his stepmother. Nor does Paul speak of adultery; thus, her husband is either dead or she is divorced from him.

From Paul’s Jewish perspective, such a relationship is a serious break of divine law. Leviticus 18:8 clearly forbids it, and according to rabbinic tradition, the offender was liable to stoning.

Levítico 18.8 (RVR60)

⁸*La desnudez de la mujer de tu padre no descubrirás; es la desnudez de tu padre.*

What makes the situation even more grave is the recognition that such a sexual relationship is “of a kind that does not occur even among pagans.” By this Paul is probably not claiming that this kind of immorality never occurs among pagans; rather, he must be referring to the fact that even Roman law (as stated in the Institutes of Gaius) forbade such a practice (that is, “Even in the pagan world this is unheard of as acceptable behavior!”). It was clearly detrimental to the moral fiber of the entire congregation, as well as to the viability of its witness in the pagan world.

The seriousness of this matter, which elicits Paul’s rather harsh judgment and direction for congregational action, is undergirded by his assessment of the congregation’s attitude, which apparently not only tolerated this illicit union, but found in it an occasion of prideful boasting. Indeed, Paul may have seen, behind their attitude, a view of Christian faith and life which promoted and nurtured the kind of sexual immorality addressed (both here in **1 Corinthians 5** and another form of it in **1 Corinthians 6**).

“The man is having sexual relations with his father’s wife—intolerable in both Jewish religious and Roman civil law—and you are proud” (see **1 Cor 5:2**). This judgment on their attitude is anticipated already in **1 Corinthians 4**.

Here, Paul throws a series of sarcastic barbs at their lofty pride: “already you have become rich!” “you have become kings” (**1 Cor 4:8**); “you are so wise in Christ!” “you are strong!” (**1 Cor 4:10**).

Iglesia Bíblica Bautista de Aguadilla, PR

www.iglesiabiblicabautista.org

(787) 890-0118

(787) 485-6586

1 Corintios 4.8 (RVR60)

⁸Ya estáis saciados, ya estáis ricos, sin nosotros reináis. ¡Y ojalá reinaseis, para que nosotros reinásemos también juntamente con vosotros!

1 Corintios 4.10 (RVR60)

¹⁰Nosotros somos insensatos por amor de Cristo, mas vosotros prudentes en Cristo; nosotros débiles, mas vosotros fuertes; vosotros honorables, mas nosotros despreciados.

Then he sums it up with the words “Some of you have become arrogant” (1 Cor 4:18).

1 Corintios 4.18 (RVR60)

¹⁸Mas algunos están envanecidos, como si yo nunca hubiese de ir a vosotros.

After his instruction about the excommunication of the offender, he points again to their attitude: “your boasting is not good” (1 Cor 5:6).

1 Corintios 5.6 (RVR60)

⁶No es buena vuestra jactancia. ¿No sabéis que un poco de levadura leuda toda la masa?

What is the ground for this lofty arrogance? It has long been recognized that many of the problems Paul addresses in the church at Corinth seem to be grounded in a religious mindset that devalued physical life and emphasized spiritual liberation. This view developed out of Hellenistic syncretism, with contributions from both philosophy and mystical cults that spread across the Roman Empire from the East.

Plato had taught that the body was the tomb of the soul; that death brought liberation from physical captivity; that already in this life one could transcend the negative arena of matter by a higher knowledge of ultimate reality. Various Hellenistic cults offered immortality via union with the god or gods, sometimes symbolized or achieved through cultic prostitution. Within such a religious philosophical climate, Paul’s teaching regarding freedom “in Christ” and life “in the Spirit” was all too often, and particularly at Corinth, perverted into an enthusiastic libertinism that rejected moral restraints, particularly in the realm of the physical. Since the physical realm is by definition of no account—so they seem to have argued—it does not really matter what we do with our bodies. Indeed, their arrogant pride regarding sexual immorality in their midst indicates that they may have seen this matter as the very proof of their spiritual perfection. Theirs was a religion of enthusiastic intoxication without moral enthusiasm!

The proper response, both to the intolerable case of sexual immorality, as well as to their imagined superior spirituality, should have been mourning, not pride. And a

Iglesia Bíblica Bautista de Aguadilla, PR

www.iglesiabiblicabautista.org

(787) 890-0118

(787) 485-6586

repentant attitude would inevitably lead to the removal of the offender from the fellowship.

That some form of excommunication is intended is clear not only from 1 Corinthians 5:2, but from the Passover analogy in **1 Corinthians 5:6–8** (“Get rid of the old yeast”) and the citation of **Deuteronomy 17:7** (“Expel the wicked man from among you”—**1 Cor 5:13**).

1 Corintios 5.6–8 (RVR60)

⁶No es buena vuestra jactancia. ¿No sabéis que un poco de levadura leuda toda la masa? ⁷Limpiaos, pues, de la vieja levadura, para que seáis nueva masa, sin levadura como sois; porque nuestra pascua, que es Cristo, ya fue sacrificada por nosotros. ⁸Así que celebremos la fiesta, no con la vieja levadura, ni con la levadura de malicia y de maldad, sino con panes sin levadura, de sinceridad y de verdad.

Deuteronomio 17.7 (RVR60)

⁷La mano de los testigos caerá primero sobre él para matarlo, y después la mano de todo el pueblo; así quitarás el mal de en medio de ti.

1 Corintios 5.13 (RVR60)

¹³Porque a los que están fuera, Dios juzgará. Quitad, pues, a ese perverso de entre vosotros.

The nature of the removal is expressed in the ambiguous phrase “hand this man over to Satan.” Its purpose is twofold: (1) that his “sinful nature” or “flesh” would be destroyed and (2) that his “spirit” would be saved (**1 Cor 5:5**).

The phrase “hand over to Satan” must be recognized in some figurative, metaphorical sense, since a person literally abandoned to Satan would seem to be lost irrevocably. Yet here such an end is not envisioned.

Some have seen behind the expression the Jewish practice of excommunication, imposed particularly for infringement against marriage laws. In banning an offender, it was believed that separation from the people of God, and therefore from God’s special care, would lead to premature death. (Yet, within Jewish practice, the hand of God was understood to execute this punishment, not Satan.) Premature death, in this view, could be referred to by “destruction of the flesh.” How this premature death would affect a final salvation is not clear.

It seems best to find an explanation within the larger background of apocalyptic Jewish thought which Paul shared. According to that thought, Satan was understood as the “prince of this world” (see **Jn 12:31**), as the “prince of darkness” with sovereignty over “this present evil age” and the realm of death.

Juan 12.31 (RVR60)

³¹Ahora es el juicio de este mundo; ahora el príncipe de este mundo será echado fuera.

Iglesia Bíblica Bautista de Aguadilla, PR

www.iglesiabiblicabautista.org

(787) 890-0118

(787) 485-6586

According to the Gospels, Jesus' teachings and deeds are the reign of God breaking into the realm of Satan's dominion (see [Lk 11:14–22](#)). For Paul, Jesus' death and resurrection were the decisive events: the evil powers had been robbed of their control ([Col 2:15](#)); the “end of the ages” had broken into this present evil age ([1 Cor 10:11 RSV](#)); the “new creation” had dawned ([2 Cor 5:17](#)); Christians were people who had been delivered “from the dominion of darkness” and transferred into the kingdom of God's beloved Son ([Col 1:13](#)).

Colosenses 2.15 (RVR60)

¹⁵y despojando a los principados y a las potestades, los exhibió públicamente, triunfando sobre ellos en la cruz.

2 Corintios 5.17 (RVR60)

¹⁷De modo que si alguno está en Cristo, nueva criatura es; las cosas viejas pasaron; he aquí todas son hechas nuevas.

Colosenses 1.13 (RVR60)

¹³el cual nos ha librado de la potestad de las tinieblas, y trasladado al reino de su amado Hijo,

Within this larger understanding of Paul's view the expression “hand him over to Satan” must be interpreted. The new creation had begun, but had not yet been consummated; the dominion of evil had been invaded, but had not yet ended; the new age had superimposed itself on this present evil age, but had not yet replaced it. Thus the church was the arena of Christ's presence and continuing work; it was the community of God's Spirit. To be excommunicated was therefore to be transferred out of the kingdom of God's Son into the dominion of darkness (a reversal of [Col 1:13](#)!). Such a transaction is aptly described as a “handing over to Satan,” that is, into the world, the sphere of his continuing domain.

If that is the proper sense of the phrase, then how are we to understand the stated purposes of this transaction?

A literal reading of the phrase “for the destruction of the flesh” leads to several possible meanings: (1) abandonment of the man's physical existence to the powers of destruction; (2) premature death, in keeping with Jewish ideas; (3) physical sufferings. Two difficulties arise: (1) How do any of these lead to the stated purpose of the excommunication, namely, salvation? (2) In light of Paul's teaching regarding bodily resurrection and his rejection of Corinthian libertinism (with its antiphysical thrust), would he be promoting the dichotomy: destruction of the flesh versus salvation of the spirit?

These difficulties disappear when we take seriously the way in which Paul generally uses the terms *flesh* and *spirit* when speaking about human life. Paul clearly rejected the dichotomy between the physical and the spiritual so prevalent in Greek

Iglesia Bíblica Bautista de Aguadilla, PR

www.iglesiabiblicabautista.org

(787) 890-0118

(787) 485-6586

thought. When he contrasts “flesh” with “spirit” in human existence, being “in the flesh” with being “in the spirit,” he is contrasting two means of existence, two orientations of life. “Flesh” represents the total being (including the human spirit) in its opposition to God; “spirit” designates the total being (including the physical) as redeemed by God, in relation with Christ. (See the discussion on Romans 7:14, 19.)

The Greek says literally, “for destruction of the flesh”; the NIV rendering “so that the sinful nature may be destroyed” rightly catches Paul’s “religious” use of the word *flesh*. The aim of the excommunication would then have been the destruction of the offender’s “way of life.” Surely he had grasped something of God’s grace, experienced dimensions of Christ’s love in the fellowship, witnessed the Spirit’s transforming power in the lives of his brothers and sisters. Excluded from this sphere, might he not come to his senses (like the prodigal son)? Might he not come to the recognition that his immorality would only lead to death, but that the death of his immorality would lead to life?

1 Timoteo 1.20 (RVR60)

²⁰de los cuales son Himeneo y Alejandro, a quienes entregué a Satanás para que aprendan a no blasfemar.

Jeremías 17.9 (RVR60)

⁹Engañoso es el corazón más que todas las cosas, y perverso; ¿quién lo conocerá?

Sofonías 3.1–5 (RVR60)

El pecado de Jerusalén, y su redención

¹¡Ay de la ciudad rebelde y contaminada y opresora! ²No escuchó la voz, ni recibió la corrección; no confió en Jehová, no se acercó a su Dios. ³Sus príncipes en medio de ella son leones rugientes; sus jueces, lobos nocturnos que no dejan hueso para la mañana. ⁴Sus profetas son livianos, hombres prevaricadores; sus sacerdotes contaminaron el santuario, falsearon la ley. ⁵Jehová en medio de ella es justo, no hará iniquidad; de mañana sacará a luz su juicio, nunca faltará; pero el perverso no conoce la vergüenza.

1 Tesalonicenses 3.13 (RVR60)

¹³para que sean afirmados vuestros corazones, irreprochables en santidad delante de Dios nuestro Padre, en la venida de nuestro Señor Jesucristo con todos sus santos.

Only in such an understanding is the concept “destruction of the flesh” an appropriate preliminary step to “salvation of his spirit.” In this last phrase, “spirit” denotes the human being as regenerated by the Spirit of God, living “in the Spirit” or “according to the Spirit” (see Rom 8:5–11 RSV). As such, the one who had once again

been claimed from the dominion of darkness, through the destruction of his “fleshly” orientation, would be saved “on the day of the Lord.”¹

Romanos 8.5–11 (RVR60)

⁵Porque los que son de la carne piensan en las cosas de la carne; pero los que son del Espíritu, en las cosas del Espíritu. ⁶Porque el ocuparse de la carne es muerte, pero el ocuparse del Espíritu es vida y paz. ⁷Por cuanto los designios de la carne son enemistad contra Dios; porque no se sujetan a la ley de Dios, ni tampoco pueden; ⁸y los que viven según la carne no pueden agradar a Dios.

⁹Mas vosotros no vivís según la carne, sino según el Espíritu, si es que el Espíritu de Dios mora en vosotros. Y si alguno no tiene el Espíritu de Cristo, no es de él. ¹⁰Pero si Cristo está en vosotros, el cuerpo en verdad está muerto a causa del pecado, mas el espíritu vive a causa de la justicia. ¹¹Y si el Espíritu de aquel que levantó de los muertos a Jesús mora en vosotros, el que levantó de los muertos a Cristo Jesús vivificará también vuestros cuerpos mortales por su Espíritu que mora en vosotros.

¹ Kaiser, Walter C., Jr. et al. *Hard sayings of the Bible*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996. Print.

Iglesia Bíblica Bautista de Aguadilla, PR

www.iglesiabiblicabautista.org

(787) 890-0118

(787) 485-6586