

Introduction

- What does it mean to turn someone over to Satan?
- “You are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.”
- This is referring to the local church excommunicating a member for sexual sin.

Context

- 1 Corinthians is written to the Corinthian church to address the unhealthiness in their church and answer some of their theological questions.
- Chapter 5 is focused on the need to exercise church discipline.
- They especially need to deal with a particular member of their congregation.
- There is a member of their church married to his mother-in-law, possibly own mother.
- Paul gives them instructions on what to do to this particular person, and in general.
- This passage does seem to be instructing the church, at times, to hand people over to Satan, but this is for a particular kind of person.

What to Do

- The church is to take action together and excommunicate this man from the church.
- This is based on the authority of the apostle Paul.
- This must be done in the church assembly, with everyone present.
- This must be done in the name of Jesus with His power.
- He must be removed from the assembly and their midst.
- He is to be given over to Satan.
- The man will lose the protection of the church and the Holy Spirit.
- The man is shown to not be a part of the community of God.
- Those who are not in fellowship with Christ’s bride are in fellowship with Satan.
- Excommunication also means to no longer associate with them.
- The church is not to share meals with the excommunicated.

Why Do This?

- This must be done because even a little sin leaves the whole loaf.
- The church must take sin in its midst seriously.
- Christ cares about the holiness and purity of His bride.
- Excommunication is the last step, not the first.
- The hope is that being loosed to their sin will eventually lead them to repentance.
- This does not mean that they are possessed by Satan, or that God loses control over this individual’s life.

Church Membership

- This passage is an example of church membership being assumed in Scripture.
- The church assembles and takes action together.
- There is some clear marker of who is inside of the church.
- There is some action taken to remove someone from the midst of the church.

Church Discipline

- This is directed towards believers in our community, not unbelievers outside of it.
- We respond to the unbeliever living in sexual sin one way and a professing member of our church another.
- This discipline is primarily directed towards sexual sins or other public sins, greed, idolatry, reviling, drunkenness, or swindling.
- This is an unpopular practice that many churches no longer do.
- Some churches that do can have a highly organized process and system.
- Churches must practice some form of confronting public and serious sins.
- It should rarely end in excommunication.

Conclusion

- The entire church takes this action, not just individual believers.
- It should be done tearfully and with a longing for repentance.
- There is no one in Satan's hands God cannot rescue.