

What Does I Corinthians 5 Mean?

TRAVIS: All right, everybody. Welcome back to the Bible study podcast. I'm Travis Pauley, and here we have one goal: Learn to love like Jesus. Back again, as always, with Wes McAdams. Hi, Wes.

WES: Hi, Brother. How are you?

TRAVIS: I'm doing great. How are you?

WES: I'm doing very well.

TRAVIS: We have the unique treat of a voicemail today left by a listener, so we're going to listen to that now.

WES: Okay. Let's play it.

Hi. I have a question about a specific piece of scripture that I thought could be talked about on the Bible Study podcast. In I Corinthians chapter 5, beginning in about verse 3 -- and I'm reading from the ESV -- it says, "For though absent in body, I am present in spirit; and as if present, I have already pronounced judgment on the one who did such a thing. When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, 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."

My question is, what does it mean to "deliver someone to Satan for the destruction of the flesh," and how should we apply this scripture to our lives today? Thank you.

WES: Okay. Interesting question, right?

TRAVIS: Super easy passage.

WES: Absolutely, yeah. In fact, every commentary that I read said something along the lines of "this is one of the most difficult passages in scripture," and I would agree with that. It is very difficult. And sort of the more you look at it and the more you sort of cross-reference the New Testament passages with some of the Old Testament passages to which Paul is alluding, it becomes even more difficult, but yeah, so let's just kind of -- do you hear -- I like to throw it back to you, Travis. Have you heard this passage used much, or what is your familiarity with it?

TRAVIS: I would say I definitely have read it before. I Corinthians, it's in the context of this troubled church with a lot of horrible things going on, and this is -- you know, one of the things we always talk about with the Corinthian letters is how Paul -- the first one, he kind of lays it down hard and heavy, and then the second, it's sort of like, "I'm sorry I had to do that, but..." and this is definitely one of those moments that always came across as -- it's sort of the other side of the gospel we don't always think about, is how I think about it.

WES: Yeah, that's a great way to put it.

TRAVIS: But other than that, I feel like it's definitely not something we talk about very much.

WES: Yeah. The Corinthian church, I like to say, is not your grandmother's church. Like it is -- I always say it's like a biker-bar church. I mean, this is a rough group of people, especially when compared to sort of 21st century Western Christians now, having been shaped by the gospel for generations,

thinking about this first generation of Christians that are coming out of paganism, coming out of all of the things that they were involved in before. But, in fact, it's ironic that what Paul says is happening in the Corinthian church would have even made the pagans blush. It was something that would have even shamed them. So let's sort of read the context, and then we'll talk more about what it means. In fact, you want to read starting in Chapter 5? Let's just read the whole chapter, I think.

TRAVIS: Okay. I Corinthians 5: "I can hardly believe the report about the sexual immorality going on among you -- something that even pagans don't do. I'm told that a man in your church is living in sin with his stepmother. You're so proud of yourselves, but you should be mourning in sorrow and shame. And you should remove this man from your fellowship. Even though I'm not with you in person, I am with you in spirit. And as though I were there, I've already passed judgment on this man in the name of the Lord Jesus. You must call a meeting of the church. I will be present with you in spirit, and so will the power of our Lord Jesus. Then you must throw this man out and hand him over to Satan so that his sinful nature will be destroyed and he himself will be saved on the day the Lord returns."

WES: Okay. Whoa, whoa, whoa. Let's stop the train because you're reading from New Living Translation?

TRAVIS: Yes. I can switch it up if I need to.

WES: No, no, no, I think it's good. I always enjoy reading from various translations, and this is the Bible Study podcast, so this is what it's all about. It's helpful sometimes to read from different translations and to understand the philosophy behind those translations, so I really like the New Living

Translation, but it does tend to be more of a paraphrase, and so they're taking more interpretive license with the text. And in this case, they took the word that is literally translated as "flesh," which can mean, like, skin, like your body, your actual flesh, but it could also be used metaphorically, and there they've taken it as a metaphor and they said -- read that one more time.

TRAVIS: In verse 5?

WES: Right.

TRAVIS: "Then you must throw this man out and hand him over to Satan so that his sinful nature will be destroyed."

WES: Okay. So "his sinful nature will be destroyed." Again, that is a very sort of Calvinistic, reformed way of reading the word or the idea of "flesh," that it is a metaphor for a person's sinful nature. It could be. That could be. We won't discount that.

TRAVIS: That's probably a more comfortable way to look at this passage.

WES: Right. That's true. That's absolutely true. And we'll come back and I'll say why I don't think that's what he means there, but I think it's really important to recognize the word that lies behind it, that it's "flesh." So "flesh" can mean a lot of different things. Again, it can mean skin, like the meat on your bones, very literally. It can mean something along the lines of the nature that we have that has a propensity towards sin. It can mean something like that. I like to use the idea of weakness, that it is about our weakness, both mortally and morally, that we are mortally weak in that we die, we are flesh and bones, we're flesh and blood, we get sick, we get diseases, we die, so there's the mortality of it. But there's also the morality of it, which is what the sinful nature speaks to, that we are morally weak and

we make mistakes and we have a propensity towards sin.

So I think that it's important for us to recognize that there is a metaphorical interpretation that is accurate concerning the word "flesh," that it is about our weakness, our lack of strength, and so that may mean -- that may be what Paul is talking about, is "flesh" as a metaphor, but we'll let the listener decide as we go, but just recognize that there is a difference in translation there. Okay. Sorry. Verse 6.

TRAVIS: Verse 6: "Your boasting about this is terrible. Don't you realize that this sin is like a little yeast that spreads through the whole batch of dough? Get rid of the old 'yeast' by removing this wicked person from among you. Then you will be like a fresh batch of dough made without yeast, which is what you really are. Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed for us. So let us celebrate the festival, not with the old bread of wickedness and evil, but with the new bread of sincerity and truth. When I wrote to you before, I told you not to associate with people who indulge in sexual sin. But I wasn't talking about unbelievers who indulge in sexual sin, or are greedy, or cheat people, or worship idols. You would have to leave this world to avoid people like that. I meant that you are not to associate with anyone who claims to be a believer yet indulges in sexual sin, or is greedy, or worships idols, or is abusive, or is a drunkard, or cheats people. Don't even eat with such people. It isn't my responsibility to judge outsiders, but it certainly is your responsibility to judge those inside the church who are sinning. God will judge those on the outside; but as the Scriptures say, 'You must remove the evil person from among you.'"

WES: Okay. So I want to walk through this whole passage, first remind

everybody what the context is, what's going on, why is Paul saying what he's saying. Number two, to talk about what does he tell them to do? Like what are they supposed to do? What's the application of this for them? Then number three, what does that mean to deliver the person over to Satan? And then four, what does it mean, the destruction of the flesh -- or the destruction of the sinful nature, as your translation put it?

So first of all, the context is that this person -- I think your translation said, in the first couple of verses, that he's living with his stepmother, right?

TRAVIS: "Living in sin with his stepmother."

WES: "Living in sin with his stepmother." So that could be that they're living together, but one way or the other, he's engaging in sexual immorality with his father's wife. Probably not his mom; probably his stepmother.

Now, whether that's because his father is a widower -- or his father died and now his stepmother is left and now he's shackled up with her, or whatever it is -- we really don't know the details of it, but we know that this is incestuous. It is incestuous for him to be having a sexual relationship with his father's wife, and so Paul says even the pagans would not tolerate this. So not only is this not in accordance with biblical, according to the scriptures, sexual ethics, the sexual ethics laid out in the book of Leviticus or in the Old Law that the Christians are continuing to practice and to observe -- not only are you not meeting that standard, you're not even meeting a worldly standard, and so you ought to be ashamed of yourselves. Not only should this person himself be ashamed, but the whole church should be ashamed.

Now, ironically, they're not ashamed. Not only is he, apparently, not

ashamed, but they're not ashamed as a church family. He even uses the word "boast," like you're boasting about it, like you're proud of it. Like maybe some people think that they're proud that they're so tolerant, they're proud that they're so accepting, they're proud that they're so loving, or whatever the case may be, and Paul is appalled about the way that they are responding to this. So there's the context. That's what's going on, is sexual immorality, and Paul broadens this out and applies what he's about to say to all matters of sexual immorality. This isn't just incest. There's -- it's all matters of sexual immorality, but then even broader than that, things like greed, covetousness, and he applies it to all matters of perpetual sin, that a person is persisting in sinfulness, that this applies to all of those things. He says -- this is in verse 11 -- if somebody "bears the name of brother and he's guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater or a reviler or a drunkard or a swindler, don't even eat with such a one," so this has application to a lot of different sins.

But what he tells the church to do concerning this man is sort of repeated with different phrases throughout the context or throughout this chapter. In verse 2, it puts it this way. It says "remove" the man from among you. So "remove." So there's a very plain stating of what they're supposed to do, remove the man from among them. Verse 7, it's sort of a metaphor using yeast or leaven. They're supposed to cleanse out the old leaven for the sake of the whole lump. Verse 11, don't even associate with people like this. Verse 13, "Purge the evil person from among you." Now, this is actually where it gets really interesting, because that phrase he's quoting from the Old Testament. And this is found in Deuteronomy 13:5;

Deuteronomy 17:7, 12; Deuteronomy 21:21; Deuteronomy 22:21;
Deuteronomy 22:22, 24; and then in Judges 20:13. I'll put all those in the
show notes. And every time this phrase is used in those passages, it doesn't
just mean kick them out of the community; it means execute them. I'm just
going to leave that there for a second.

And so Paul is quoting from and reminding them of the law that the
people of Israel, the family of God, when someone persisted in a sinful
behavior, there were times when they were supposed to execute them. For
the sake of the entire family, the entire congregation, they were supposed to
put this person to death, and the phrase that was used was "Purge the evil
person from among you." And so he uses that phrase in telling them just
how serious this is. Now, I don't think that that's what Paul is telling them to
do. I don't think he's telling them to execute this person literally, but I do
think that's exactly how we should understand it, that this is essentially an
execution, that they are supposed to so put him out of their congregation, put
him out of their fellowship, that essentially, they are assigning him to death.
Just like in Israel or in -- as the people of Israel came out of Egyptian
captivity and they moved towards the Promised Land, and as they moved
into the Promised Land and took up residence there, when people acted in
ways that were not conducive to this sort of godly, communal living, that
person was not just put out of the community, but was -- or was supposed to
be -- put to death, and that's essentially what happens to someone who is put
outside the church.

We'll get more into that in just a second, but let me just stop there and
say, what do you think so far?

TRAVIS: Well, I think, yeah, that particular phrase that we went over briefly about "hand him over to Satan" so that either his sinful nature or -- to give the NLT credit, it does have a note that says, "the Greek reads 'for the destruction of the flesh or so that his body will be destroyed.'" So that idea -- that's definitely the problem phrase that's like, okay, what does that mean? "Hand him over to Satan so that his body will be destroyed, but that he himself or his spirit will be saved on the day the Lord returns." That's definitely, I think, the part that I was thinking about before we started this.

WES: Right. So I think, to kind of answer that question, the whole chapter is about excommunicating this person, kicking them out of the church, and that in doing so, you are -- I hesitate to use the phrase "spiritual" because so many people take "spiritual" and contrast that with "physical" -- but spiritually, as in this is a spiritual execution. This is putting them outside of the church where there is no life. And when we say "there is no life," we don't just mean like in a, like, ethereal sense. We mean there is no resurrection, that they are going to die, because outside of the church they are separated from God, they are separated from life, they are separated from the Holy Spirit. There is death and there is destruction outside of the church, and I think we have to see it in such stark contrast. We have to recognize that the church is the new creation of God, that the people that have been saved by Jesus are these Spirit-filled people making up this Spirit-filled community. At least this is the way it's supposed to be, that you have this Spirit-filled community in which there is life, and on the outside of that community is chaos and death and destruction, and it is the realm of Satan. Satan rules the world. Satan's the ruler of the world. He is the prince of the

powers of the air. Satan rules the world, and when you put somebody out of the new world, the new creation, the new humanity, and you say, "You are not walking in a way that is in line with the new creation, and so you have to go back into the world" -- that when you are assigning them back to the world, you are assigning them to the dominion of Satan, where Satan rules and there is death and there is destruction.

This is the place from which we've all escaped. If we've come into Christ, if Jesus has saved us, we've escaped from the world. We've come out from the domain and the dominion and the rule of Satan into the rule and the reign of Jesus, where Jesus is protecting us and loving us and, through the Spirit, giving us life. But if we behave in this kind of a way and the church has to put us out of the community, then they are essentially -- if you think about like the wilderness wandering and you think about the caravan of tents and you think about this community of tents, and then somebody gets kicked out, even if they weren't stoned to death -- is what they were literally commanded to do, oftentimes -- but even if they weren't stoned to death and they were kicked out of the tent city, or even after they took up residence in Canaan and they were kicked out of town, out into the wilderness, out into the place where there is death and destruction, there are robbers and there are thieves and there are wild animals and there are all kinds of manners of death -- this is what Paul is telling them to do in a spiritual sense.

But, again, when we say "in a spiritual sense," we're not just saying in an ethereal sense. We are saying very much so, that the people of Jesus are the ones who will be resurrected to live forever, and to be kicked out of that community is to be sent back into the place where there is death and

destruction and darkness, and that's what he's telling them to do. He's saying, "Send him back to the place from which he came. Send him back to the rule and the reign of Satan because he's not living as one who is under the rule and the reign of King Jesus."

TRAVIS: Yeah, and on the -- two thoughts I had. One, I've been aware of modern churches that have done this, that, you know, someone's found to be living in a way that requires them to be barred from fellowship, and they take that quite seriously. And I think -- I remember one of the first times I heard about that happening, I thought, well, that's -- like this was a person who's clearly struggling and floundering in their faith. I thought -- again, not considering this verse, this passage, but I thought, man --

WES: Just looking at it on the surface.

TRAVIS: Right. It's like that's so brutal, because aren't you just abandoning that person to sin? And you read this passage, and it's like, yes, pretty much.

WES: Yeah. That's the point, yeah.

TRAVIS: And -- but then I also look at it -- I had this thought as I was reading the passage before we came on, and that was -- on, like, a personal level, I know I've reflected on times in my life when I was hanging around people I shouldn't have been that weren't good for me, and I certainly wasn't being any good for them, and I've thought, in years since then, like why did I do that? Why was I -- like on some level I knew. I knew that I wasn't -- I had no business being around these people. But I realized, with years of introspection, that when you feel bad about yourself, when you're not convinced in your own salvation and your own path of righteousness, it actually feels pretty good to have people to compare yourself to and to say --

so you mentioned that maybe this was an issue of being -- because it says they're being proud of it. They're being proud of their own tolerance and their own compassion, you know, and I think that's -- in sort of a perverse way, that's what you think you're doing when you associate with people that you know you shouldn't be, especially wearing the name of Jesus, that there's sort of a perverse pride in, well, this is compassion. Jesus ate with sinners, you know. But that was not in the context of the church. That was not in the context of the new creation that you're supposed to be.

WES: Yeah. It's hard to know exactly what their motivation is behind it. It could be that, and I've heard people make those kinds of references. Another thing to consider is, in Chapter 6, they really had a very perverse way of thinking about sexuality. I apologize to listeners if you have kids. We're getting into an area where it might be a little more adult-focused. But in Chapter 6 he talks about sexual immorality, and some of their excuses seem to be things like, "Well, food is for the stomach; the stomach is for food. You know, if I have this appetite, then why shouldn't I satisfy it? Who cares?"

TRAVIS: Sounds familiar.

WES: Right. Exactly. And so they had this nihilistic view of the body that said, "The body is going to be destroyed anyway. What difference does it make?" And Paul says, "No, the body isn't for destruction. The body is for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body. The Lord is for the body. He wants to redeem your body and to use it for good, and your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit." And so he has to change their view about the body because their view on the body is leading to very real-world type of implications. So

it's hard to know exactly, why were they putting up with this?

But it's also interesting to take into account that Paul helps them to realize that it is all of their responsibility to discipline each other, and this really flies in the face of modern Christianity, of modern living, that just says, well -- I love the phrase -- when I say "love," I'm being sarcastic, but the phrase "You do you," right? "You do you." You just do whatever -- my son likes to joke with me when I look at somebody and kind of shake my head, "I can't believe what that guy's doing. I can't believe this guy. Can you believe how he's living his life," or whatever, and my son will jokingly say, "Dad, he's just living his best life," and that's just his way of saying, "Don't judge him. Just let him do what he wants to do." And that's a very modern way of thinking, that we just let each other do whatever feels right to that person. But that's chaos, and Paul says -- he says, "I don't have anything to do with judging the people in the world. I have nothing to do with disciplining them. That's not my job. My job is not to go around and police the world's sexual ethics." Paul says, "I have nothing to do with that. God is going to judge them. But it is our responsibility to discipline those within the body."

So if anyone calls themselves a believer, if anyone calls themselves a brother or sister in Christ and they're living this kind of life -- not just sexual immorality. It's very easy for us to get myopic and think about one thing, but greedy or idolators or a reviler, speaking abusively about people, then we should discipline people. And, in fact, I've been thinking a lot about the words "honor and shame." In fact, I'm writing a blog series right now on honor and shame, and there's sort of two different ways of using the word

"shame." One of those is sort of a modern way of thinking about shame, and it's more an individualistic idea that says, "There's something wrong with me." So sort of the modern, psychological way of thinking about shame is that it's a toxic way of thinking about yourself, to say not just that I've done something wrong, but "I am something wrong. There's something wrong with me." And there's a lot of good thought that goes into helping people to break free of those shameful thoughts.

But in this context, in this culture, shame was used -- and it continues to be used. We use it in families. We do this. We say, "You ought to be ashamed of yourself," and there is a healthy place for that in a community -- for the people in a community saying, "This is our standard of living. This is how we live in this community. These are the kinds of things that we do, and these are the kinds of things that we don't do," and we use a healthy amount of spiritual shame. And, again, I know that's a bad word today, but we tell people, "If you want to continue to be part of this community, then this is how you have to live your life. And if you choose not to live your life this way, that's your choice. I can't force you to be a follower of Jesus. I can't force you to walk in the way of Jesus, but you cannot continue to be here and live like that." And that's something that very few churches, very few Christians, are willing to say to one another anymore because, again, we rightly see in scripture this need to be longsuffering with each other, patient with each other, gracious with one another.

And so there is a place for that, and when it comes to this point, that's a whole other -- that's not what Paul is getting into in this particular text. But you're right; we do have to consider that and say, "Well, is this a new

Christian? They just don't know any better? Are they struggling? Are they discouraged?" If somebody is discouraged, the way you help somebody out of discouragement is not shaming them. That does not help somebody that's discouraged. If somebody's like, "I'm at my wit's end. I don't know what to do. I might as well just give in and follow my desires," that person probably doesn't need to be shamed. It's the person that is boldly, bold-facedly saying, "I'm going to do whatever I want to, and you have nothing you can say to me. You can't judge me. I can do whatever I want. I'm my own person. You can't tell me what's right and wrong." That person needs to be told by the entire community, "You can't live this way and be a member in good standing in this community."

And, again, Paul puts it very strongly in that you are sending them back to the rule and the reign of Satan where they are going to die. Not you're going to execute them. Not they're going to starve to death or something like that, but they are not going to be resurrected to life. And when we interpret this eschatologically, when we interpret this in light of the resurrection, we understand that it's those in the community of Jesus that are resurrected to life, and by sending someone out, you're saying, "You're no longer a recipient. You're no longer an heir. You're being disinherited." And yes, that is the most extreme form of punishment, and so that is something that -- it should be a last resort. In my life, I've only been a part of one time where that's happened. Arguably, it should have been more, but I've been a part of that happening one time. It's a matter of last resort, but sometimes it does exactly what the intention was here, and it restores the person and saves them in the long run.

I just want to take a short break from our Bible study to tell you that if you are enjoying this discussion, you might also enjoy my book "Beyond the Verse." You can find the audio version of the book at RadicallyChristian.com/audible. If you're not already an Audible subscriber, you can actually get my book for free when you sign up for a free trial, so go to RadicallyChristian.com/audible. Now back to the Bible study.

WES: As we were kind of talking about some of that, a passage came to my mind that I think -- again, I think you're right in that we have to have a balance to this, and if we just focused on this one passage to the exclusion of the rest of the New Testament, we might think, "Oh, you mess up and you're out." I love what Paul says in I Thessalonians 5:14. It says, "We urge you, brothers, admonish the idle" -- that means warn the idle -- "encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all." I really like that. "Admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, and be patient with them all." I think that that's a recognition that different people are in different places in their spiritual walk, and different people might even be sinning for different reasons. Some people might be sinning because they don't know any better. They're ignorant; they just need to be taught. Other people might be sinning because they are rebellious and they need to be admonished or they need to even be disciplined. But if we just assume that everybody is rebellious, we will overdiscipline. But if we just assume that everybody just needs a little more time, or everybody just needs a little bit more understanding, or everybody just -- then we'll make the mistake of

never disciplining people.

And I think we have to focus here on what Paul says about the purpose of it, because he says, "Deliver this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord." This is where we need to kind of talk about, as we sort of wrap this up, this "destruction of the flesh" idea. And, really, there's two things there. There's the destruction of the flesh for the salvation of the spirit, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord. So there's flesh and there's spirit. So, again, the New Living Translation says, "Flesh, well, that's sinful nature and you need to discipline him so that his nature -- so that his sinful inclinations, his passions, become disciplined." That's definitely possible.

But again, looking at what he's saying in the context of the whole Bible, like the passages from Deuteronomy about "Purge the evil one from among you," that -- that you are assigning this person, you are surrendering this person to Satan. And I think recognizing that Satan has dominion over the world and disease and death and destruction, that this is turning this man over to Satan for whatever Satan wants to do to him. And why? Not because we have control over Satan. Not because we can say, "Okay, Satan. Here's the checklist. Here's what we need you to do to this guy. Torture him in this way." That's not what he's saying. He's saying that if you walk in this kind of rebellious manner, then you are going to be turned over -- rather, the protection of Jesus is going to be removed from you.

TRAVIS: Right.

WES: It's like if my boys sometimes say -- I've really harped on my boys today, I guess, but -- they're not as serious as you might think that they are,

but they're like all kids, and there's times where they say, "I'm going to run away. I don't want you to be my dad anymore. I don't want to live here anymore. I'm outta here." My oldest is 13, so he's not serious, but sometimes I'll call his bluff on that, right? When he says, "I don't want to live here anymore. I'm done," it's like, "Okay. Well, see how that works for you. Like go live out there and see what happens." Now, he's 13. I'm not actually going to let him do that. I'm bluffing and calling his bluff because I'm not going to let him live out on his own. But if he was 19 or he was 20 and he said, "I don't want to live here anymore. I'm done. I don't want to live under your rules anymore," then the only option I have is to remove my protection from him. And when I remove my protection from him, then he is surrendered to the elements. If you are kicked out from underneath your roof literally, then you are surrendered to the storms. You are surrendered to whatever may come.

And if we believe that in the church -- if we believe that in Jesus and being filled with the Spirit provides us with protection, yes, in this life and maybe even more so -- maybe, in the first century, miraculously so even more than today, but also the protection of brothers and sisters, the protection of community, the support system that we have in that if I go bankrupt or broke, I have brothers and sisters that can help me, but especially eschatologically. Jesus is going to raise me to life. I cannot die. I cannot die. My flesh will be redeemed. My body will be redeemed. I will be resurrected. But if I'm kicked out of the love and the protection of Jesus, if I'm kicked out of the household of God, then my flesh, my body, is surrendered to Satan for its destruction. That is what is going to eventually

happen to it.

Now, hopefully -- and I think this is the point here, is that hopefully, being surrendered to Satan and the destruction of his flesh will bring about his salvation before the flesh is completely destroyed. Before he dies, hopefully, he's going to repent. I think that's Paul's whole point, is that we're going to surrender him for the destruction of his flesh so that his flesh isn't destroyed, so that his spirit is saved, so that he comes back to the Lord, and so that he experiences the love and protection and life that is in Jesus.

TRAVIS: So much of what you're saying keeps calling to mind the biblical theme of sacrifice that -- you know, whether it's with Jesus or whether it's with the scapegoat, whether it's with the bulls and goats that they sacrificed, you know, for thousands of years, the children of Israel -- the metaphor, the symbolic representation, the necessary act of death leading back to life -- and when you're talking about releasing someone into the elements, into the dominion of Satan and away from the protection and the light of the church and the communion of the Spirit in the church, that you are offering them up to their destruction, -- you know, I think about Christ on the cross and how, literally, the world goes dark when he's forsaken, when he's sacrificed on the cross, but that was to lead to life that was -- and I think, you know, that metaphor, that idea of sacrifice and rebirth and resurrection, it carries literally; it carries psychologically. It holds up that if -- I mean, sometimes, to appreciate what you have, you have to let it go.

WES: You have to lose it.

TRAVIS: You have to completely lose it. And I think that -- I think that the question that keeps coming to my mind is how do you propose that we do

this in a modern context? Like you talked about you only had to be a part of one, but that, arguably, it should be a lot more. How do you think we go about doing that in the modern context where the modern Christianity is much more focused on sort of compassion in the form of simply tolerance and not compassion in the form of "I want you to be restored, but in order for that to happen, you have to be rejected."

WES: I think we're so far from this because in order for disfellowship to be effective, fellowship has to be effective, and we are so far away from that. I don't even -- honestly, I don't even know how to get back to that. I mean, obviously, a local congregation can say, "Hey, we're withdrawing fellowship from you. We're excommunicating you," and that can be somewhat effective. But the fact that there's a church on every corner, it loses its effectiveness. If you withdraw from me because I'm living in sin, I'll just go find a church that accepts this -- whatever "this" is. And where people are -- churches are competing for members and people are coming over there and people are just trying to swell their numbers, all of these things are so contrary to and antithetical to this kind of community. This is like family, where it breaks your heart to have to say, "You're destroying us from the inside out. You're destroying us, and you cannot be here anymore. You cannot be here. We are surrendering you over to the world." There was no other church for him to go to. Like it was either the Corinthian church or nothing. There was no alternative. And so that's really the only way that this is effective in the same sort of way. We have to do the best we can, and so, yes, there are times where we have to warn people, encourage people, teach people, but we also are going to have to work on creating fellowship

environments that are so tight.

Again, to go back to my kids and that metaphor, they don't really want to live outside of the house. They don't really want to be out from under our protection and our roof and our family because this is where there is life and hope and connection. This is where they eat every meal. This is where everything happens. That's the way the church should be. The church should be exactly like that, where this is our family. And sometimes it is that, but for so many people, church is just something they do on Sunday. And if church is just something you do on Sunday, then this kind of thing, if it happens, it's just going to be way different. It's just going to be, "Hey, you're not officially a member here anymore." Like, okay, I mean, that's better than nothing, I suppose, but it only can be effective the way that Jesus wants it to be effective so that that shame -- again, in a good way -- has its proper effect. Like you said, it's the actual removal of something.

When I ground my sons from something, from the video game or from their phone or whatever -- when I ground them from something and I take that away from them, it hurts because they lost something that they enjoy. They lost something that was important to them. If the church isn't really important to us, then its removal won't even be felt. Paul wants this man to feel the removal of that community, the removal of that unity, the removal of that family. And so I think part of it is building that -- building that type of an environment where we are so closely connected to each other and that we are understanding of the fact that we need to be involved in each other's lives and decisions.

Again, this "You do you," "You live your best life," "You make your

decisions, whatever you feel is right for you," that kind of thing -- within reason, I guess that can work, but when we're talking about these kinds of -- sexual immorality or greed or idolatry or the way we talk to each other, whatever it is, like that -- we can't be so hands-off with each other and so distant and disconnected from each other. We have to be connected because, again, that type of connection -- not just "I belong to a church; therefore, I have life. I belong to a church; therefore, I have the protection of Jesus. I belong to a church; therefore, I'll experience the resurrection." It's so much more than that. It's in the community of Spirit-filled followers of Jesus there is life and there is love, both in the present and in the age to come, and we have to get back to restoring that. We love to talk about restoring New Testament Christianity. This isn't just something we do a few hours a week. This is life. We have to get back to the point where we are living life with our brothers and sisters so that when we get out of line, when I get out of line, you can tell me, "Wes, this behavior is not in keeping with the spirit of Jesus. This is not in keeping with the gospel. You need to change." And if I refuse, then the withdrawal from me -- withdrawing from me, the entire community saying, "You're outside of our fellowship now," it hurts so bad that I change, I repent, I come back to Jesus in order to be part of the family. We've got to work on restoring the family and the community before the discipline will be effective.

Thank you so much for being part of the Radically Christian Bible Study podcast today. We hope that you've enjoyed this episode. I want to give a special thanks to Travis Pauley and to our McDermott Road church family for

making this podcast possible. As always, we love you, God loves you, and we hope that you have a wonderful day.