

1Corinthians 5:6-8 "Called To Be Saints, Not Sinners"

1 Corinthians 5:6-8 ⁶ Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump *of dough*? ⁷ Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are *in fact* unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. ⁸ Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

This portion of God's word is a very straight forward approach to certain problems that were taking place in Corinth at this time in church history. Paul has set the stage by saying at the outset that God's people are "sanctified in Christ Jesus and *called to be holy*, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ..." (1Co.1:2)

And then he spends a great deal of time addressing certain problems which are anything but a demonstration of holiness in the lives of these people. But Paul also is very practical in his approach to correcting these difficulties in Corinth.

One way in which he begins the correction of this church is to show them an example of one who is walking in holiness, and that would be Paul himself. In fact, he goes so far as to say, "I urge you to imitate me." (1CO 4:16)

If we are to follow anyone's example it should be a good example. But, Paul was not suggesting that these Corinthians should exclusively follow some human example in Paul, but the example of Paul as he followed Christ.

That's why he could say in 1CO 11:1 "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ."

That's what this whole letter is about; following Christ. That's what our whole life is about; following Christ, and honoring Him with our lives in everything we do.

In the case of the church at Corinth, these Christians were not following Christ in a way that honored Him, and in the process they were showing their community that claiming to follow Christ was no different than the surrounding unbelievers claiming to follow their gods and philosophies.

And so, in a very practical fashion Paul now makes it clear as to how to get back on the path of holiness which should characterize every believer in Christ. In the case of our context the first radical step is to excommunicate an individual who was misrepresenting our Lord and was unrepentant about it. And, as an apostle, he had the authority in Christ to take the action he does.

1CO 5:4-5 "When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present, 5 hand this man over to Satan, so that the flesh may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord."

This was designed to not only cut out the cancer that was destroying the body in Corinth, but to also get the attention of the rest of the believers to show them that God doesn't take sin lightly.

Unfortunately, these believers had reached a point in their lives where they had felt they were self-sufficient to the degree that they didn't need to submit to the authority of the apostle Paul, or the rest of the word of God, which addressed such matters. And so, we come to our text this morning to see their attitudes as Paul addresses it.

1CO 5:6-7 "Your boasting is not good. Don't you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough? 7 Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast - as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed."

Your boasting is not good? That's right. In what sense were they boasting? Well, the word boasting here could also be translated glorying. They were proud of the fact that they were tolerant of sin.

And by the way, this same phenomenon is at work in the church today. Just ask yourself, why do the more liberal segments of the church glory in the fact that they are tolerant of behavior like homosexuality, or drunkenness in the guise of a disease, all the while assuming the moral high ground by suggesting that to judge such behavior is actually ungodly?

We are certainly to be patient with people and to direct them to Christ and His word as it relates to sinful behavior, but we are never to be proud that we are so tolerant of sin that it results in rampant ungodliness as the word of God defines it.

For these Corinthians to be boasting suggests that they were not at all concerned with such behavior. Paul says, 'you need to be

concerned and here's why; "don't you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough?"

The way this question is posed is an attempt to address the obvious. Common sense should tell you that if you allow sinful behavior of the type addressed here in this letter, then it will not be long before everyone is affected by this attitude. Over time all sin will be overlooked and Jesus Christ, who has called that local body together, will be a laughing stock.

That's what our Lord meant when he addressed Israel, who was taken into captivity because of their rebellion against the Lord. The prophet Isaiah addresses this.

ISA 52:5 "And now what do I have here?" declares the LORD. "For my people have been taken away for nothing, and those who rule them mock, declares the LORD. "And all day long my name is constantly blasphemed."

The ones who took Israel captive are the ones blaspheming God as they mock Israel. And they mocked Israel because they are in essence saying that Israel's God cannot be very powerful since they have now been delivered into our hands.

And when the world looks to the church and they see people who are no different than anyone else, whose lives are just as ungodly, and yet claim to be a special people because of their faith in Christ, the world questions such a faith and such a Savior who seems to make no difference or at worse is Himself anemic.

The church is to be a place of refuge for sinners, and it is to be a place where sinners are welcome where they are lovingly commanded to turn from their sin and embrace Christ as Lord and Savior.

Unfortunately, much of the church today is welcoming sinners in a way that allows them to continue in their sin with no consequences.

But the church is not to be a refuge for sin. It is not to be a haven where sin abounds. The church is meant to be a sort of spiritual hospital where sinners can find healing as their sins are completely forgiven in Christ and in turn become a worshipping community of the one true God.

But, to purposely use a hospital as a breeding ground for more sickness is to completely miss the point of why it's called a

hospital. To purposely allow sin to run rampant in the church without addressing it is to completely miss the importance of Christ's atonement for our sin.

He sacrificed His life and took our condemnation for sin so that we might be delivered from its penalty as well as its power.

ROM 6:6-7, 11-12 "For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin - 7 because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. 11 In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. 12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires."

Sin is something that can permeate throughout if left unchecked. There is no such thing as a small sin if we make provision for its continued use. If we allow small sin to continue in our lives, it's only one step closer for allowing other sinful behavior which can be much worse.

We might not consider lying under oath in a court of law, but do we lie to people around us for "small things"? I can't tell you how many times I've talked to people over the years who might come out to church and for some reason they stop coming. And out of concern I call and see how they're doing.

"Well, we haven't come out because we've been sick." For three months?

None of us would probably consider going into Wal-Mart with the idea of walking out with something we stick under our shirts. But has it ever happened to you at a place like Wal-Mart, or a restaurant, where they forgot to charge you for an item?

We might take the attitude that all's fair in love and war and items they forget to ring up. Or, "hey they can afford this. It was their mistake anyhow." And that might be true. But, if we had gone shopping or out to dinner with Jesus, what do you think He might say? And yet, every time we go shopping or out to dinner we do take Jesus with us, don't we?

A little leaven leavens the whole lump. The kind of sin we see in Corinth, in all likelihood, didn't start out with someone having his father's wife. It may have begun with a lax attitude about any sort of indiscretions. One smaller sin built upon another until it was out of control.

Paul's point is, don't introduce the leaven in the first place. If you don't want bread that's fluffy and light, then don't put the yeast in it.

1CO 5:7 "Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast - as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed."

The imagery here is of the Passover in Egypt.

EXO 12:15 "For seven days you are to eat bread made without yeast. On the first day remove the yeast from your houses, for whoever eats anything with yeast in it from the first day through the seventh must be cut off from Israel."

In our text Paul is using the yeast here as a metaphor for evil and sin, which was to be left behind in Egypt, which is also a metaphor for the old life.

Stephen, in his defense before the Sanhedrin, shortly before they stoned him to death, talked about Israel's attitude in the desert when Moses had delivered God's word to them.

ACT 7:38-39 "He was in the assembly in the desert, with the angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and with our fathers; and he received living words to pass on to us. 39 "But our fathers refused to obey him. Instead, they rejected him and in their hearts turned back to Egypt."

What Paul sees taking place with the church in Corinth is an attitude that despite how they've been delivered from spiritual Egypt, or the bondage of sin, their hearts still want to go back and dwell in that bondage.

And what he's trying to convey to them is that they have no business going back. If we've left Egypt, (the old life with its bondage to sin), then we must understand how God wants us to completely turn from those old ways which did nothing but foster the growth of more sin.

1CO 5:7 "Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast - as you really are...."

We are a new batch without yeast. In other words, we are a new creation in Christ which makes no room for the old life and its sinful ways.

2CO 5:17-20 "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! 18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: 19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. 20 We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God."

And that reconciliation comes through Christ, our Passover Lamb, who has been sacrificed. Just as the blood of an innocent lamb was put on the doorposts of the Jews in Egypt, so that the angel of death would pass over their houses sparing the first born of each house, Jesus' blood covers us as we place our faith in Him alone.

When it comes to condemnation for sin we are passed over because we are found not guilty in His blood and in His righteousness put to our account through faith in Him.

Well if that's the case, why in the world would we continue to put the leaven of the old life back into the mix as though it were completely acceptable by the Lord, when He has made it clear that it's not?

The first Passover feast in Egypt was to be celebrated without leaven in the bread. And now, we who are in Christ Jesus, are also to be celebrating our Passover without the leaven of the old life.

1CO 5:8 "Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth."

Paul is not suggesting to these Corinthians, nor us by extension, that we are literally to celebrate the Passover feast which was common in Israel. He is showing us that all of life in Christ is a festival of celebration, because the leaven or the sin which separated us from God has been taken away.

The leaven of malice and wickedness is another way of stating what sin is and what it does. The word malice in the Greek is *kakia*, and it is an ill-will toward someone with the desire to injure. And so, malice has more to do with the heart of a person.

The word wickedness is more of the carrying out of that ill-will. And so, it's the actual expression of the sinful attitude. And so, the

leaven Paul speaks of is not just the act of sin itself, but the heart of the person who carries out the sin.

And so, to get rid of the old leaven in our context is certainly to put out of the assembly the one who is committing such sin such that even the pagans don't practice, but it is also to get rid of the heart problem of each individual in the church who has come to accept such behavior.

And how is that done? By embracing the "bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth."

Here again, we have the concept of putting off and putting on. Put on the new life in Christ by walking in the newness of this forgiveness as we flee from sin which is the putting off aspect of this new relationship. Paul speaks of this when writing to the Ephesians.

EPH 4:22-25 "You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; 23 to be made new in the attitude of your minds; 24 and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. 25 Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body.'

There's a tendency to put off what we want to put off when it comes to our old selves. And yet, to justify any of our old self and its sinful ways is to allow the leaven, even in small quantities, to still be active in the new dough of our new life in Christ.

When Paul says to "put off" your old self in Eph.4:22, the word for "put off" is only one word in the Greek which means to cast away. And the idea here is to cast far enough away where you don't have access to it any longer.

I know in my own life there has been the tendency to cast off my sin at arm's length. That way it's always close enough for me to say that it jumped on me again; not that it was close enough for me to receive again.

We'll use just about any excuse to justify why we sin. I'm tired, I'm bored, I'm frustrated, I'm nervous. But there is a real problem with casting away our old self. You see, we still have to live with our old self, despite being new creations in Christ.

And this is where the struggle takes place. But, if we find that sin no longer becomes a struggle then we've already conceded to defeat as these Corinthians had. The closer you draw to Christ the more aware you are of sin in your life and the more it grieves you when you do sin.

Have you ever thought why Paul could say, "Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners - of whom I am the worst."? (1TI 1:15)

In the context Paul is talking about his former life where he persecuted the church. To him that was heinous in light of the grace extended to him by Christ. But, despite his former life he doesn't say, of whom *I was the worst* [past tense], but of whom *I am the worst*. [present tense]

He recognizes the fact that that sinful nature still wants to rear its ugly head and he knows that he is prone to give in at times. And he hates the idea that he could be redeemed by the blood of the Lamb and still want to rebel in his heart on occasion.

He talks about this when writing to the Romans.

ROM 7:23-25 "... but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. 24 What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? 25 Thanks be to God -through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin."

There are those who would suggest that Paul is talking about his B.C. days; "Before Christ." This simply isn't the case. He still had to struggle against this war we all face in Christ. And though we might have expected him to have said, 'what a wretched man I was,' he plainly says, 'what a wretched man I am.'

Does this mean that Paul continued to persecute the church after coming to Christ, or that he was an adulterer, or that he was involved in stealing and such? Not at all! It simply means that he understood what it cost the Son of God to save him from the penalty of sin, and that any turning back to any sin was a departure from the new creation he was in Christ.

Don't think for a second that Paul was perfect, because he was just as human as you or I. But, like Paul, we are expected to see sin for what it is, and like Paul we are to mourn over our sin, not become

complacent about it or, as in the case of these Corinthians, boast about it in a way that suggests to the world that it's not a big deal.

It was a big enough deal for Christ to die for, and it should be a big enough deal for us not to make excuses to continue to live in it.

We should be celebrating the feast of life with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. This might seem like a contradiction in light of the fact that this world is not our home and that at every turn there seems to be a road block to such a feast, but Paul is not talking about a celebration of this world, but a celebration of the life we have in Christ.

In other words, the premise for such a celebration is spiritual in nature. I mean, if we were to look around us we would have to wonder what in the world there is to celebrate at times.

Many politicians are at the forefront of promoting corruption in our society. Crime is still a very real evil, wars are always breaking out somewhere in this world, and there are still starving people.

But all of these things were taking place in Paul's day as well, and yet he can say, "let us celebrate the feast." That's different than saying let us celebrate life in this world, unless you qualify what kind of life you're talking about.

And that's really the crux of the matter. Because the feast Paul is talking about is intrinsically tied to the bread of sincerity and truth.

The metaphor he uses here is very interesting because he speaks of a feast, and what feast doesn't have food? The food he brings to the plate is bread. And we know that the bread of life is none other than Jesus Christ Himself.

JOH 6:35,48,50-51 "Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty." 48 I am the bread of life. 49 Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died. 50 But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. 51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

The question we should be asking ourselves is, are we actually dining on this bread in a feast atmosphere by faith, or are we simply gnawing on this bread periodically to get rid of the hunger pangs once in a while?

Jesus Christ gave Himself that we might have life and have it abundantly. (Joh.10:10)

This doesn't mean that this life will necessarily provide us with great wealth and happiness and without a care in this world. It simply means that we have an abundance of grace to not only persevere, but do it in a way where our joy in the Lord is seen in this world to the glory of God who has given us life eternal.

Paul knew what it meant to live in a sin-filled world and yet he was able to celebrate the feast with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth because he knew who his truth was. He knew Jesus was his way, his truth and his life.

And he lived in that truth every day of his life trusting that God was true to His word and His promises and that this world can only be celebrated in Christ who delivers us from this world and the lusts which it offers. Paul, Peter and Jude make this clear.

1TI 1:14 "The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus."

2PE 1:2 "Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord."

JUD 1:2 "Mercy, peace and love be yours in abundance."

Does this sound like life is meant to be lived in black and white, or in the fullness of the color of Christ's abundant love and grace?

The problem you and I have is that we have a tendency to want to taste that old leaven once in a while, instead of understanding that there is a feast in the new bread we have come to embrace by faith in Christ.

ROM 5:17 "For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ."

Let's live in the truth. Not just facts about the truth, but the truth itself, who is none other than the person of Christ. In our sincerity and purity may we love the Lord with all our heart, soul and mind.

And may we faithfully represent Him in a way where people see the celebration in our lives which is not just outward fanfare, but the inward calm and joy one can only have who has been forgiven of sin and given the hope of eternal life in Christ alone.

That's the true celebration of life, because it's a celebration which is unhampered by any trial or temptation that would try to bring us down. It's a celebration of the future reality which has given hope to our present.

And it is His grace alone that allows us to live this life in celebration of Him.

Let me end with a doxology from Paul to the church at Rome. But let me substitute the church at Rome with Calvary Chapel Port Charlotte.

ROM 1:7 "To all in [Port Charlotte] who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ."