

Get Rid of the Old Yeast

1 Corinthians 5:1-13

Key Verse: 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.”

In today’s passage, we learn the secret of being truly healthy. Everyone wants to be healthy. We want to have a healthy body, we want a strong family, and a healthy church. And we know that there are some things that we should do to get healthy and stay healthy. Especially in this passage, Paul says, “Get rid of the old yeast.” Let’s see what this means. May God help us to learn more about how Christians can be strong and vigorous in this world and how we can be a good influence to our culture rather than being influenced by it.

I. Hand this man over to Satan (1-5)

Let’s read verse 1. “It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans: A man has his father's wife.” Here Paul confronts an outrageous problem that happened within the church. The mentality of free sex had run amuck to the extent that a man had his father’s wife. Possibly it was a man and his step-mother. This is the kind of thing that we may expect would happen among hamsters, but not among Christians. Even the Romans and Greeks thought such incest was wrong. It was heartbreaking: if a man had his father’s wife then she could be both his girlfriend and his mother at the same time. That is weird! Also, if the man’s father was still alive he would be crushed, and his siblings would be bitter. How could this occur in the holy church of Jesus Christ our Lord? How could it continue to happen and not be addressed by the Corinthians until they received Paul’s letter?

Verse 2 says, “And you are proud! Shouldn't you rather have been filled with grief and have put out of your fellowship the man who did this?” Paul rebukes the church for this problem, not just those who committed the sin. Maybe they thought that the Corinthian church was strong in the grace of God (Romans 6:1). They were proud that their church was tolerant, compassionate, non-judgmental and progressive. But Paul rebuked them for their pride. They honored their own opinions above what the Bible and Jesus Christ said. They should have been filled with grief and followed God’s command to put the man out. Leviticus 18:8 forbids a man to be with his step mother. In Matthew 18:17 Jesus said, “...if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.” Sin in

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the church must be systematically and swiftly dealt with. If there is no repentance, according to the Bible, the perpetrator must be kicked out of the fellowship.

According to verse 3, Paul said that he already passed judgment on the one who did this. How could Paul pass judgment on the man when Jesus said that we should not judge (Mt 7:1-5, 1 Cor 3:3-5)? It is because the kind of judgment that Jesus forbids is hypocritical judgment based on a standard that we don't even judge ourselves by. Moreover, while we cannot judge one another's motives, we can certainly be honest about the facts of one's conduct. The man in this passage clearly committed a great sin in the sight of God. If he had repented, the matter would have been dealt with quietly and the man would have received some training and help. But since he refused to repent, Paul called for the Corinthians to assemble in the name of the Lord Jesus and in the power of the Lord Jesus to deal with it openly. What were they to do in this public assembly? Look at verse 5. "hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord." Paul regarded the church as a community, not a group of individuals. He wanted the whole church to co-work together to help the man repent by cutting him off from the church and the warmth of Christian fellowship. This would send a clear message to the whole church community that sin is very serious, and that they should have one mind about the matter. If the church did not all have the same mind, the man could go around and get sympathy from various people. Co-working to help people is important. For example, parents should co-work in helping their kids so the kids can't play one parent against the other. When this man was expelled before the whole church, it was like handing him over to Satan and he would have to struggle by himself. In this way, he could plunge into the depths of misery like the prodigal son in the mud among the pigs, and seriously think about what he did. Hopefully he would come to his senses, repent and come back into the loving arms of the Father.

Today people want to be politically correct and not hurt anyone's feelings. Sometimes we think that love means tolerating everything someone does gracefully. However, the deepest love involves discipline that doesn't feel very good. Hebrews 12:11 says, "No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it." Moreover, Proverbs 12:1 says, "Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates correction is stupid." Discipline is a key to healthy churches, healthy families and healthy individuals. Correction is also necessary to get on the path to eternal life. Let's take sin very seriously and be willing to rebuke those who sin, telling them to repent. Let's bring back true love

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rather than superficial love. Let's also accept correction and discipline humbly as God's great love so that we may be blessed.

II. Christ our Passover Lamb has been sacrificed (6-8)

Let's read verse 6 . "Your boasting is not good. Don't you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough?" Yeast is a small micro organism. Yet when a small amount is mixed with sugar and heated, it very grows quickly. While it multiplies, it emits a gas that makes dough puffy. Likewise, sin spreads quickly and makes people puffed up, proud before God and boastful. Sin also spreads rapidly like yeast through dough even though it is small. In this way, at first sin seems like a small matter. But once it is compromised with, it becomes a Frankenstein monster. It is not just a personal matter; it becomes a bad influence like an infectious disease that corrupts many others. In the case of the Corinthians, when they began to compromise with the immoral culture around them, it came in and spread until finally a man had his father's wife.

There might be many yeasts of sin, but Paul specifically addresses the yeast of sexual immorality. In Genesis 2, God made man and woman in paradise and when he brought them together they were very happy. God established the family as part of his greatest love and blessing on mankind. A man and woman loving each other and getting married is really a beautiful thing. So some of the best music, the best movies and the best literature and indeed some of the best things in life are related to a man a woman getting together and loving each other. But it is often the best things that God made that are twisted and perverted and become the most grievous of sins. The yeasts of pre-marital sex, adultery and homosexuality especially influence us. They may seem to be a small thing, like drinking a Mountain Dew. But they can ruin people and families and can make society like the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah which fell under the wrath of God. This is why we pray for many joyful and blessed house churches in our land. From these house churches, many people can grow in the love of God and share God's blessing to those around them. Last summer I was driving in Evanston and happened to drive past a couple holding hands very romantically while taking a walk together. As I got closer I noticed that it was Dr. James and Dr. Sarah Kim who have been married more than 30 years. And I realized that God has blessed Northwestern ministry in part because of their joyful and loving house church which helps students see the blessing and love of God.

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God established the church to be a good influence to the world. Jesus said in Matthew 5:13-14, “You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden.” But instead of being a good influence, the Corinthian church was being influenced by the world and was being rendered useless. In the same way, God established the church in America, a world superpower, to be a blessing to the whole world. But in many ways instead of being a good influence to our culture and the world, we are influenced by sinful culture and often powerless to change it. In America, the yeast of sexual immorality has grown dramatically. Just 50 years ago, the divorce rate in America was 25%. Now it has doubled to about 50%. This has had a huge affect on our society. Now instead of getting married, many people just “shack up” according to their convenience. Now more than 1/3 of kids do not live with both parents which has negative affects on the children as they grow up. This is not someone else’s problem but a problem of Christian influence. But unfortunately most Christians aren’t much different from the world. The divorce rate among Christians is the same as the rest of society and there is immorality in the church and scandals involving Christian leaders. Even so, there is hope. I heard from Dr. John Jun that among 1,000 marriages he has presided over the divorce rate is less than 1%. Also Pastor Ron’s told me that the divorce rate for marriages that he has presided over is 0% thus far by God’s grace. May God bless our nation and help many influential house churches to be established so America may be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. May God help Dr. John Jun and Pastor Ward to perform many more weddings in the future.

How can we overcome our evil desires and the influence of the sinful world? Let’s read verse 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 blood of the Passover lamb was the turning point between the old life of the Israelites in slavery in Egypt and their new life as God’s holy people. Likewise, the blood of Christ, who was crucified on Passover, is the turning point between our old life of sin and the new life in God’s grace and the life of salvation with hope in the kingdom of God. So we must get rid of the old yeast, which represents our old lives of sin and be a new batch without yeast as we really are. Before he met Christ, St Augustine enjoyed many kinds of sexual immorality and had a child by a mistress. When he first heard the gospel he liked it but also liked his sin. So at that time he said, “Lord, grant me chastity, but not yet.” Then one day, God convicted him through Romans 13:13,14, “Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in

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dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.” When his mistress called out, “Augie” he ran the other way and he became one of the most influential Christian intellectuals in history. The blood of the Passover Lamb has power to forgive anyone no matter who they are. I was an atheist punk rocker who got kicked out of Northwestern University with a 1.4 GPA. I was thoroughly infected by the yeast of sin. But by the blood of Jesus, I could get rid of the old yeast of laziness and corruption and became a shepherd with a beautiful wife, four of the best children in the world, and recently got a PhD in Electrical Engineering and Computer Science from world renowned Northwestern University. These are not just isolated instances but many of us here have experienced the life-changing power of the blood of Jesus which enabled us to get rid of our old sinful lives and live new lives in Christ. May the forgiving blood of the Passover lamb Jesus give many more people the power to get rid of their old lives of sin and live a new life under Jesus’ grace.

Look at verse 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.” According to this verse, Christian life is like one continuous festival. In the Old Testament, the Feast of Unleavened Bread extended for one week, starting on Passover day. Along with the sacrifice of the Passover Lamb, God commanded the Israelites to eat bread without yeast and rid themselves of yeast. It was an assembly which joyfully celebrated God’s grace through the Passover. Here Paul says that with Christ as our Passover Lamb, the Passover festival of celebrating God’s grace does not last just one week but our entire lifetime. So we must replace the yeast of sin with bread of sincerity and truth. If we are sincere and truthful, we know that we cannot hide our sins before God. The yeasts of malice and wickedness should be confessed and God will take them out and help us to live the life of faith. 1 John 1:9 says, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” When we write sincere and truthful testimonies with repentance rather than criticizing others in our testimonies, he is faithful and we can maintain our love relationship with God. Also when we are sincere and truthful we can follow God’s leading out of sin. May God help each of us to keep the Festival continually, getting rid of the yeast of sin and sincerely celebrating the grace of Jesus.

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III. Love people with God's love (9-13)

Verses 9-10 say, "I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people— not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world." By being so uncompromising with sin, they might have misunderstood that he was saying that they should separate themselves from all immoral people, such as the greedy, swindlers and idolaters who are everywhere. On the contrary, God called Christians to live in this world among sinful people and make friends with them. Jesus himself spent time with tax collectors and sinners to save them. When he was criticized by the Pharisees for this he said in Luke 5:31-32, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." One time there was a long haired freaky Japanese man. But when someone invited him to Bible study, he came and accepted Jesus. He became Daniel Yoshiba who is the one who brought Pastor Kevin Albright to Bible study. Another time someone came to Bible study and experienced God's grace. Then he brought his girlfriend to Bible study. She also became a Christian and they later became a blessing to many other people as husband and wife. God has left us here in the world to associate with people in the world and be a good influence on it. May God bless our campus ministries to help many young people to experience the grace of Jesus that is greater than all kinds of sin. May we also invite many of our friends to register online and come to the upcoming Purdue Summer Bible Conference entitled, "For God so loved the world..." so they may know Jesus and come out of the life of sin.

While loving people, we have to hate sin and not compromise with it. For those in the church who sin and should know better, the way to truly love people is by being strict. Paul says in verses 12-13, "What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? God will judge those outside. "Expel the wicked man from among you." Paul again asserted that they should purge evil among them. When we are clear with sin in the church, in the short term it is painful. But it is the best medicine. The command to expel the immoral brother made the Corinthians very sorrowful, and the man who was expelled had a very difficult time. But we know that the man who was handed over to Satan finally repented his sin and was changed by the grace of God. In the letter of 2 Corinthians Paul he asked them to accept and embrace the man who repented. In 2 Corinthians 7:9,10 Paul said, "For you became sorrowful as God intended and so were not harmed in any way by us. Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to

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salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.” Helping people to repent is very difficult. Often people get mad and try to retaliate when they are asked to repent. But even though it is very difficult, it is a very joyful thing to see people come to God. It was very hard for Joseph to help his brothers to repent but when they did, they were all so joyful with an inexpressible joy.

Through this passage we learn God’s love to send Jesus to cleanse our sins and make us pure. May God also give us a clear attitude towards sin so that we may not be influenced by the world, but be strong and healthy Christians who can be a good influence on the world. May we celebrate with joy our Passover Lamb Jesus with pure lives of sincerity and truth.