

December 6th, 2020

The Rule of Love¹

1 Corinthians 5:1-8

A nightmare scenario

Imagine this scenario: a small child from our congregation after service, goes outside and finds a small .22 caliber pistol in his dad's glove compartment in his pickup truck. It's loaded. Thinking it's a toy, he walks out to the back parking lot and as he's pulling it out of his pocket he shoots himself in the leg. In shock, the child doesn't feel his wound right away even though he's bleeding out. He then begins pulling the trigger while pointing it out other children who are running around in the play area out back. All the while, many of us are witnessing this through the back windows, and our collective response is "Well, boys will be boys." And nothing is done. At least three things immediately result: the boy is in danger of death; all the other children in his vicinity are in danger of death; and Christ's witness at this Church has been utterly ruined. What is the greater error, the small boy who took his dad's pistol or the Church who did nothing about it?

Paul's primary concern in chapter five

As we begin chapter five, Paul addresses the second major problem the Church had. But it might not be what you think. No doubt this man's sexual immorality was in view, just like the little boy playing with his father's gun was in view. But Paul's main rebuke was that the Corinthians didn't do anything about it. Why not? Because they had adopted the same worldly wisdom and and sophistry *that we are seduced by today*. They, like many evangelicals today, had a twisted view of Christian liberty as expressed in **6:12** "All things are lawful for me"—meaning we are so free in Christ, that we can even commit incest. Or

¹ Title borrowed from Jonathan Leeman's *The Rule of Love: How the Local Church Should Reflect God's Love and Authority*, (Wheaton, IL.,: Crossway, 2018)

they, like many today, had a twisted view of what love is: ‘as long as you are being true to yourself, then you can love and marry and have sex with whoever you want.’ Regardless of the particular motive, Paul calls them arrogant in **v.2** and asks them “Ought you not rather to *mourn*?” In other words, you should be grieving, full of sorrow, weeping and have inward silent turmoil. Why? Because this sin is destroying this man’s life, its destroying you as a Church, and its destroying Christ’s witness to the world. That’s Paul’s essential argument. The world today tells us that Church discipline is unloving. What we should do is “live and let live.” To discipline someone is arrogant. But Paul argues in exactly the opposite direction. It is arrogant, and unloving to allow unrepentant sin to continue because of what is at stake. Paul give us in this chapter: the rule of love.

The Big Idea...

The rule of love says we must address unrepentant sin for the sake of the one caught in it, for the sake of the rest of Church, and for the sake of Christ

- ☆ Church Discipline Is an Act of Love to the Offender
- ☆ Church Discipline Is an Act of Love to the Church
- ☆ Church Discipline Is an Act of Love to Christ

I. Church Discipline Is an Act of Love to the Offender

Paul presents them with a choice

Chapters 5-6 are really a section of issues that are to be taken together. The three major issues are Incest (**5:1-13**); lawsuits (**6:1-8**); and prostitution (**6:13-20**). All of these require the Church to take action. So Paul at the end of chapter four says in **v.21** “What do you wish? Shall I come to you with a rod, or

with love in a spirit of gentleness?” So Paul is giving them a choice: If they would “...expel the incestuous man, stop taking each other to court, and cease going to prostitutes,”² then Paul would come to them with a spirit of love and gentleness. If they refuse, then Paul says he will come with a rod. Paul, as their spiritual father, no doubt is appealing to **Proverbs 22:15** “Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him.” Paul doesn’t want this! Which is why he is writing them to take care of it themselves.

The specific sin in view

So let’s consider the first case. Please look at **v.1** “It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife.” The word for sexual immorality is πορνεία (por-na'-ä), it’s where we get the word pornography. πορνεία refers “...to any illicit sexual activity.”³ The specific kind of πορνεία, Paul says is “not tolerated even among pagans.” So we can make some conclusions here. Paul didn’t have *fornication*—sleeping with someone who is not your spouse; or *adultery*—sleeping with another man’s wife—in view, though these may have been included.⁴ But fornication and adultery were tolerated and celebrated among the pagans just like they are in the world today. No this was something beyond these, it was incest. This man in question, end of **v.1** “has his father’s wife.” Three things we can conclude from this. 1) “*His father’s wife*” means his stepmother. We know that from other places of Scripture.⁵ Now we don’t know if the father was still alive or not. But it is irrelevant. **Leviticus 18:7-8** makes it clear that “sexual relations between a man and his stepmother

² Roy E. Ciampa & Brian S. Rosner, *The Pillar New Testament Commentary: The First Letter to the Corinthians*, (Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), pg. 196

³ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: 1 Corinthians*, (Chicago, IL.,: Moody Publishers, 1984), pg. 123

⁴ After all, it’s not clear whether the father is alive or dead, married or divorced from this woman.

⁵ cf. Leviticus 18:7-8. Contrast the language of “mother” in v.7 to the language of “father’s wife” in v.8

was in the same category as relations between him and his natural mother.”⁶ **2)** This woman in view was not a Christian. How do we know? Because Paul isn’t including her in Church discipline. Which means he is having this illicit relationship with an unbeliever which Scripture also forbids (**2 Cor. 6:14**).⁷ **3)** This was not just a one time fling, or an affair that had come and gone. Paul says this man “*has*”—present tense—his father’s wife. This is vital to see, because when many hear about Church discipline they become terrified and decide not to confess their sins to one another for fear that they themselves might come under Church discipline.

A sinner vs. a sinner

But loved ones, there is a difference between a sinner and a sinner. You, me, we are all sinners. We did not stop sinning when we were born again. And we will continue to sin until we go to Heaven. Christians sin. Martin Luther’s 1st Theses of the 95 he nailed to the Church door in Wittenburg said this “When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, “Repent” (**Mt 4:17**), he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance.”⁸ That’s the key. We never stop repenting because we never stop sinning. God loves our repentance. **Psalm 51:17** says “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.” So that is **the first type** of sinner: a repenting sinner. Repenting sinners don’t come under Church discipline.

The second type of sinner is one who stops repenting. It is vital that you see this? Paul didn’t write chapter 5 to divide up the Church into those who have committed gross sins and those who haven’t. Paul himself was formerly a gross sinner, a Christian killer, and he willingly acknowledged that he was the

⁶ MacArthur, pg. 123

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Hodge makes a fascinating argument (which I believe), concluding that this shows the perpetual obligation of the Levitical law concerning marriage. cf. Charles Hodge, *A Commentary on 1 & 2 Corinthians*, (Carlisle, PA.: The Banner of Truth Trust, Reprint 2018), pg. 81

⁷ MacArthur goes further saying that “since adultery is not charge, the relationship between the son and his stepmother probably had cause here to be divorce from the father.” *ibid*, pg. 123

⁸ Source: <https://www.luther.de/en/95thesen.html> Accessed December 5, 2020

chief of all sinners (1 Timothy 1:15). Dear congregation, all of us have been gross sinners. It is gross to be selfish, gross to have a hardened heart, gross to live as a law unto yourself. If Paul was dividing up the Church between gross sinners and non-gross sinners, we would all be on the gross side. No, the division that Paul is making is between repenting Christians and those who have stopped repenting, those who have stopped fighting, those who have given themselves over to their sin. That's the problem with this man, he's basically said "I'm not going to repent anymore."

"Ought you not rather to mourn?"

It's *that attitude* that Paul says the Corinthian Church ought to mourn over. Please look at v.2. "And you are arrogant!" Why does Paul call them arrogant? Because while this man was busy pleasing himself, they were busy pleasing themselves. That's what arrogance is: self absorption, self-worship, 'what can I do to please me?' This is what Paul has been dealing with since chapter one. Arrogance not only produced the the party spirit in Corinth, but it produced the sexual immorality in this man, and the carelessness on the Church's part in ignoring it. Paul pleads with them in v.2 "Ought *you* not rather to mourn?" Notice that Paul is speaking to the whole Church—"Ought *you*..." The you's in this verse are *plural*. Paul is talking to the whole Church—not merely pastors, but *the whole congregation*. In other words, Paul is holding the entire congregation responsible for not acting on behalf of this man.⁹ This is something we so often fail to see. The Corinthians failed to grasp that we are the living body of Jesus Christ, each of us members one of another. **Romans 12:5** "...we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another." And if one member is suffering, we ought all to suffer along with it (1 **Corinthians 12:26**). This man was suffering. Once again, He had become a slave to sin. **Romans 6:16** "...you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to

⁹ You see, just like American Christianity, the Christians in Corinth had become consumers: they went to Church paid their admission (a tithe), saw a show, and then went home. It was an event of sorts, all of them huddled around their favorite speaker.

death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness.”¹⁰ The Corinthians were *not* mourning over the fact that their brother in Christ had become a slave.

Excommunicate the unrepentant man

This does not mean that he was not in rebellion. The Bible recognizes that sinners are both rebels against Christ *and* captives of the devil at the same time. In fact, it is for his rebellion that Paul tells the Church at the end of v.2 “Let him who has done this be removed from among you.” It is here where the theologians have coined the term excommunication. The prefix *ex* means *out of*, and the suffix refers to our communion, meaning our common union with one another. Paul is commanding them to excommunicate—or remove—the man from their Church communion. This is further clarified in v.3-5 “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.” We see the circumstances in v.3-4 and the command in v.5. The **circumstances** are these: at their public gathering, though Paul is absent bodily, his apostolic authority is present, and their assembling is in *the name of the Lord Jesus* and with *the power of the Lord Jesus*.¹¹ Meaning, “whenever a local church acts in Jesus’ name, that is *according to His Word*, they can be sure they are acting in His power.”¹² Then the **command** is this: “deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.”

¹⁰ also cf. 2 Peter 2:19 “For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved.”

¹¹ “The power of Christ resides, not in any individual, but in the assembly of believers.” Thomas Charles Edwards, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, (Published by Forgotten Books 2012, Originally Published 1885), pg. 125

¹² MacArthur, pg. 125-126

“Deliver this man to Satan”

Now v.5 here is essentially an unpacking of v.2. What does it mean in v.2 to remove or excommunicate someone from the Church membership? It means v.5 –to deliver them over Satan for the destruction of their flesh, so that their spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord. So first of all, why is excommunication described as being delivered over to Satan? Because this world is the kingdom of Satan (1 John 5:19; John 12:31; 2 Corinthians 4:4). Therefore “to cast a man out of the church, was to cast him from the kingdom of Christ into the kingdom of Satan.”¹³ Salvation is described as being delivered from the domain of darkness and transferred into the kingdom of Christ (Colossians 1:13). Excommunication is being removed from the Church back into Satan’s realm.

The twofold good of excommunication

There is a two fold purpose here: the first is subordinate, and the second is ultimate. The **subordinate purpose**, v.5 tells us is “for the destruction of their flesh.” Commentators are split on this verse, because the word for flesh σάρξ sarx in Greek can refer to our *physical bodies* or our *sinful nature*. So the question is: in excommunication does Satan destroy physical bodies or the sinful nature? It’s true God has afflicted His own people **physically** from time to time. In 1 **Corinthians 11:30** Paul tells the Church that because they had abused the Lord’s Supper, many of them had become weak and ill, and some have died. So I don’t think that physical affliction is excluded. But I think the main thing in view is that God uses Satan to help destroy the sinful nature. This seems to be what was in view in 1 **Timothy 1:20** when Paul says he handed “Hymenaeus and Alexander...over to Satan *that they may learn not to blaspheme.*” Paul’s explicit aim was not to afflict their physical bodies, but to teach them not to blaspheme—that is to destroy their sinful nature. Likewise Paul’s purpose here isn’t to destroy or hurt the man. Rather it’s to bring him to his senses. Like the prodigal son, he has left the Father in his heart and is living a reckless life.

¹³ Hodge, pg. 85

The **ultimate purpose** then of handing this man over to Satan—or excommunication—is v.5 “...so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.” It could be that this man is not a believer. Jesus does say that there are tares among the wheat (**Matthew 13:24-30**). Paul does say in **6:9** that the sexually immoral will not inherit the kingdom of God. If he was a true believer, we shouldn’t say that he lost his salvation when he was excommunicated *and then* received it back through the process of Satan destroying His sinful nature. Our salvation cannot be lost. **Philippians 1:6** “...he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.” However, Christ does use *means* to keep all His sheep. Just like He uses the means of the Word and Sacrament to keep us from straying from Him, so He uses Church discipline—even excommunication—to keep all His true people from finally falling away.¹⁴ So we see that “Paul’s ultimate aim in excluding this man is for his own good”¹⁵ so that he will be saved.

A worldly-wise man objection

The world has an immediate objection to Paul’s doctrine here. It goes like this: “How could you ever, exclude or excommunicate anyone from Church? It is hateful and arrogant, especially if it’s over something as innocent as sex.” So how do we answer that? Well the first answer is that Jesus Christ is the Lord of the Church, and we don’t get to decide how to run it. **Colossians 1:18** says “And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.” It is not hateful and arrogant to obey Jesus. It is hateful and arrogant to disobey Him.¹⁶ Secondly, we need to point out the world has its own version of excommunication, known today as cancel culture. If you are not progressive enough, not woke enough,

¹⁴ “Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you strike him with a rod, he will not die. If you strike him with the rod, you will save his soul from Sheol” (Proverbs 23:13-14)

¹⁵ Ciampa & Rosner, pg. 209

¹⁶ True humility is only genuine when it “...is framed in conformity to the Word of God.” John Calvin *Reply to Sadolet* pg. 12

not politically correct enough you will be thrown out of social or professional circles. The difference between the world's version of excommunication and the Church's is that the world excludes virtue, the Church only excludes vice. If you are being faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ, the world will excommunicate you. But if you are being faithful to the devil, it will love and embrace you.

Church discipline is love

If you are doing something that will destroy your soul in hell, the world will love you for it. But the Jesus calls us to love the sinner, which is precisely why He calls us to practice Church discipline. Anything less is hateful and cruel. "Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him" (**Proverbs 13:24**). "The Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives" (**Hebrews 12:6**). That's our **first point**. Christ calls the Church to lovingly and gently practice Church discipline because it is an instrument of freedom from sin, and restoration to Christ for those who have lost their way.

II. Church Discipline Is an Act of Love to the Church

Leavening the lump

Paul already accused the Corinthians of being arrogant in **v.2** because of how loveless their actions were to the offender. Now he brings up their arrogance again because of how loveless their actions were to the Church. Please look with me at **v.6** "Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?" This question might seem cryptic at first, but it is actually extremely helpful. There is more than one type of leaven, but the leaven we would be familiar with is yeast. It is what causes bread dough to rise before you bake it. You only need a little yeast in the dough and it spreads throughout the whole and cause it to puff up and swell. The latter product is entirely different than the former.

The leavening power of sin on the individual

Paul is using the imagery and making a doctrine out of it. Leaven represent influence. In Scripture it is used of both good and evil influence. In Matthew 13:33 Jesus taught that the Kingdom of God was like a woman who hid leaven in some flour, and soon the whole batch was leavened. In that parable leaven was a good influence. But here it is evil influence that Paul has in view. The leaven represents the powerful influence sin. Dear congregation, you know this from experience. If you indulge yourself in just one secret sinful thought, and you nurture it and water it, what happens? It's like Jack's magic beans. They quickly tear themselves out of the soil, shredding anything in it's way, growing, growing and growing until it can be seen for miles. Unrepentant sin spreads in the whole soul until your mind is fixed on it. Your affections become friendly with it. Your will soon acts on it. Then what happens? Your conscience becomes defiled, you become alienated from your friendship with God. Then the means of grace feel like a burden rather than a joy, because the sin has hardened your heart against them. I would plead with anyone who is listening this morning, if you are toying with a sin, a secret sin, that nobody know about, don't be deceived. You cannot control it. It is controlling you. It will choke out grace and love and peace in your life. The leaven of sin leavens the whole lump.

The leavening power of sin on the Church

But here Paul is applying this to the whole church. When a member engages in open and unrepentant sin, and the Church refuses to act, it spreads like a cancer, metastasizing, and it will eventually infect every other member of the body. Oh the examples of this throughout Biblical history.

- Remember the wicked prophet Balaam? Balak hired him to curse Israel so that his army could destroy them. But God turned his curses into blessings. Balaam knew what to do. He convinced Balak to send in the pagan Moabite women to leaven the men. **Numbers 25:2-3** says "These invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods.

So Israel yoked himself to Baal of Peor. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel.” 24,000 people died in that judgment. Balaam knew that a little leaven would corrupt the whole lump.

- Or think of King David. We are going to look at this tonight. David didn’t just sin privately, he enticed others so sin. His leaven spread to his servants who fetched Bathsheba for him, though they knew she was a married woman (**2 Samuel 11:3**). His leaven spread to Bathsheba who in turn was unfaithful to her husband (**2 Samuel 11:4**). His leaven spread to Joab who agreed to conspire with David to kill Uriah (**2 Samuel 11:16**). David sin first in his heart and then it spread to the hearts of others.
- Jesus warned the Church in Thyatira about the leaven of Jezebel in **Revelation 2:20** “But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols.”

Sin never stays private. It always leavens. Paul says in **1 Corinthians 15:33** “Do not be deceived: ‘Bad company corrupts good morals.’” So Paul’s appeal to the Corinthians is essentially this: ‘Don’t you know that the longer this goes on, the more the Church is going to suffer? You will not escape from this corruption. No one ever does.’

A worldly-wise man objection

Now I believe the world has another objection at this point. It goes like this: “If God cares for his church so much, and He knows that unrepentant sin will infect the body, then why doesn’t he doesn’t just grant repentance to this man? Isn’t your God the One who **2 Timothy 2:25** says grants repentance, and leads people to a knowledge of the truth?” How do we answer? Yes of course God can grant repentance at anytime. He is the Sovereign God and none can resist His will (**Romans 9:19**). So are their reasons as to why He doesn’t always? I believe there are at least three.

1. God sometimes withholds repentance to show us how free His grace is

Do we really believe the statement “...but for the grace of God, there go I?” Or do we just tag it on the end of our sentences, along with all the other Christian cliches that so easily roll off our tongues? In the case of the man 1 Corinthians 5 God is giving us a picture of what we would all be without Sovereign Grace. Not that we would all commit incest, but that we would all go our own way, seeking our own pleasure, rejecting the ways of God. Consider **Romans 9:22-23** “God...has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy...” When we see that God purposely withholds repentance *towards some*, it ought to have the effect of how free God’s grace is. It ought to make us thank God that He has had mercy on sinners such as us.

2. God sometimes withholds repentance to strengthen our faith

God tests believers. He doesn’t tempt believers (**James 1:13**) but He does test believers. God tested Abraham (**Hebrews 11:17**). And the prayer of the Psalmist is that God would test him (**Psalm 26:2**) To “test” mean “to prove by trial.” As one Bible teacher has said “When God tests His children, His purpose is to prove that our faith is real. Not that God needs to prove it to Himself since He knows all things, but He is proving to us that our faith is real, that we are truly His children.”¹⁷ And this testing is what strengthens our faith. **James 1:3** says that the “...testing of your faith produces steadfastness.” When a Church membership all takes part of a Church discipline case like this, it tests us, it makes us ask “am I really in the faith?” It makes us pray “God please don’t let me go astray.” In withholding repentance to some, God is strengthening the faith of others.

¹⁷ Source: <https://www.gotquestions.org/why-does-God-test-us.html> Accessed December 5, 2020

3. God sometimes withholds repentance to keep us fearful of sin

In **1 Timothy 5:20**, Paul tells us what do do if an elder who is caught in sin and refuses to repent. “Those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, *so that the rest also will be fearful of sinning.*” God wants us to be fearful of sinning. From time to time He puts it on public display so that we would hear of it and fear it so that we will not commit such an evil against the Lord (**Deut. 19:20**). We are so often afraid of all the wrong things. Of socialism, loss of freedom, financial ruin, COVID, but God wants us to be afraid of sinning. He wants us to fear Him, and to fear living a life that would displease Him. In withholding repentance to some, God is making the rest fear sinning against Him.

In summary

So we see in summary that even when a sinner must be removed from the Church, Christ is working out the highest good for the Church. Church discipline is an act of love for the Church. That’s our **second point**. Christ is protecting His bride from the leaven of sin, when He commands us to practice this type of Church discipline.

III. Church Discipline Is an Act of Love to Christ

The credibility of the gospel

Perhaps this last point is the least obvious. However it’s the most vital. Look at v.1 again. Paul says “It is actually reported...” The KJV says “It is reported commonly...” In other words, Corinth had become notorious for this circulating report.¹⁸ Everybody knew about this sexual immorality, not just the Church members, but their pagan neighbors and the unchurched knew about it. And since this sin wasn’t even tolerated among the pagans, the watching world was scandalized. What happens to the gospel of Jesus Christ when something like this happens? **Romans 2:24** “The name of God is blasphemed among the

¹⁸ “it was a matter of notoriety that [this kind of] fornication existed among them.” Hodge, pg. 81

Gentiles because of you.”¹⁹ Do you see, the very credibility of the gospel is at stake. What does the unbelieving world think when they see the Church refusing to act on this? That the gospel of Jesus Christ doesn’t actually ‘work.’ People in the Church are no different than people in the world. That Jesus is no different than any other god. Do you see? Refusing to discipline sin in the body dishonors the Lord Jesus Christ.

You are already clean

Therefore, for the third time Paul commands the Corinthians to take action. Look at v.7 “Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump.” Let’s stop there. Paul is drawing back on the Passover celebration of the Jews. Do you remember what the last plague was before Egypt finally let Israel go? It was the angel of death. The angel of death would pass through the city, and kill all the firstborn in Egypt. The only way to escape would be to take the blood of an unblemished lamb and smear it over the door posts of your house. God told them “And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you or destroy you (**Exodus 12:13**). As part of the preparation, **Exodus 12:15** says that they were to remove all the leaven out of their houses as a sign of removing their impurity. Paul is drawing on that here “Cleanse out the *old leaven*, that you may be a *new lump*.” The contrast is between the old life of sin and the new life in Christ.²⁰ But Paul is not saying that “the Church will become God’s people [if] they get their house in order”²¹ *if* they purify themselves first. No look at the middle part of v.7 “Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, *as you really are unleavened*.” Amazing! Paul is telling this Church—the most sin-plagued Church in the NT—that they should cleanse themselves of this sin *not* so that God would accept, but because God has already accepted them.

¹⁹ God told David after his great sin “...by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme.” 2 Samuel 12:14 (KJV)

²⁰ Ephesians 2:23-24 “...put off your **old self**, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the **new self**, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

²¹ Ciampa & Rosner, pg. 214

You really are unleavened. You are already clean.²² “In other words, what they must become *is what they already are by the grace of God.*”²³

“I have already passed over you”²⁴

How? End of v.7 “For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.” That’s why we are to purge sin out of the Church. Just as the Jews purged the leaven out of their house at their Passover, so we are to purge sin out of the Church *because* Christ the true Passover Lamb has already taken away our sin by His sacrificial death. Paul is telling not only Corinth, but every Church, ‘purify yourselves of sin from among you *because* the angel of death has already passed over you.’

Our names are already written in the Lamb’s book of life.

We will never come under condemnation.

We already have peace with God.

We already have already been sealed with the Holy Spirit.

We have already been adopted as sons and daughters by our Father in Heaven.

We already are sitting in the heavenly places.

We already have have been blessed in Christ with every spiritual blessing.

We already have an inheritance kept in Heaven imperishable, undefiled, and unfading.

We already are partakers of the Divine nature.

We already are hidden with Christ in God.

We already are a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

We already have been made the righteousness of God.

We already are loved by God.

²² The imperative to cleanse themselves *rests* on the indicative that they have already been cleansed.

²³ Ciampa & Rosner, pg. 214

²⁴ “Paul’s point is that Jesus Christ’s death is to the Christ what the Passover was to the Jews.” Kim Riddlebarger, *The Lectio Continua: Expository Commentary on the New Testament: First Corinthians*, (Powder Springs, GA.,: Tolle Lege Press, 2013), pg. 128

A perpetual Passover

v.8 “Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.” The Jews celebrated the Passover festival once a year. But Paul is saying here, that our whole life is one perpetual spiritual Passover celebration.²⁵ How are we to celebrate it? Not with the old leaven—not by continuing to live like we still belong to the world—full of malice and evil. That brings dishonor to Christ. But rather we are to celebrate it with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. Sincerity meaning a transparent clearness, that we don’t live secret hidden lives, but that we live in the full light of the noon day sun. And truth meaning that there is harmony between what we say and how we act. But won’t we still sin? Yes. But since you are already clean in Christ, you can confess it with no fear of rejection. Paul’s point is essentially this: “How can we continue to a life of unrepentant sin, of unconfessed sin? How can we live a life where we stop fighting against sin, when our Savior was slain for us? “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Are you still living a leaven-filled life?

Perhaps you are here this morning you know that you know that you have never been cleansed by the leaven of sin. You are filled with malice and evil and you hate yourself for it, but you love your sin. You want to be free, but you love being a slave. Dear friend, you cannot free yourself. But the Lord Jesus Christ can. Jesus said “...if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.” You can be set free this morning by receiving Him, by believing on His name. “...through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and by him everyone who believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law.”

²⁵ “To keep the feast means, ‘Let your whole lives be as a sacred festival, i.e. consecrated to God.’” Hodge, pg. 87