

THE CASE OF SHAMEFUL SIN IN THE CHURCH (PART II): WHAT THE CHURCH MUST DO TO HANDLE SHAMEFUL SIN IN ITS MIDST 1 CORINTHIANS 05:06–13

Introduction

This passage is a continuation of the former passage (v. 1-5). The subject is church discipline, a subject that is critically needed if the church is to be what it should be before the Lord and the world. What is the church to do when shameful sin is found in the life of a member?

- I. The church must learn something: a little yeast (sin) will change the whole lump (v. 6).
- II. The church must purge out the yeast (sin) (v. 7).
- III. The church must keep the festival; that is, it must clean itself out (v. 8).
- IV. The church must separate itself from the world, but not entirely (vv. 9-10).
- V. The church must separate itself from sinners who call themselves brothers (v. 11).
- VI. The church must judge only those “inside” the church; God judges those “outside” the church (vv. 12-13).

I. *1 Corinthians 05:06 Church Problems*

The church must know something — a little yeast (sin) will change the whole lump. The yeast or sin of the Corinthian church was its “boasting.” The church thought of itself as a strong and spiritual church, a church greatly blessed and gifted by God. Every conceivable gift of the Spirit had been given the church, and the members revelled and gloried in their gifts and blessings (See 1 Cor. 1:5-7; 1:12; 1:26; 2:6-13; 3:18-23; 4:1-5; 4:6; 4:7; 4:8; 5:2. A quick glance at these notes will give an overview of the glory and pride of the Corinthian church and of the glory and pride that can seep into any church.)

The depth of sinful pride, however, is when a church begins to pride itself in the fact that certain community leaders belong to its fellowship. This was apparently one of the terrible sins of the Corinthian church.

The church was “boasting” because of the man who was guilty of the shameful sin (v. 6). The church, of course, would not have been boasting in the sin of the man. Their boasting was in the man himself: his stature, his prestige, who he was, the money he could give, the contribution he could make, his leadership and perhaps his wealth. The word for “boasting” (*kauchema*) indicates this rather strongly. It means that they were boasting and taking pride in the man despite the known fact of his sin. Perhaps he was a man of

outstanding leadership in the community or the city of Corinth. Perhaps he had become a leader of one of the factions in the church. Whatever the case, the church overlooked his sin and took great pride in the fact that a man of his stature would join and become a part of their fellowship.

Thought 1. Too often, a church overlooks the sin and sinful lifestyle of a man because he is a leader in the community, government or business. In fact, too often a church glories in the fact that the man is a member of its fellowship. As Scripture declares: “My brothers, this should not be” (James 3:10).

The point is this: the church must wake up and learn something. A little yeast (sin) will change the whole lump. Yeast (leaven) is a type of sin in the Bible. Therefore, if the man and his shameful sin are allowed to remain in the church, the sin of the man will spread. If the church accepts the man who is living in clear sin, others will begin to feel that they, too, can be acceptable even if they sin. If there is no restraint upon sin, then sin will grow. If sin is accepted, then sin, not righteousness, rules. If righteousness is not the basis of acceptance, then righteousness does not reign, but sin reigns. If the church accepts the person who lives in clear sin, then the church is letting sin rule, and sin will spread. The man who lives *for sin* influences others to live *for sin*.

Note what Scripture says: it takes only a *little* yeast, not much, for sin to grow. Accepting just one man who lives *for the world and for sin* will cause others to begin living worldly and sinful lives.

Rom 14:15 *If your brother is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting in love. Do not by your eating destroy your brother for whom Christ died.*

Gal 5:7-9 *You were running a good race. Who cut in on you and kept you from obeying the truth? That kind of persuasion does not come from the one who calls you. “A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough.”*

Mat 18:6-8 *“But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea. Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to sin! Such things must come, but woe to the man through whom they come! If your hand or your foot causes you to sin cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into eternal fire.”*

Eccl 10:1 *As dead flies give perfume a bad smell, so a little folly outweighs wisdom and honour.*

Song 2:15 *Catch for us the foxes, the little foxes that ruin the vineyards, our vineyards that are in bloom.*

II. *1 Corinthians 05:07 Purge out the Yeast*

The church must purge out the yeast (sin). There are two reasons why the church and its believers must purge all sin out of their lives.

1. Believers are new creations. The picture is that of the Jewish Passover Feast. The Jewish family was required by law to remove all yeast out of the house before celebrating the Passover. They were even required to light candles and search throughout the house for crumbs of yeast that might have fallen on the floor and under tables and other furniture. The purging of all yeast was symbolic of the people purging the *corrupting influence* of sin out of their lives.

Note the statement: “That you may be a new batch without yeast.” The believers of the church were already without yeast; they were new lumps, new creations; therefore, they must not run outside the family into the world and bring the *old yeast* back into the family. The believer has become a “new creation” in Christ. His *old sins* and *old man* have been cast out of the house; therefore, he is not to let the old sins back into his life nor back into the family of God, that is, the church.

2 Cor 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

Gal 6:15 Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation.

Eph 4:22-24 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; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Col 3:9-10 Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices, and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.

2. Christ our Passover has been sacrificed for us and for the church. This, too, is a picture of the Passover Feast. In the Jewish Passover Feast, every family slew a Passover lamb and its blood was painted on the door framing above the main entrance into the house. This symbolized that the family believed the Word of God, that God would save the family from judgment when God saw that the blood of the Passover lamb covered its house.

The point is striking: the Passover lamb of the feast and of the Old Testament symbolized God’s great Passover Lamb, Jesus Christ. Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us; therefore, we must purge and remove the yeast, the sin and its corrupting influence, out of our lives. We must purge all sin out and take the blood of Jesus Christ and cover ourselves and our houses if we wish God’s judgment to pass over us.

Now note the point: if we continue *to practice and to accept sin*, it proves that we do not really believe that the blood of Christ cleanses us. Accepting and living in sin proves that we have no interest in being free from sin. Accepting and living in sin proves that we love sin — that we like what sin can do for us so much that we are unwilling to purge it out of our lives and church. If we allow the old yeast, the old sin in our lives and churches, it shows that we have little interest in a clean and pure life. It shows God that we care little for the cleansing power of the blood of Christ our Passover. The point is forceful, and it is a warning. Therefore, we must purge out the old yeast, the old sins from both our lives and our church.

John 1:29 *The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”*

1 Cor 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.*

Gal 1:4 *Who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father.*

Eph 5:2 *And live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.*

Titus 2:14 *Who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.*

1 Pet 1:18-19 *For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.*

1 John 3:16 *This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.*

Rev 1:5 *And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood.*

III. 1 Corinthians 05:08 Keep the Church Clean and Pure

The church must keep the festival, that is, it must clean itself out. The point is as clearly stated as possible: the church must keep itself clean and pure. It must not allow malice and wickedness into its fellowship. It must live a life of sincerity and truth. Note five points.

1. The word “malice” indicates that some in the church were apparently opposing the shameful man’s presence in the church. But those who supported the man stood their ground, and malice set in between the two groups.

2. The word “wickedness” (ponerias) means more than just sin and coming short. It means taking pleasure in evil. The church must purge itself of its pride in prestigious men who were living in shameful sin. Such wickedness must be purged out.
3. The word “sincerity” (eilikpinias) means pure, clear, transparent. It is something through which the sunlight can pass indicating a flawless purity.
4. The word “truth” (aletheias) means unadulterated, conformed to the nature of whatever is true. God is truth; therefore, it means to be like God. It means to live and do the truth; therefore, the church must do precisely what is right. It must discipline both itself and the shameful man. The church must purge out the sin within itself.
5. The words “let us keep” are in the present tense, which means continuous action. The church *must continue to keep* the festival, continue to purge out the old yeast of sin and its corrupting influences. It must not only discipline itself and the man who is living in shameful sin, it must continue to keep itself pure, to continue celebrating the festival of purity before God.

2 Cor 1:12 *Now this is our boast: Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, in the holiness and sincerity that are from God. We have done so not according to worldly wisdom but according to God's grace.*

2 Cor 2:17 *Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit. On the contrary, in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, like men sent from God.*

Phil 1:9-10 *And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ.*

Titus 2:7 *In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness.*

1 John 3:18 *Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.*

IV. 1 Corinthians 05:09–10 Separation from the World

The church must separate itself from the world, but not entirely. Paul had apparently written an earlier epistle or letter to the Corinthians. He had charged them to do exactly what he was now saying: do not keep close company with those who live *for sin and this world*. The word “associate” (sunanamignusthai) means to mix up. Paul had mentioned four types of shameful sins that were to be kept out of the church and separate from believers.

1. The church was not to become mixed with the immoral people of this world. The word “sexually” means corrupt, sinful, depraved and all kinds of immoral sexual acts.

It includes adultery, premarital sex, homosexuality and all forms of sexual deviation. Those who practice immorality are not to be part of the fellowship of the church. Believers are not to keep close fellowship with them.

Rom 1:27 *In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.*

1 Cor 6:9 *Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders.*

Gal 5:19, 21 *The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery;... and envy; drunkenness, orgies and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

Eph 4:19 *Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.*

Eph 5:3 *But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people.*

1 Th 4:3 *It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality.*

Jude 1:4, 7 *For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord... In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire.*

2. The church was not to become mixed up with the greedy (pleonektais) of this world. The word means those who seek for more and more while millions within the world are dying from sin, hunger, disease and poverty. This is a sin that is especially despised by God (see notes, Mt. 19:16-22; 19:23-26; Lk. 16:19-31).

Luke 12:15 *Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."*

Eph 5:3 *But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people.*

Col 3:5 *Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.*

Heb 13:5 *Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."*

Exo 20:17 “You shall not covet your neighbour’s house. You shall not covet your neighbour’s wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour.”

Psa 10:3 He boasts of the cravings of his heart; he blesses the greedy and reviles the LORD.

Jer 6:13 “From the least to the greatest, all are greedy for gain; prophets and priests alike, all practice deceit.

Ezek 33:31 My people come to you, as they usually do, and sit before you to listen to your words, but they do not put them into practice. With their mouths they express devotion, but their hearts are greedy for unjust gain.

Micah 2:2 They covet fields and seize them, and houses and take them. They defraud a man of his home, a fellowman of his inheritance.

Hab 2:9 “Woe to him who builds his realm by unjust gain to set his nest on high, to escape the clutches of ruin!”

3. The church was not to become mixed up with the swindlers (harpaxin) of the world. These are the thieves, hijackers, grafters and those who take advantage of the poor in order to get more gain for themselves. Again, these are especially despised by God because of their unreal view of the world, a world that reels under the weight of so many gripped by poverty, disease, sin and death.

Mat 23:25 “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence.”

Luke 3:13 “Don’t collect any more than you are required to,” he told them.

Psa 82:2 “How long will you defend the unjust and show partiality to the wicked?”

Prov 14:31 He who oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honours God.

Prov 29:27 The righteous detest the dishonest; the wicked detest the upright.

Isa 10:1-2 Woe to those who make unjust laws, to those who issue oppressive decrees, to deprive the poor of their rights and withhold justice from the oppressed of my people, making widows their prey and robbing the fatherless.

Ezek 22:12 In you men accept bribes to shed blood; you take usury and excessive interest and make unjust gain from your neighbours by extortion. And you have forgotten me, declares the Sovereign LORD.

Amos 5:11 You trample on the poor and force him to give you grain. Therefore, though you have built stone mansions, you will not live in them; though you have planted lush vineyards, you will not drink their wine.

4. The church was not to become mixed up with the *idolaters* (*eidololatrais*) of the world. The word means those who either worship false gods or do not have a right relationship with God. Idolatry, of course, includes all unbelievers; for any person who does not truly worship God is worshipping something else, some idol, even if the idol is self and the possessions of this world.

1 John 5:21 *Dear children, keep yourselves from idols.*

Exo 20:4 *“You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below.”*

Deu 11:16 *Be careful, or you will be enticed to turn away and worship other gods and bow down to them.*

Psa 81:9 *You shall have no foreign god among you; you shall not bow down to an alien god.*

Isa 42:8 *“I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another [not even to self] or my praise to idols.*

Now, note the point. The church and its believers cannot go out of the world; therefore, some contact with the unbelievers of the world is necessary. This is understandable to any thinking and honest person. However, it is also understandable that the church must not become *mixed up* with the shameful sinners of the world. The church and its believers must be separate in their behaviour and fellowship. The church and the believers are to be holy and pure and righteous before God and to hold up the banner of holiness and purity and righteousness before the people of the world. Believers are *in the world*, but they must not be *of the world*.

John 15:19 *“If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.”*

Acts 2:40 *With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.”*

2 Cor 6:17-18 *“Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.” “I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters,” says the Lord Almighty.*

Eph 5:11 *Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them.*

1 John 2:15-16 *Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world — the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does — comes not from the Father but from the world.*

2 Th 3:6 In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers, to keep away from every brother who is idle and does not live according to the teaching you received from us.

V. 1 Corinthians 05:11 Separation of Sinful Brothers

The church must separate itself even from shameful sinners who call themselves “brothers.” Note the difference between this charge and the former command. The former charge has to do with the sinner out in the world. This charge has to do with the sinner in the church. Sometimes a professing believer returns to the shameful sins of the world and stays there, refusing to repent. Of course, the church is to seek to restore the man; the church is to take the steps spelled out by Christ (see Mt. 18:15-20 for a clear discussion of what a church should do when a professing brother sins). However, if the man refuses to respond and repent after the gracious attempts at restoration have been made, the church has no choice but to separate itself from the man.

Note that two sins are added in this verse.

=> The slanderer (loidoros) is a person who rants and scolds; reviles and abuses; uses insolent, abusive and slanderous language.

=> The drunkard is a person who intoxicates himself with alcoholic beverages and drugs, a person who deadens his faculties through alcohol and drugs.

Mat 7:21 “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.”

Mark 7:6 He replied, “Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: ‘These people honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.’”

Titus 1:16 They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good.

1 John 3:18 Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.

TPsa 78:35-36 They remembered that God was their Rock, that God Most High was their Redeemer. But then they would flatter him with their mouths, lying to him with their tongues.

Prov 26:23 Like a coating of glaze over earthenware are fervent lips with an evil heart.

Ezek 33:31-32 My people come to you, as they usually do, and sit before you to listen to your words, but they do not put them into practice. With their mouths they express devotion, but their hearts are greedy for unjust gain. Indeed, to them you are nothing more than one who sings love songs with a beautiful voice and plays an instrument well, for they hear your words but do not put them into practice.

VI. 1 Corinthians 05:12–13 Discipline in the Church

The church must judge only those “*inside*” the church; God judges those who are “*outside*,” that is, the unbelievers. No believer and no church is to try to exercise discipline upon unbelievers out in the world. Judgment of unbelievers is in God’s hands. However, the church is to exercise discipline inside the church. Therefore, the shameful sinner who refuses to repent must be dismissed from the church (see Mt. 18:15-20; Cor. 5:3-5).

Mat 18:15-17 *“If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.”*

Luke 17:1-3 *Jesus said to his disciples: “Things that cause people to sin are bound to come, but woe to that person through whom they come. It would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around his neck than for him to cause one of these little ones to sin. So watch yourselves. If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him.”*

Acts 16:4 *As they travelled from town to town, they delivered the decisions reached by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem for the people to obey.*

1 Tim 5:20 *Those who sin are to be rebuked publicly, so that the others may take warning.*

2 Tim 4:2 *Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage – with great patience and careful instruction.*

Titus 1:13 *This testimony is true. Therefore, rebuke them sharply, so that they will be sound in the faith.*

Titus 2:15 *These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you.*

Titus 3:10 *Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him.*

Heb 13:17 *Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you. ■*