

KEEPING THE FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD

Peter Hay, prepared for word ministry, 1 November 2020
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Keeping the true Feast of Passover

Today we will focus on the attitudes and behaviours that undermine our communion from house to house.

We have been rejoicing in the season of the Lord illuminating us to our participation in the communion house to house.

We will look at the principle of leaven, which speaks of those attitudes and behaviours that affect our participation in the communion, so that the food and drink that we are consuming is changed from being 'the table of the Lord' to being a different table.

The keeping of the true Feast of Passover, which Paul obviously exhorted all believers to do, is not only eating and drinking the communion.

It requires us to *rid our houses of leaven*.

Regarding the Passover, the Lord said to the children of Israel, 'Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day, you shall remove leaven from your houses, for whoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel.' Exo 12:15.

Being 'cut off from Israel' is being cut off from *the community of the covenant* that the Lord has made with His people.

In relation to keeping the true Passover, to be cut off from Israel would be to be cut off from 'the church of the firstborn'.

Removing the leaven of malice and wickedness

We are to keep the feast, 'not with old leaven'. 1Co 5:8.

In this passage, Paul began to instruct the Corinthians and, indeed all of us, in relation to how we keep this principle of not eating leavened bread for seven days.

He said we are to 'keep the feast'.

This is the Feast of Passover with its three subsidiary feasts, which are obviously the Passover meal, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and the Feast of Firstfruits.

'Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness [we are supposed to get these things out of our lives and our houses], but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.' 1Co 5:8.

Ridding our houses of leaven means *identifying*, and then *removing*, from our houses, the cultures that are contrary to godliness.

This is one of the most important points I will make today.

We *all* need to do this as an initiative of faith for *the whole of our Christian walk*.

This is what it means to 'eat unleavened bread for seven days'. Remember that the number seven in the Scriptures represents fullness, or completeness.

So, the seven days in which we are to eat unleavened bread is *the fullness of our days as a son of God*.

This is an initiative that we need to take in order to keep this feast.

Purge out the old leaven

Paul said, 'Therefore purge out the old leaven [we have to get rid of it], that you may be a new lump.' 1Co 5:7.

That sounds a little like, 'There are all of these things in my life that I need to get rid of, so I will give attention to getting rid of them so that I can keep this feast'.

That is *not* what he was saying.

He said, 'Therefore, purge out the old leaven, that you may be *a new lump*, since you truly *are unleavened*.'

Now, that sounds like a contradiction, doesn't it? How can you be unleavened if you have leaven to get rid of?

Then he said, 'For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.'

Now, here is the point. Being unleavened bread is not because we have been made 'perfect'.

Rather, we *are* unleavened bread to one another if we are *committed to ridding our lives and houses of leaven*.

Paul said, 'Therefore purge out the old leaven [we have to accept that we have some old leaven in our lives], since you truly are unleavened.'

So, to be 'unleavened' means that we are to purge leaven from our lives.

Repentance and faith demonstrate that we are unleavened

I will give an example of this, and will pick this up again in our next session when we look at how we deal with leaven.

I was at a fortieth birthday celebration not long ago. It was the weekend of the Bible study when we were exhorted to the culture of godliness, out of Paul's letters to Timothy.

The point was made that we are to teach our children to honour those who are older in the body by the way that our children address them.

As we were sharing around the table at this fortieth birthday, one of the men shared that they had not taught their children to address those who are older in the church in a particular way.

In the car on the way home from church, he and his wife began talking with their children about how their family culture had been inconsistent with what the word was proclaiming that day.

He then said to his children, 'We need to be obedient to this. We actually need to make a shift right now, as we are driving from this place.'

They had leaven in their house that was being addressed, and that is what they were confessing.

'We had not given attention to the culture of honour in our house.'

Their leaven was being addressed, but they also had an *easy repentance and faith* towards God.

What is the evidence of faith towards God? It is obedience - the obedience of faith.

Their easy repentance and faith toward God to remove that way of thinking from their house demonstrated that they were unleavened.

This is what Paul taught us.

They immediately purged the leaven from their household *because* they were unleavened bread. They were committed to the culture of Christ.

When the light of the word showed their culture to be other than that, they rid their household of it.

However, if they had gone home and said, 'Look, he's of a different generation and it's a bit old fashioned', or if they consulted with their peers regarding the inordinate nature of this instruction, their leaven would have remained.

If their leaven had remained, they would not have kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread, nor the Passover.

Instead, they testified that night around the table, and their testimony became sincerity and truth to us.

They had that leaven, addressed it immediately, and testified of the change.

Then *they were being the bread of sincerity and truth* to us at a birthday party.

That's a lovely testimony and example of the simplicity of this at work as a culture among us in the church.

Some attitudes have a leavening effect

Paul helpfully identified some notable leavens that we are to remove from our houses.

He outlined these in his first letter to the Corinthians, which was the letter in which Paul gave particular instructions regarding the communion meal.

Throughout this letter, he made six statements regarding leaven that they were to address in order to commune together, or to keep the feast.

Leaven is the substance, or agent, that is added to bread to make it rise, or puff up. A big loaf of bread didn't *start* like that.

It started as a small piece of dough, and in that dough was a substance called 'yeast', which is a type of leaven. It causes the bread to puff up to become the size that you see when you take it out of the packet to make a sandwich.

This natural image of the effect of leaven on the dough helps us to recognise Paul's references to leaven in the book of Corinthians.

Wherever he wrote about something being 'puffed up' or 'rising up', it refers to the leavening effect of these attitudes or behaviours within our houses.

It causes the lump to rise up more than it otherwise would have.

In this session today, we are going to consider the first four of these six leavens that Paul identified in his letter.

In our next session, we are going to cover the final two leavens, and also talk about how we deal with leaven; how we get it out of our houses.

THE LEAVEN OF FACTIONALISM

The first leaven that Paul referred to is the leaven of 'factions', or factionalism.

'And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ.

'I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal.

'For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?'

'For when one says, "I am of Paul", and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not carnal?' 1Co 3:1-4.

These were factions - a group that identified themselves with Paul and a group that identified themselves with Apollos.

And there were other groups as well; some identifying themselves with Peter, and some who were 'extra righteous', who identified themselves as being 'of Christ'.

All of these divisions are not the mark of *sanctification*. They are the mark of a leavening principle giving rise to envy, strife and divisions in a body that should be one.

Speaking about these allegiances that the Corinthians had to different people, Paul said, 'Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes [He said, 'I'm trying to explain this principle to you.'], that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written.' 1Co 4:6.

Now, what was written is obviously in the Scriptures, but it was also what Paul had written to them as the instructions for the culture of their communion.

He said, 'There's a principle at work among you that's above and beyond, or more than, what has been written in terms of how to participate in the communion; and, as you engage in that, it's not the communion for you anymore.'

He continued, 'That you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written, that none of you may be *puffed up* on behalf of one against the other.'

There was the faction of Paul and the faction of Apollos, and he asked, 'Where is your allegiance? You get puffed up on behalf of one against another.'

This becomes the source of the division, the source of strife; and it has its base in envy, or covetousness.

Leaven gets puffed up, one against another

'For who makes you differ from another?'

They were supposed to be one bread, one body.

And Paul asked, 'Who is making you differ from one another? It's not Paul, and it's not Apollos. We are one in one presbytery, proclaiming one word to you. The division is in you.'

'And what do you have that you did not receive?' 1Co 4:7.

He was being very direct with them because if, on the one hand, they said, 'We didn't receive from you', they were claiming to be the source of truth. And that is a lie, for he was saying, 'We are the source of truth to you. Why do you engage in this way?'

'Now, if you did indeed receive it [if you are born from above, you would have to believe that that faith has come by hearing], why do you boast [or, why do you speak, or converse] as if you had not received it [from the one who proclaimed it]?' 1Co 4:7.

This leaven is evident in a person being puffed up, one on behalf of another, because of these factions.

Fellowship on a basis other than faith

Now, factionalism is where people congregate, or commune, with one another.

Communing is a *fellowship*, a *conversation*, within the church. We are all supposed to be communing at the *one* table.

But factional gathering is communing, or congregating, on a different basis. It is on a basis *other than* the spirit of faith that comes by hearing the word of God.

These ones who congregate together may associate on the basis of doctrinal views. They might have a particular doctrinal history or propensity where they 'cohere' around a particular point or a particular belief system.

It may be on the basis of doctrinal views from church *histories*. People from a particular denomination tend to cohere together. Even though they have come out from those denominations, their affinity and friendships depend on that history.

They can even cohere on points of discontent or perceived hurt.

The leaven of generational judgement

However, the one I was particularly thinking of, probably because of the fortieth party I went to where there had been a shift in the culture, is the reality that these factions can be *generational*, where an age group is sceptical or judgemental of an older group.

They look at things that happen, and say, 'We are the exemplars of the way of righteousness, because we are not like that. We've learnt from their errors.'

This is a *puffed up* view or way of engaging with one another, over and against those older ones.

They also presume to be benefactors to a younger group, to direct them in 'a more correct' way.

Now, I am really talking about *my* generation - our perceptions about older ones, and the way we act as benefactors to younger ones.

That is *not* of God!

We are to exemplify the culture of the word and to multiply the word through testimony. That is to be our culture.

If it is not that, then we become factional. Fundamentally, this 'communion', or faction, is not spiritual, but carnal.

Introducing this principle, Paul said, 'This communion is not spiritual, but carnal, because it gives rise to envy, division, and strife, particularly against the presbytery.' 1Co 3:3.

Fellowship based on divisions is carnal

Many of the factions that develop are actually factions that separate themselves from the fellowship of the body of Christ.

Over these past months, we have begun to understand that the fellowship of the body of Christ is the fellowship of the presbytery, which is fellowship with the Father and His Son. 1Jn 1:1-3.

Where these divisions arise or these conversations are serviced, they are actually over and against the presbytery because they promote a word *other* than the word that grants faith to participate in fellowship.

Now, even if a faction's speech *sounds* spiritual, their disconnection from the presbytery, whose fellowship is in the Spirit with the Father and Son, reveals that they are carnal.

So, even if it has a 'spiritual' hue to it, if it is an alternative word and it gathers people to itself, it is carnal.

Becoming offended by perceived injustice to another

Now, the effect of this particular leaven of factionalism can be that members of a faction may become offended and vocal because of perceived injustice that they believe another person has experienced in the church.

A person may be offended by something that has been proclaimed; or they might be offended because their initiative has not been accepted in the way that they wanted it to be accepted, believing, of course, in their own righteousness.

Where people gather to that offence and entertain the conversation, they also may become offended by the one who has proclaimed the word. They are against the presbytery on behalf of the original offended person, but they actually do not really know what the issue is at all.

They have simply been caught up in it, or have become *puffed up* on behalf of that person against the one who has proclaimed the word.

When that happens, it is not the evidence of the truth. It is the evidence of leaven; the puffing up and the ferment of leaven.

Another word for the effect of leaven is 'ferment'; it 'bubbles around'. And this agitation is not the evidence of the Spirit, because the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering and all of those qualities.

All of the other emotions of sin are the evidence of leaven.

Joining another's offence makes us carnal

So, the effect of leaven may be that members of a faction become offended and vocal because of a perceived injustice that they believe another person has experienced in the church.

As Paul noted, they become *puffed up* on behalf of one against another, often engaging in matters that are not their business.

If someone is offended, we need to let *them* sort that out themselves. As soon as we join their offence, we are carnal. That is *not* a spiritual activity at all. We are to be responsible for our own response to the word.

It is not the foundation of repentance and faith if, in the light of the word, our response is to join someone else's offence. We are not to engage in matters that are not really our business or for which we have no spiritual sight.

People who get caught in these arguments and disputes are like children. In this regard, Paul said, 'Brethren, I couldn't speak to you as spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ.' 1Co 3:1.

Saying, 'I'm of this one, I'm of that one' indicates being puffed up in offence.

So, if we are engaged in that, it doesn't matter whether we think our view is right or not; we are carnal, and a babe in Christ.

Where we are engaged in these arguments, it is like being little children in the playground, fighting over who is the best super-hero. It is a ridiculous argument.

We can see the connection of super-heroes to being a supporter of Apollos or a supporter of Peter, as though they are a cherub to us!

However, that should not be our discussion. We should not be entertaining it.

And if someone *does* come to us with their offence, we need to say, 'Well, you need to meet Christ. Go and meet the brethren yourself on that matter. I can't wait to hear your testimony.'

We can help one another here and not entertain leaven; for, if we do, it shows that we are immature.

Factionalism within the presbytery; collegiality

This is another amazing point, and is a point of repentance, even in the presbytery.

Factionalism can be fostered within the presbytery when leaders function as 'colleagues'. Their focus is *not on true fellowship* in the presbytery but, rather, on the well-being and representation of their loyal followers.

It is one thing for people to say, 'I am of the Apollos group', or 'I am of Paul', or 'I am of Peter', or 'I am of Jesus'.

But it would be another thing for Paul to say, 'I represent that group in the presbytery.' That would be Paul saying, 'I'm a colleague of Apollos, and my job in this fellowship is to represent those people.'

That is a great corruption called 'collegiality'.

The focus of Paul and Apollos was one-Spirit fellowship, so that they proclaimed the word that joined those who received it to the same fellowship.

If a presbyter thinks that their responsibility is to 'represent their group', either historically or because they have an affinity with them, they are in grave danger.

They presume 'a voice' in the presbytery because of this representation.

They are not, then, in the presbytery because of a work of offering through which they are given to obedience. Rather, they *presume* a place there to represent others. This is great and fallen corruption.

To engage with one another in this way is indicative of what Jesus said to the Ephesian church: 'You have fallen from first love'.

Speaking to draw people to ourselves

When Paul was about to leave Ephesus, he stated to the elders that some would rise up and

ignorantly speak perverse things to *draw disciples after themselves*. Act 20:30.

So, if you are acting as a ‘colleague’ in a presbytery, and you are speaking for the benefit of those whom you are representing, you are not in a one-Spirit, first love fellowship.

It is not the *one* word, so it does not matter how good you think your heart is. The word that you proclaim will *not* be the word that comes from that one fellowship. You will ‘rise up’, completely with good intentions in mind, and will speak something *other* than the presbytery proclaims.

Paul said, ‘They will rise up, speaking perverse things.’ ‘Perverse’ means that it deviates *from the truth*.

Moreover, what happens? Because you are speaking for the benefit of those you represent, you draw them to yourself.

So, this factional leaven is very powerful and significant, both in the presbytery and in the church itself.

It is amazing that Paul *warned* the Ephesians of this principle, but then the very first letter in the book of Revelation, calling for restoration, was to the Ephesian presbytery regarding their falling from this fellowship.

‘Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.’

That is the leaven of factionalism.

THE LEAVEN OF CONGREGATIONALISM

The second leaven that Paul described is *congregationalism*.

You will see that these are connected, but there are some important differences that we need to note.

‘Now some are puffed up [a handy key], as though I [Paul wrote as part of an apostolic administration, part of a presbytery] were not coming to you.’ 1Co 4:18.

In other words, ‘You are being puffed up, as though you don’t need to receive the word that I am proclaiming to you.’

‘But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord wills, and I will know, not the word of those who are puffed up [I’m not interested even in the

argument or the rationale for why they think they are equal to the word, because their being *puffed up* is a lot of “hot air”. It’s not the truth.] but the power.’ 1Co 4:19.

The *power* is found in the *fellowship of Christ’s offering and sufferings* – the wisdom and the power of God. That is what Paul was invested in, and that is what he brought to them.

‘For the kingdom of God is not in word but in [that] power!’ 1Co 4:20.

Congregationalism is based in the worldly principle of democracy

The leaven of congregationalism is religious dependence that belongs to those who do not recognise the need to receive and obey the apostolic administration that proclaims the wisdom of God which comes down from above.

Congregationalism promotes, and is loosely based on, the principle of democracy, as though democracy were, somehow, inherently Christian.

In reality, democracy comes from the *world*. It is a principle of the world. It is not a principle that belongs in the church.

Congregationalism promotes the right of every household to express their own religious views. We have to be careful here because, of course, everyone has the freedom to express whatever view they want.

However, just because we *express* our view, it does not make us part of that one bread.

We are made part of the one bread because of *our membership of one body*; because we are *all* partaking of the *one word*.

We can have as many expressions and views as we like, but the more views we have, the less we are able to be *sincere and true*.

Congregationalism promotes the right of every household to express their own religious view and, because of this, those who are caught in this ‘leavenous’ mindset view of the church consider the church to be an institution that is supposed to meet *their* needs.

Everyone believes that they have a ‘right’ - and that right is that the church should service their needs.

Can you see, immediately, that is the complete opposite to the fellowship of Yahweh?

What is the fellowship of Yahweh?

It is *love* which *lays down* its life to reveal another.

Congregationalism is the *complete opposite* to the way in which Yahweh Himself operates.

Significantly, in a church where congregationalism is pervasive, there will be men and women who consider themselves to be speaking on behalf of, and in the best interests of, the congregation.

This is a very altruistic notion.

Congregationalism strives to ensure that the needs and expectations of everyone are met

‘We are speaking on behalf of the people to the leadership of the church, to ensure that the leadership is aware of everyone’s needs, and to remind them of what they expect from them.’

These people *presume* to *assess* the word and direction that is given by Christ through the apostolic administration that is in His hand.

As I said before in relation to factions, presbyters may act in this manner, viewing their role in the presbytery to be a voice for the concerns of the people.

People who are this way inclined often take it upon themselves to question or correct what they view to be doctrinal errors in the word of present truth.

In this regard, they consider themselves to be the arbiters of what is true, or right.

Most often, these corrections are not proposed in the presbytery, but in social settings, such as people’s house.

It sounds a little like ‘*wolves in sheep’s clothing*’ when this congregationalist notion is pervasive in a church.

And then, there are some who stand up to ‘represent’ the congregation to the leaders. They are *feeding off* their association with the congregation.

Congregationalism fosters projection and presumption of one’s name and authority

Now, these ones who presume to represent the people consider that they are ‘right’ on the basis of their ‘authority’.

Their authority is not their name, as God has given

Rather, their authority becomes the fact that they are ‘right’ on a doctrinal point or a direction for the church. However, their rights and arguments are merely part of a *projection*.

In other words, they are not being who the Lord made them to be, which can only be known in the light of fellowship.

The very fellowship of which they are demanding some sort of response is the fellowship in which they should be laying down their life to reveal.

They are doing the very opposite, and the evidence, or reason, for that is because they are *projecting beyond themselves*. They actually do not have a name to speak in that context.

The name of a person *can only be known in the light of fellowship*.

For this reason, their wisdom is not of the Spirit, but is earthly, sensual, and *demonic*, and that connects them to ‘the table of demons’. The conversation at their table will not be ‘the table of the Lord’. They will not be able to minister the bread and wine to others, because it is from a different basis.

Their *wisdom* is earthly, sensual, and demonic.

Spiritual wisdom is pure and peaceable

In contrast, the wisdom that is found in the Spirit is first *pure*. Jas 3: 17.

Now, doesn’t ‘pure’ sound like a person who is *purging leaven out*?

It is first pure, then *peaceable*. It is not looking for differences or making accusations.

It is looking to see *peace*, by *the Spirit*. ‘It is pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield.’

Where someone is ‘rising up’, they are obviously not willing to yield.

‘Full of mercy and good fruits [the fruit is ‘the fruit of our lips’], without *partiality* and without hypocrisy.’ Jas 3:17.

That partiality connects to factionalism. Partiality is, ‘I am of Paul’, where others are partial because they are of Apollos.

Concerns need to be brought to the fellowship of the presbytery

Every person in the church is free to ask questions and to raise concerns regarding the activities of the church and the conduct of those who lead.

This is an important point.

In addressing congregationalism, we are not saying that, where someone in leadership exhibits aberrant behaviour or activities, there is no avenue for a person to raise that! We are definitely not saying that. To raise these issues is not leaven.

The leaven of congregationalism is manifest when those who are raising concerns either speak among themselves first or become an alternative authority to the presbytery. In this way, they draw brethren to themselves, and away from the fellowship of the presbytery.

These concerns need to be brought to the fellowship of the presbytery.

The church at Laodicea

The leaven of congregationalism was prevalent in the church at Laodicea.

Jesus described Himself – and we spoke of this previously – as being on the *outside* of this church.

Another way of saying this is that they weren't meeting in the name, and He wasn't in the midst of them. That is amazing, isn't it? Of all of the congregations that made up the Laodicean church, none of them were *meeting in the name*.

Jesus was *outside* of them – even though they all identified as Christians.

He was standing at the door of the church, knocking to see if there were any leaders who were willing to hear His voice, and to open the door of their heart to Him.

He said, 'If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come to him and dine with him, and he with Me.' Rev 3:20.

The name 'Laodicea' is a Greek compound word.

A compound word refers to two words that are placed together to form another word. Laodicea is a Greek compound word that means 'the justice of the people'.

So, we are looking at congregationalism as being *leaven*. And Jesus identified this church of

Laodicea, which is 'justice of the people', and He said, 'I am entirely outside of you, because of this *leaven* among you.'

It can also be translated as 'the right of the people'.

The presbytery at Laodicea was serving the agenda of the church rather than first love

Jesus was writing to the presbytery of Laodicea.

We can obviously see congregationalism *arise* within the congregation.

A presbyter, or a presbytery, can *promote* congregationalism. Jesus was addressing the angel, or the presbytery, of that church. He was saying, 'The way in which you are leading gives rise to congregationalism.'

So, a leader with a Laodicean profile will endeavour to *meet the needs*, and to *serve the agenda*, of the congregation. This is 'falling from first love'.

The success of a leader in this kind of congregation will be dependent upon their ability to gain approval – to be well-liked by everyone – and to meet the needs of the most powerful factions within the church.

They are constantly at the behest of 'leaven-ness' factions, rather than their attention and effort being given to *first love* in the presbytery.

It is completely the wrong way around! And, of course, when they do that, congregationalism as a leaven permeates the place. In this regard, the congregation is their master, and has replaced the lordship of Christ.

They have 'covered their head.'

Congregationalism leaves no place to speak the truth in love and call for repentance

Their focus is now on what the people want; not on what Christ is saying.

They can never speak what Christ wants to say to that church, because their security, their validity, their identity, is tied up in how well they are received by the congregation.

It means that they can never *speak the truth in love*.

A presbyter can only 'speak the truth in love' if they are established in first love with their brethren.

But this other way is a hideous corruption. It means that those people who rise up in

congregationalism have *no way of repenting*. No word can call them back.

And, Jesus said, 'I am *outside* of that church'.

These are important points for us to understand, particularly as the day grows short.

So, in this regard, the congregation is their master, and has replaced the lordship of Christ that is expressed through an apostolic administration in His hand.

The Laodicean condition excludes Christ from His church, and replaces it with human, self-based and, therefore, self-righteous, religious activity.

This spiritual sickness is one of the most virulent of all the diseases that afflict a community of Christians. That is a strong statement, isn't it?

Congregationalism is the denial that Christ appoints overseers of His church

It is a leaven that denies that Christ appoints ministry-graced leaders to be masters and overseers of His church. And, ultimately, that is what congregationalism is – it is a denial of that point.

If you deny that a messenger has been sent by Christ, you deny Christ and the Father Himself.

So, let us remove that out of our houses.

The leaven of religious sophistication

We will move on now to the third leaven that Paul raised. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians was quite a strong letter.

This third leaven that Paul referred to is a form of 'religious sophistication'.

This is a religious culture of 'niceness' within the church which, in the name of the love of God, embraces every person and every mode of conduct.

Last week I said, 'We have to be very clear that when Christ comes with *eyes like a flame of fire*, it is a jealous love the *burns* on all that does not belong to His fellowship.'

But there is a mindset that can gain hold in a congregation, believing that the love of God is demonstrated through *embracing everyone*. That is just not true!

The apostle Paul had received a report of sexual immorality in the Corinthian church, the likes of

which the Gentiles would not have considered acceptable. They themselves would have been embarrassed about this.

Embracing all in the name of God's love is a corruption

Paul rebuked the Corinthians for embracing this person and their conduct in the guise of demonstrating some sort of *Christian virtue*. They embraced this corruption because 'everyone is a son of God, and we are all embracing these ones.'

But Paul said, 'That is an *absolute wickedness* among you.'

The behaviour is *leaven* – it is wickedness.

But the leaven he was addressing was not the sexual immorality; the leaven he was addressing was the fact that *they were embracing this as being 'acceptable' among them*.

'It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality is not even named among the Gentiles [He was really 'giving them a go' here], that a man has his father's wife!

'And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you.' 1Co 5:1-2.

He said that they had become *puffed up*, arrogant, embracing this one in some sort of sophisticated, religious, love of God.

'You should have mourned about it, so that this would not become a corrupting influence among you as a whole congregation.'

In relation to this matter, he said, 'Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?' 1Co 5:6.

He was addressing the *leaven of accepting* it, but he also said, 'That corruption itself is wickedness, which is a little leaven that will affect you all.'

In their sophistication and presumption, the Christians in Corinth were unable to see that embracing this man, and overlooking his deeds, was a corruption.

More than this, they did not realise that they were in *opposition* to Christ, because Paul, as Christ's messenger, had given this man over to Satan.

Paul brought a word to establish a ground of fellowship that would give opportunity for recovery

Paul had come with *the mind of Christ*. He was bringing the word that would establish the ground of fellowship on which they were to meet. He said, 'I have given this one over to Satan, and you are embracing him in your midst.'

When they did that, they excluded themselves from the fellowship that had been established by Paul's word, eating and drinking from a different table.

If Paul had given that one over to Satan, and now they were including him in their communion, what table were they eating from? It was a table of demons.

Now, Paul was not acting in this way so that the man would never recover.

This is amazing, because Paul gave that man over to Satan so that he would learn, through the sufferings that he would experience, if he would embrace them as fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ, as a time, or a season, that was particular to him and would be recovered.

And, indeed, he was!

We read in Paul's second letter, 'This man has repented. It's time for you to forgive, and to embrace him, and gather him in.'

We see that the presbytery was not trying to bring division and strife. They were *speaking the truth and establishing the ground of truth* upon which they were to meet.

And it was for this man's sake that he was given over to Satan who, also, was afflicting Christ.

And, as that man received his afflictions as his fellowship in Christ, he would be delivered from his wickedness and would be able to join the body in purity.

This was wisdom that the Corinthians could not see, because they were like little babies.

They were carnal, and not spiritual.

Paul, as Christ's messenger, had given this man over to Satan so that, through this suffering, he might be delivered from his wicked ways, and his spirit would be saved in the day of the Lord. 1Co 5:5.

God's love is a jealous love

Christians who maintain the view that Jesus receives every person as they are, and so the church should do as well, do not understand nor accept the jealous love of God.

I heard on the news the other day a prominent Christian leader calling every human being 'a son of God'. I tell you – not every human being is a son of God!

The sons of God are those who are *born of His life and live in His house*.

And, where we embrace a culture that is other than that, we are as deceived as the one who presumes to behave in that way and to live among us.

And the jealous love of God burns on that. Why so? It is to burn it up, so that everything that remains in Him is 'of Him'.

The Lord is removing everything from His church that offends

Do you want to be 'of the Lord'?

Well, then, receive His word; join the fellowship of His offering and sufferings; and walk in His way, which is a *light*.

These ones who hold this alternative view do not recognise that God comes to judge those who are in His church, because He is removing from it everything that offends.

They forget that, even though Jesus had delivered the children of Israel out of Egypt, He judged and slaughtered them in the wilderness because of their unbelief.

We read that it was Jesus who took them out and, because of their rebellion, slaughtered them all. Jud 1:5. That hardly sounds like the 'happy' Jesus who includes everyone, does it?

We need to be real, and to recognise what is true, and what is just religious 'guff' – because that is not going to save us.

The Lord is serious about leaven, and He is calling us to *keep the Feast of Passover!*

God grants us mercy to participate in the fellowship of His offering

God's love and mercy are not demonstrated by His overlooking a person's wickedness, and that is true for all of us. That is *not* the mercy of God!

So how does God demonstrate His mercy?

He demonstrates His mercy by granting a person *participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering*.

We need to see, understand and accept that 'mercy' is not God *overlooking* our transgressions.

His mercy is, 'I am giving you your participation in the very fellowship by which you can *be delivered* from your wickedness.'

That is the fellowship of His offering and sufferings. A circumcising action occurs as that suffering and pain is happening, which is cutting the other law from you.

And the blood that was shed on His body as it was being abused is being shed on your heart, sprinkling your heart from an *evil conscience*, so that you can serve the living God.

Removing leaven is all about your ability to *serve Him* – that is the mercy of God.

If you want to encourage a person to avail themselves of the mercy of God, encourage them to receive their participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings.

If they reject that, they have rejected their own salvation.

There is *no other way* that leads to life than the *path* that He has pioneered for each one.

In this fellowship, which is the fellowship of His offering and sufferings, the judgement that a person is under because of their wickedness - and we have to be clear on this - *is judgement changed to chastening*.

It is changed to chastening when we, by the grace of God, remain *in His grace, with Him*.

Our suffering does not exclude us; it changes us

So, the suffering we experience is no longer *excluding us*, but it is *changing us*.

It is *including us* because we are now *with Him* – that is *true communion*.

As a person is chastened by the Father in Christ, they can be delivered from their deviances, and enabled to serve God acceptably.

Thank the Lord that He is delivering us from all these matters.

People who deny the necessity to be joined to the offering and circumcision of Christ are often *offended* by their sufferings, and by the sufferings that they see others experience.

They say, 'How can the Lord be in this if this person is suffering this way?'

They have no spiritual sight!

They may even attempt, through prayer, to 'lobby' the Father to withdraw His hand from the lives of those who are in distress.

Praying in this way *dishonours* the Lord and denies the grace that is available to every son of God to continue in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings.

The leaven of religious tradition

The fourth leaven that we will consider is *religious tradition*.

The first leaven was 'factionalism'; the second was 'congregationalism'; the third was 'religious sophistication'; and the fourth leaven that Paul raised was 'religious tradition'.

Let us look at this verse from Corinthians again. 'Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened.' 1Co 5:7.

The old leaven is a reference to the Old Covenant.

Although Paul was writing to a Gentile church, to the Corinthians, many had given heed to the teaching of the Judaisers, who taught that the Law needed to be kept.

The Judaisers came among the church and said, 'Yes, we believe in Jesus; and, yes, we agree with all of that, but you have to keep the Law to keep faith with what Jesus has come and established among you.'

This is 'another', alternative word, which declares that it is the maintaining of tradition that grants life.

And Paul said, 'That is an old leaven. You need to purge out that old leaven, in order to be unleavened bread.'

The old leaven is the practice of life exemplified under the Old Covenant, and the silly thing about it is that *not one of them* could do it.

It is a complete lie. It is a delusion. It is 'another' fruit.

It is actually the fruit of angels, or the food of angels, which is the table of demons, to believe that and to walk that way.

So many of you, I would imagine, would be saying, 'Well, I do not sacrifice a bull every now and then, just in case. I do not try to keep the Old Covenant.'

We hold on to our religious traditions

However, we do hold on to our *religious traditions*. You will see that we have actually been doing much of this, particularly in relation to the communion.

Leaven does not only refer to the keeping of the Old Covenant.

It is keeping faith with the denominational traditions of men *as the way to righteousness*. This is old leaven!

This 'sacramentalism' is what the Lord is addressing among us in relation to our participation in the communion.

We have obviously rejected transubstantiation. But how long have we held on to the necessity for someone in authority to bless those elements so that, because they have 'done something' to it, we are now having communion?

I tell you, that is *old leaven*! The Scriptures never taught that! But it has become a 'pervasive practice' - that is another 'leaven' term.

It creeps in through the whole lump, which the Lord, in His mercy, has addressed us on. *Sacramentalism is the view that* something supernatural, or spiritual, has been done to those elements to *make* it the communion.

This old leaven has been quite pervasive in the way that we think and understand, and participate in the church.

The Lord is addressing us in relation to our participation in the communion

The Lord is addressing this sacramentalism among us in relation to our participation in the communion.

Our traditional understandings of the communion have undermined our participation in the fellowship of Christ.

This has been part of our *repentance*. It is not just that we are delighting in what He is revealing to

us, although many of us are. The testimonies from around the churches of people meeting house to house for communion is beautiful.

But the reality is that there is *repentance* occurring.

Letting go of our religious traditions in relation to the communion

We actually have to let go of something - an old leaven - to be 'unleavened'; to 'keep the Feast'.

This leaven takes hold when we become loyal to a religious tradition that may, or may not, have been of the Spirit.

I am being careful there because some of the practices that we view as 'definitive' or 'characteristic' of a church really did not come from the apostles at all. They came from scholars, generations after, who said, 'This is what it means.'

And it wasn't even good leaven! It was just leaven that was added among us. And we have held on to these traditions as though they are true, but they are false.

It is not even that the Spirit established that mode at that time, because some things that were established in the church were not of the Spirit at all. They were of a philosophical, worldly, wisdom.

And yet we have imbibed them, and leant on them, and been loyal to them, as though they were the truth.

We can see that we really have to allow the Lord to 'scrub' us in this, and to bring to our attention what the Spirit is saying to us so that we can walk in His way.

We can become loyal to a religious tradition that may, or may not, have been of the Spirit.

This is holding on to religious tradition - we attempt to have life by maintaining the tradition, even though the Spirit has moved on.

We need to be able to turn easily and quickly as we are led by the Spirit

We are believing, and we know we are not perfect but, as soon as the Spirit says, 'This is what I am speaking about', we should be able to turn easily and quickly - just like the testimony of my friend in relation to the culture of his house.

He didn't know it before that point, but as soon as he heard it, he knew that that is the way to walk.

That is how we are to live, isn't it - as ones who are 'of the Spirit'?

We become loyal to religious traditions that may, or may not, have been of the Spirit.

However, we attempt to have life by holding on to the tradition, even though the Spirit has moved on.

To 'hold on to the tradition' means that *we have not moved with the Spirit*.

And the Spirit is not a 'catechism'. The Spirit does not operate by a set of precepts that are set in stone.

What is the Spirit like? Jesus said, 'The Spirit is like the wind. You don't know where it has come from, or where it is going to; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.' . Joh 3:8.

If your security - and your certainty as a son of God, or just as a Christian - depends on the maintenance of those traditions, you are not of the Spirit, because the Spirit is not a catechism.

We walk by the Spirit wherever He goes

The Spirit is a Person, and we are to be with the Spirit where He goes.

Our loyalty to traditions or a yearning for the former ways, is a denial of the need to walk by the Spirit and to live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God through His messengers.

It is a commitment to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.