

Title: "But, It's Just a Little Bit"

Text: 1 Corinthians 5.6-8

Theme: Understand the real Problem

Series: 1 Corinthians #20

Prop Stmt.

Patrick tells this story to our students from time to time to illustrate the truth of this text that I have tried to capture in the title. We all like to think that a little bit of sin is ok, as long, as of course, it does not get out of hand. A boy could not understand why his father was so upset with him, when the boy was telling his dad that it was just a little drink, or it was just a little pack of gum that he stole from the party store. It was not as if he had stolen thousands of dollars, or had gotten drunk. Dad, asked his son to help him mix up a batch of brownies and while mixing the ingredients he told his son to go into the back yard where their dog is and bring in just a little bit of his droppings for the brownies. Of course – the boy can't believe it, when dad says, "It's just a little bit."

This issue of seeking to be a believer and a church who guards purity and calls upon people to live that way, should be a no-brainer, but it isn't. I well remember a church member sitting in my office and looking flabbergasted at me and saying in amazement, "You can't tell people how to live." I became the one who was sitting in amazement. The church has to do that. Not as a cult, where one person demands worship and obedience. But as a community of believers who follow Christ as it is revealed in the Scriptures. That, after all, is who we are. And, I might add, we really believe it and seek to follow that. That is a revelation for some, and it might be a revelation to those of you who live with the misguided notion of, "Well, it's just between them and God." What if you went and picked out a brand new Mustang. And you parked in the back of the parking lot, covering four parking spaces so that no one would scratch it, and I go walking out to it, and take out a key and grind a line all the way down the side and while you are about to strangle me, I say, Don't worry about it, It's just between me and God." Understand this, the way you live your life is never just between you and God. One day, you will stand before God – just you and God. Also, no one can trust in Christ for you, you have to get that matter resolved, just between you and God. But the way you live your life is not only between you and God, it is with a community of believers –called the church, and you live your life in a society, a culture of unbelievers who are examining the validity of the gospel by means of your actions. Your habits, your values, your choices, are never, just between you and God. Your actions affect each of us. Ananias and Sapphira learned this. Achan learned this too. It's the point of this passage. There are two illustrations that Paul uses in these three verses.

The Leaven Principle – leaven is a lot like yeast, in that a little bit left in the dough will influence the entire batch.

The Passover Picture – When Israel became a nation, she was rescued from the angel of the Lord who was bringing death upon the firstborn in Egypt. Each Israelite family was rescued only through the sacrifice of a lamb. The blood of the lamb had to be applied to the pillars and door frame. (picture) When this was done, not only were the people

saved from death, they were set free from Egypt to become a new people, a brand new nation. We will come back to these two ideas as we work through this text.

When you step back and look at 1 Corinthians as an entire book you see that chapters 1-2 deal with the Christ and the cross and chapter 15 deals with Christ and the resurrection. In between these two towering monuments of theology is all of the stuff of life. I love this book! I find it amusing to hear of some people who say, “You have to make the Bible interesting.” “You have to make it come alive.” Whoa – anyone who thinks that has not paid much attention to 1 Corinthians – eh? (for our UP audience)

1. **Because Sin is destructively aggressive...** (6)

Your boasting is ill-founded! (better than “not good”) Your sense of complacency about the sin in your church and the sin in your life is really bad!!! You think that because there is not immediate pressure that you are ok?

“Don’t you know?” a phrase used 10 times in this letter. Why do you think he uses this phrase? They had prided themselves on all of the “secret knowledge” that they had, but they were so “smart” they did not know basic things. The point is, “of course you know this, you just aren’t connecting the dots in your brain.” You know what yeast does to an entire batch of dough. You know what happens to an entire church family when sin is ignored? You know – don’t you?

I think that Paul is using a little imagery here. They were puffed up with self-conceit over their acceptance of this sin in their church, when in reality they were being swollen with infection from sin which was affecting the entire body.

What is the context? - The Church! What was going on? A man in the church was involved in a sexual relationship with his father’s wife and compounding the problem was the fact that the church was not doing a thing about it. The problem should be very obvious. Sin is destructively aggressive. It will affect the entire body just like yeast will affect an entire batch of dough.

Some of you are coaches. If you have a player who shows up late, refuses to practice hard, makes fun of the staff and any player who is working hard – what do you do? You have to deal with it, because if you do not, then you will not have a team. The story of Coach Carter has recently been made into a movie. This All-American basketball player went back to the high school from which he graduated to become the basketball coach. It was common knowledge that everyone bent the rules for the athletes. Coach Carter had a really strange idea. His strange idea was that kids went to school to be educated, so he required the boys on his basketball team to maintain a GPA that was higher than the state’s requirement. He found out that not only were some of his students cheating, but the teachers were going along with it. Coach Carter knew that if his young men were going to be prepared for real life, they had to face the music. So, he started canceling practices, then games until they got things back in line. Do you think he was praised for this? Of course not – he was almost killed – why? Because most people live as if the

show must go on, who really cares about integrity and reality? The church does not exist to teach people how to put the ball in the hoop, but how to be ready for eternity. If we live as if sin does not matter, then it is very clear that we do not understand the gospel. Sin is not neutral. Sin is not your friend. Sin is not like a chemical in a science class that you can use, then put into a jar and set it on the shelf and it will just stay there and sit dormant. Sin will rip you, your family, and any church apart if it is tolerated. Just like how a little bit of leaven will affect an entire batch of dough, a little bit of sin that is ignored will affect the whole body. Sin is aggressive.

The truth is, many people treat the church a lot like they do Santa Claus. They act as if this story is really true and they tell their children all about it because it is a fun story and it makes kids happy, even though everyone else knows better. They assume that when their children get older, they won't take it seriously, they will realize that it was fun, but no one really believes the stuff. So, in the same way, go to church because everyone likes the stories, they like the songs, they like the people (at least most of them), they like the memories and the traditions, but what happens when a kid really believes it? For years I have watched this happen to students at the high school level. High school students and early college students often have a very low tolerance level for hypocrites. Some of the students who really start to get a handle on what it means to follow Christ find out that their life now presents a problem to their family. The adults have been living as if Christianity is a nice story, and now the student wants to embrace it at the heart level and begins to realize that mom and dad, when it really comes down to reality, don't get it. How do you know when people don't get it? ...when they do not want to decisively address sin. Because sin is aggressive...

2. **Sin has to be decisively addressed so that...** (7a)

“Get rid of, purge, clean it out! This is a command to us! Because the sin, like yeast will affect the entire batch, you have to get rid of that which is causing the infection.

In verse 7, Paul uses the leaven/yeast idea to communicate a second point. In order to get the batch of dough clean, you have to completely rid it of leaven or yeast, which means that you have to start over. This is what people in Jewish homes did in preparation for the Passover celebration. They would go through their homes and rid them completely of any leavened bread. This illustrates a very important command for you.

A. Act!

Let's get personal about this. What often happens in a government, a company, a church, or a committee when a problem has to be dealt with? A group is formed to look into it. Now, this can be a necessary step to take, but too often, it is simply an attempt to delay dealing with the problem in hopes that the problem will go away quietly and no one will have to really do anything. After a while, people will get used to the status quo and everyone can go on pretending, like Santa Claus.

What happens when you do not pretend? What happens when you say, “Hold the phone Houston, because we have a problem?” The person who dares to tell the truth is often pointed out as the one who is causing the problem. That may go with the turf, and not everyone is willing to be part of what is a legitimate church. But, this text cannot be ignored. We have to act, but look at the next phrase and you get a sense of what Paul is really focusing on. This command is connected to a principle, a truth. All that Paul is doing is connecting the dots. Are you a follower of Christ? If you claim to be a follower of Christ, does it make any sense for you to get upset with someone who is challenging you to live like it?

B. As you are Called

7b – “as you really are” What is Paul saying? When you came to faith in Christ, you were saved from the penalty of your sin because Christ took your penalty when he died on the cross in your place. You are also being saved from the power of sin, which is why Christ saved you once, and He saves you everyday. He, who began a good work in you will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ. He will ultimately save you from the presence of sin. This is what you have been called to. This is what Christ is doing in your life. This is who you really are and why you are living. So...live as you are called. Live as you really are. Live as a follower of Christ, that is as one who in running after Christ is running away from sin. You cannot run toward sin and run toward Christ all that the same time.

3. Life Together can be a Celebration. (7b-8)

Life in Christ and life together with other believers has to be lived on the basis of what we are and what we are called to be. And even though this text is dealing with a heavy subject, true Christianity is not made up of fun-killing, joy-robbing, beady-eyed, knuckle-spanking spiritual Gestapo agents who are trying to stuff a self-centered, ego-driven religion down people’s throats. There are plenty of major religions already doing that. Genuine Christianity is whole, it is true, it is real, it brings security because it can be believed. It can be believed because the pieces fit together and it ought to be believed and followed consistently because otherwise it falls apart into a hypocritical pile.

A. Of our Savior – 7b

Here is the picture that Paul is painting. On the night of the original Passover, the lamb that each family killed was pointing to the sacrifice that Christ would make on the cross. Just as the blood of the lamb protected each Israelite family from death and became the occasion of their release from slavery, the death of Christ on the cross protects each follower of Christ from God’s wrath against sin. Christ took the wrath and death that we deserved. His death in our place not only paid the price to forgive us, but when we come to faith in Christ, we are also born into something that is new – the family of God, the community of believers in Jesus Christ called the church. Just as Israel left Egypt – the land of slavery – for the promised land, so too, when you come to faith in Christ, you leave an old way of living. You stop being a slave to sin and you start living unto God.

The entire argument that Paul is laying out here is based upon that picture. Look! He is saying, this is what Christ has already done for you. He has released you from bondage – don't go back to Egypt. Don't go back to bondage. That is what sin does. It blinds you and then it binds you. It promises freedom and delivers bondage and it looks at Christianity as being bondage, but in reality it is freedom. That is why in the church life can be a celebration. It is a celebration of our Savior, who is the basis for all of this.

So, when you live the Festival, (he is using the Passover feast as a 24-7 picture), do so consistently.

B. Of our Salvation from Sin – 8a

You can't celebrate the Passover with leavened bread. Neither can you live the Passover with a leavened life. You have to get rid of malice and wickedness. Why? So that you can live with sincerity and truth!

C. Of our Sincerity – 8b

Everyday with Jesus is a celebration of His grace and His gospel. Since by His grace and through His gospel we are saved from our sin and saved to God, then we now live that message.

On the one hand we welcome sinners, that is who we are. On the other hand, we have to deal with sin. The church has to maintain this balanced position between being a community that invites, welcomes and helps sinners, and being a people where anything goes and nobody says anything. The danger of discipline is in being harsh and punitive. The danger of ignoring sin is that it will destroy you and the church. Sincerity and truth is not only the result of consistent living, but it actually describes how we ought to carry out the process of helping each other when problems and sin arises. The reason Paul had such credibility was because of his sincerity and he always spoke the truth.

I have seen the impact that one person can have on an entire family when he lives true to his word day in and day out, year after year after year. Around him, life is safe. The walls are secure, the ground is steady. He is worthy of trust because he has shown that what he says, is what he does and what he ought to be, he really is. In essence that is all that Christ is calling us to be. Live, as I have called you to be. Sin is bad, deal with it. Hypocrisy and lies, malice and wickedness destroys lives – don't tolerate it. Sincerity and truth is right, live it. And if you have been playing a game – stop. Get real. Because there is no such thing as a little bit of sin.