

Christ Our Passover

SERMON

By

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July 12, 2014

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 5:1-8

PROP: Proposition

1 Corinthians 5:1–8 (ESV)

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. ² And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you. ³ 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. ⁴ When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, ⁵ 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. ⁶ Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? ⁷ Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb has been sacrificed. 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.

In the text before us Paul writes to the Corinthian church concerning a most grievous sin that holds them in bondage. A young man in the church has taken his stepmother or possibly his own mother as his wife. It was not an unusual relationship in the Roman society of that day but God condemns such relationships. Paul terms the relationship, "Sexual immorality." What was even worse is the fact that the Corinthian church did nothing about it and then boasted of their spirituality. Like Israel in Egypt the Corinthian church was in bondage to sin. In our day many churches permit similar if not worse sins to exist in their communions and like the church at Corinth they do nothing about it. A church that cannot discipline sin will never have a lasting ministry. Indeed, such churches invariably degenerate so that they become no churches of Christ but synagogues of Satan. The sin of this young man was egregious indeed but that was not Paul's real concern. Paul's burden here was the failure of the Corinthian church to deal with flagrant sin and that she was in danger of becoming no church at all. She must rid herself of the sinful influences that threaten to tear her apart. We too will be torn apart by the sins that so easily beset us if we fail to deal with our sins and rid ourselves of their terrible influence in our lives.

Sin in our lives and in the church is like yeast. A little yeast in a lump of dough rapidly infects the whole lump just like a little sin, if not dealt with rapidly, influences our whole life and in the end destroys us. Paul rebuked this young man and delivered him to Satan, but what of the others in the church? Can we just sit back smugly and say, "Well he got what he deserved," and overlook the lump of sin in our own lives that could grow into something equally heinous because we are doing little or nothing about it? Our boasting is really the yeast that leavens the whole lump. Open scandal will bring any church to its demise soon enough but what of our own sin? How worthy are we to approach the table of the Lord?

When we examine ourselves in the light of God's Word we find that we too, have forsaken the fountain of living waters and have hewn out for ourselves broken cisterns that can hold no water (Jeremiah 2:13). All of us have sinned. All of us do not have the zeal we should have for the Lord and his kingdom. All of us are deficient in our love for Christ. We very well may have forgotten the enormity of our own sin that made necessary the shedding of God's own blood in order to redeem us.

John wrote in his first epistle, "If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." **Therefore one of the marks of the Christian is sensitivity to sin**, the sin that is in the life of every believer and a readiness to come to the Savior for forgiveness. We are to be unleavened bread. Paul wrote,

1 Corinthians 5:6–7 (ESV) — 6 Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? **7** Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.

Clean out the old yeast, to use Paul's metaphor. Get rid of that piece of evil smelling dough that will soon infect your entire life. He uses the Greek present tense here which connotes a present continuous action. **Be cleaning out the old leaven.** We are to be continuously cleaning out the sin from our lives which is ever with us and why is this? Why must we be continually purging the old leaven of sin from our lives? Because, as Paul says, Christ our Passover lamb was sacrificed for us and it is just this point that we will focus upon.

We have come to the table of the Lord to observe Christian Passover and need to think for a few moments of our own deliverance from the Egypt of our sins. We need to behold Jesus our Savior as the Pascal Lamb on which we feed. Let us not only look on Jesus as the Lamb of God but let us eat of his flesh and drink of his blood; for his flesh is meat indeed and his blood is drink indeed. As we

approach the ancient feast let us go back to Egypt's darkness and seeing the blood of the Pascal Lamb sprinkled on the door posts and lintel of our homes to turn aside the angel of death, let us see instead the blood of Christ our Passover sprinkled on the doorposts and lintel of our sinful hearts.

We find in Exodus chapter 12 that the Israelites are about to escape from Egypt. The tenth plague has yet to take place and God's people are concerned with certain preparations to avert the Angel of Death from killing their first born sons. **We see in this account one of the most profound pictures of Christ and his own sacrifice for our sins in all of Scripture.** It was a lamb that was slain, the blood of which delivered the people of God from his justice. No other creature could so well have typified him who was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. It most sweetly portrayed our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. There is no other emblem of sacrifice as appropriate to the person of our beloved Lord as that of the Lamb. A child would at once perceive the likeness between a lamb and Jesus Christ, so gentle and innocent, so mild and harmless, neither hurting others, nor seeming to have the power to resist injury.

Looking further in the text we see that the lamb was to be without blemish. A blemished lamb, if it had the smallest speck of disease, the least wound, would not have been allowed for a Passover. The priest would not have allowed it to be slaughtered, nor would God have accepted the sacrifice at his hands. It must be a **lamb without blemish;** and was not Jesus Christ perfect from his birth? Unblemished, born of the pure Virgin Mary, begotten of the Holy Spirit, without a taint of sin; his soul was pure, and spotless and his life was the same. **In him was no sin.** He took our infirmities and bore our sorrows on the cross. He was in all points tempted as we are, but there was that wonderful exception, "yet without sin." A lamb without blemish. Can any of us who have known the Lord, who have tasted of his grace, who have had fellowship with him, find any fault with the Savior? Can we lay anything to his charge? Has his truthfulness departed? Have his words been broken? Have any of his promises failed? Indeed not! Jesus is the unblemished lamb, the pure, the spotless, the immaculate, "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world;" and in him there is no sin.

The lamb was to be a male of the first year. Such a lamb would be in its prime, healthy and vigorous. So Christ was in the ripeness of his manhood. At the age of 34 he was sacrificed for our sins, when he was healthy and strong. We can see in our minds eye a man filled with dignity and genius. A man fairer than any of the sons of men.

Fair are the meadows,
Fairer still the woodlands,
Robed in the blooming garb of spring;
Jesus is fairer,
Jesus is purer,
Who makes the woeful heart to sing.

Jesus did not die through weakness, nor through illness or disease. His soul was strong within him; he was still the Lamb of the first year. He could still if he pleased, even on the cross, have removed his hands from the nails that held them; and descending from the cross, have scattered his tormenters, yet he meekly yielded obedience unto death. Can we not see Jesus here, the unblemished Lamb of the first year, strong and mighty? And, can we not understand — if Jesus consecrated himself to save us when he was in all his strength and vigor, should not we in our youth dedicate ourselves to him? And if we are mature and strong, are we not doubly bound to give our strength to him? And if we are in old age, still we should seek while the little remains, to consecrate that little to him. If he gave his all to us, which was much, should we not give our all, though it be little by comparison, to him? Should we not feel bound to consecrate ourselves entirely to his service, to lay body, soul, and spirit, time, talents, all upon his altar? And even though we are blemished with sin should we not be happy to rid that old leaven of sin from our lives that we might present our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, and acceptable to God which is our reasonable service?

When the lamb was slaughtered its blood was caught in a basin then smeared on the side posts of the doorway and the overhead parts of the door. It was not put on the threshold were it would be trodden under foot. The precious blood of Christ as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot is the ground for our redemption. It is that blood and no other which averts destruction in hell forever. It is that blood which signals the destroyer to pass over us. If we would not come into condemnation, if we would escape hell, the blood of Christ must cover our sins. It was not enough to be of Israelite descent, not enough to live in Goshen with God's people. Everyone without the blood would receive the wrath of God. I imagine that it took faith to obey such unusual instructions, faith that God could bring to pass such an act of judgment, and it takes saving faith in Christ the Lamb to send away the angel of death. The lamb was to be eaten that night in haste and readiness. Many of us will be suddenly thrust into eternity. There may never be another opportunity for us to repent since death comes surely and not always when we expect it. Death cannot be sent away like Darby O 'Gill's banshee. We must act while there is time to save ourselves from destruction.

The lamb was to be roasted, not boiled or eaten raw. We are told that the pottery of those days was too small to contain a whole lamb and to boil it would require the lamb to be cut up. Roasting on the other hand was done on a spit so the whole animal could be cooked at once. The integrity of the lamb was to be kept and none of its substance was to be dissolved in water. The roasted lamb would be put on the table whole and essentially unchanged. None of its bones were to be broken. So also with the Lamb of God. We are not to break him in pieces with doubtful disputations or false doctrine. We are to treat him as the One in whom all the fullness of the Godhead dwells in bodily form. Our faith receives great strength from the fact, that we see our Savior not only as a fulfillment of the Passover lamb, but the only one who fulfills it. Our hearts rejoice to look on him whom we have pierced, and see his blood, as the lamb's blood, sprinkled on our lintel and our door-post, and see his bones unbroken, and to believe that not a bone of his spiritual body shall be broken hereafter; and rejoice, also, to see him roasted in the fire, because thereby we see that he satisfied God for that roasting which we ought to have suffered in the torment of hell for ever and ever.

How does the blood of Christ benefit us? The chief benefit of God's elect is that Christ our Passover Lamb was slain for us. Those of us who by grace have set our hands upon this glorious scapegoat can say, "Yes it is true, Christ has not only been slain, but he has been slain for us. So many in our day believe that the death of Christ made possible the salvation of all men on the condition that they believe, but that Christ's death in itself did not actually secure or guarantee salvation for anyone. But Christ our Passover Lamb was slain for us! The death of Christ was designed to secure the salvation of God's elect and for no others. Christ our Passover Lamb was slain for us! The blood of the Passover Lamb was sprinkled on the door posts and lintels of God's people and into those homes alone the death angel did not enter. The Passover blood was designed to save God's people and all the others perished.

Let us turn our minds eye to the land of Goshen where Israel lived in Egypt. It is evening. The Egyptians are going homeward thinking little of what is coming. But just as soon as the sun is set, a lamb is brought into every house. The Egyptian strangers passing by, say, "These Hebrews are about to keep a feast tonight," and they retire to their houses utterly careless about it. The father of the Hebrew house takes his lamb, and examining it once more with anxious curiosity looks it over from head to foot, to see if it has a blemish. Finding none he says, "Bring me the basin." It is held. He stabs the lamb, and the blood flows into the basin. The father commands his wife to roast the lamb before the fire! "Take heed," he says, "that not a bone is broken." We can see her intense anxiety, as she puts it down to roast, lest a bone should be broken. Now, says the father, "bring a bunch of hyssop." A

child brings it. The father dips it into the blood. "Come here, everyone, and see what I am about to do." He takes the hyssop in his hands, dips it in the blood, and sprinkles it across the lintel and the door-posts. His children say, "What do you mean by putting blood on the door posts?" He answers, "This night the Lord God will pass through to smite the Egyptians, and when he sees the blood on the lintel and on the two side posts; the Lord will pass over the door, and will not allow the destroyer to come into the house to kill you." The thing is done; the lamb is cooked; the family sits down to eat, the father of the family has blessed the meal, "Baruch atah Adonai Elohenu melek haolam". (Blessed art thou, LORD, our God, King of the Universe) The family watches how carefully father divides joint from joint, lest a bone should be broken; and he is careful to see that the smallest child of the family has some of it to eat just as the Lord commanded.

We can hear him say, "This is a most important night, hurry and eat, in another hour we will all go out of Egypt." He looks at his hands, they are rough with labor, and clapping them, he cries, "I will not be a slave any longer." His eldest son, perhaps, hurts terribly from a beating he took today, and he says, "Son, the task-master whipped you this afternoon but it is the last time you will feel it." He looks at them all, with tears in his eyes, "This is the night the Lord God will deliver you." We can see them with their hats on their heads, clothed, and their staves in their hands. It is the dead of night. Suddenly they hear a terrible cry! The father says, "Stay inside, my children; you will know what it is in a moment." Now another cry of anguish, then another and many more. They hear terrible wailing and crying. "Stay inside, don't open the door" he says, "the angel of death is here. Silence is in the room and they can almost hear the wings of the angel flap in the air as he passes their blood-marked door. "Be calm," says the father, "that blood will save you." The anguished shouts increase. Eat quickly, my children," he says again. The door crashes open and a frantic Egyptian shouts, "Get out of here! Go away! We don't care about the jewels that you have borrowed. You have brought death into our houses." "Go!" says a mother, "Go! For God's sake! Go. My oldest son lies dead!" "Go!" says a father, "It was a bad day when you people came into Egypt, and our king began to slay your first-born. God is punishing us for our cruelty." We can see them leaving the land; the cries of anguish are still heard; the people are busy with their dead. As they go out, a son of Pharaoh lies in state amid the chants of dozens of priests. Presently they see one of their task-master's sons taken away. A happy night for them when they escape but a night of terror for the enemies of God.

Do you see, my friends, the glorious parallel? Israel had to sprinkle the blood on the posts of their doors, and also eat the lamb. Have you ever had the blood sprinkled on you? Can you say that Jesus Christ is yours? It is not enough to say

“he loved the world, and gave his Son,” you must say, “He loved *me*, and gave himself for *me*.” There is another hour coming, my friends, when we will all stand before God’s bar of justice; and once again we will have to deal with the angel of death. His holy angels will separate the wheat from the chaff, the sheep from the goats. Like the firstborn of Egypt the chaff and the goats will be cast forever into the fires of hell. Once again the people of God will be set apart by the blood of the Lamb. The hands of the judgment angels will be held back. As we see the justice of God we may well consider that we also deserve the wrath and curse of God but we will remember the blood of Christ and we will say with the hymn writer,

*Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress;
Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,
With joy shall I lift up my head.
Bold shall I stand in Thy great day,
For who aught to my charge shall lay?
Fully absolved from these I am,
From sin and fear, from guilt and shame.*

But my friend, if you cannot see that you have sinned against God, if you see no need for the blood of Christ, what hope do you have to escape the death angel when he comes for you. The account of the first Passover in Egypt is not just a quaint story from ancient times. It is a compelling picture of the death of Christ and our need for his blood to cover our sins. All of us are urged in the strongest terms to see to our souls. There is nothing of greater importance to us than this.

When God’s people are sprinkled with the blood of Christ that is not all they need. To have the blood of Christ cover our sins, to have the death angel turned aside is most important for us but it is not all that is important. We must also feed upon Christ. We must also eat the Pascal Lamb as it were. Many come to the table of the Lord because they feel there is some **merit** in doing so. They do well to attend upon the liturgy of the Lord’s supper but they do not feed on Christ. They are not his intimates.

John 6:53–58 (ESV)

⁵³ So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. ⁵⁴ Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. ⁵⁵ For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. ⁵⁶ Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. ⁵⁷ As the living Father

sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. ⁵⁸ This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.”

To be saved from the death angel it was necessary to put blood on the door posts and lintel but it was also necessary to eat the Passover lamb. Is Christ your daily food? Is he your bread from heaven? The righteousness of Christ is imputed to us and our sins are covered and we live by feeding on Christ. We are justified by faith alone and we live on Christ the justifier. What a blessing it is to know that we have been chosen from before the world began, to be in Christ and that our souls are hid in Christ. We must take care to eat the Pascal Lamb to eat Christ who is the bread of life and drink Christ who is our living water. Indeed for Paul to live **is** Christ and to die **is** gain. And so my friends as once again we come the table of the Lord we will keep the Passover. Once more we will eat the Lamb and by faith feed on his blood, and righteousness.

*Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress;
Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,
With joy shall I lift up my head.*