

## **A Little Leaven**

“Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?” These words were spoken by the Apostle Paul as he dealt with a sin among the Corinthian brethren that “is not even among the Gentiles” (1 Corinthians 5:1). The sin was fornication, fornication being illicit sexual intercourse, illicit being, “not allowed by law: unlawful or illegal.”

The brethren in Corinth are described as being “puffed up, and did not rather mourn, that he might be taken away from among you” (Vs. 2). In this event we are able to see three problems the Corinthians were missing: (1) They were “puffed up.” The scriptures do not specifically identify how their pride was being inflated, but it had something to do with the brethren and the man overtaken in the error. Whatever it was it resulted in (2) a failure to “mourn.” There was much to mourn about, i.e., the eternal condition of the offender, and the effect the neglect would have upon individuals, and/or the church collectively. In some societies, such fornication would have been subject to civil vengeance, i.e., death. This failure did not hold in high esteem the physical well-being of the man, the salvation of the man, nor the influence upon the church. (3) They failed to remove, or, that the man “be taken away from among you.” The Lord does not look peaceably upon brethren who fail to address issues and respond in a righteous manner.

When the Apostle Paul addressed the issue, he said, “deliver such a one unto Satan, for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” (Vs. 5). In some such cases, the Lord expects the brethren to act swiftly, and decisively to preserve the spiritual well-being of the offender.

The Apostle Paul indicated that the indecisive actions of the brethren presented a collective dilemma, i.e., “a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.” The effects of sin are not without collective consequences. Therefore, Paul’s admonition to the Corinthians was, “I wrote unto you not to keep company, if any man that is named a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such a one no, not to eat” (1 Corinthians 5:11).

It appears that the brethren in Corinth heeded the words of the Apostle Paul, for of this man, the Apostle Paul said, “Sufficient to such a one is this punishment which was inflicted by the many; so that contrariwise ye should rather forgive him and comfort him, lest by any means such a one should be swallowed up with his overmuch sorrow. Wherefore I beseech you to confirm

your love toward him. For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye are obedient in all things” (2 Corinthians 2:6-9).

The Apostle Paul, said, “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey the lusts thereof: neither present your members unto sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves unto God, as alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God” (Romans 6:12-13). Ross Triplett, Sr.