

You've heard the saying -

**"one bad apple spoils the whole bunch?"**

I've always wondered - *Is that just a saying or does it actually happen?*

Yes it does. As the apple ripens, it produces a gas called **ethylene**. Store fruits together, and the ethylene each fruit produces will cause the others around it to ripen further, and eventually go rotten.

**This is what the apostle Paul is talking about to the church in Corinth.** He's talking about bad apples in the *metaphorical* sense - NOT actual fruit that we eat. He's concerned with **the fruit we produce as followers of Jesus.**

Paul wants us to live in such a way that people can **taste and see** that the fruit of our lives is good. If we say we're Christians, then our actions should resemble His character. And when it doesn't, we should be grieving over it - *not celebrating it.*

**This is NOT how the Christians in Corinth were living.** In fact, it was so bad, that Paul said - *"even the pagans cannot tolerate what you're doing".*

### **1 Corinthians 5:1-13**

*"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!** [**celebrate it**] 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** [**celebrate it**] 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 [*celebrate Jesus, freedom, eternal life*] not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. 9 I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people— 10 not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. 11 But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone [*social isolation*] who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one. 12 For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? 13 God judges those outside. “Purge the evil person from among you.”

In this part of Paul's letter he is using **the one rotten apple** to point out a much deeper problem among the whole bunch. Someone in the church was committing a *deplorable act of sexual sin* and was not sorry about it one bit. That was the obvious problem. *It's not hard to pick out the rotten apple among the bunch.*

**But a much bigger problem was harder to see.** In fact, it was hidden - deep down inside the heart of these so-called Christian believers was a problem that was actually spoiling the whole batch of apples.

What was the bigger problem?

**Christians were tolerating sin - and starting to celebrate it.**

You say, '*so what's the problem with that?*'

Well, the big problem with **celebrating sin** is that it promotes the very thing that **destroys relationships**. Sin puts a barrier between us and God. Whenever we reject God, we refuse His blessings. And the greatest blessing we can ever receive from God is **a relationship with the One who created us**. Without a relationship with God we

are left to define **love** on our own terms. And **the love of self** is the number one killer of relationships in the world.

Some of these Corinthian believers were starting to say -

***'Who am I to tell another person how to live?' Let them do what they want.***

***What's a sin to me, may not be a sin to you.*** Right?

***Wrong.***

Paul is teaching these misguided Christians how to rightly handle **sin**. Whether it's in the life of an individual Christian or in the Church - there's **only one way to deal with sin**.

But first, I want to look at how some of us try to deal with these deep-rooted problems that destroy our relationships - with God and others.

**In verse 1** Paul says - there's a kind of sin that destroys human relationships that is not even **tolerated** among pagans.

That word **tolerate** means - *to accept or endure someone or something unpleasant with patience.*

**These Christians in Corinth were tolerating sexual sin.** Now that was the 'norm' in Corinth. Corinth was known for its highly sexualized and extremely permissive culture. But Paul is saying - this should have been unthinkable for Christians. **Why?**

Because **Leviticus 18:8** says - *“Do not have sexual relations with your father’s wife; that would dishonour your father.”* **Deuteronomy 27:20** says - *“Cursed is anyone who sleeps with his father’s wife, for he dishonours his father’s bed.”*

**They were without excuse.** ***So why did they do it?*** They stopped reading their Bibles. They started listening to politicians and celebrities for their moral standards - instead of prophets and pastors who *preached the word of God*.

As a nation, we are living in the **pandemic of our past** - *spiritually speaking*. What we tolerated in the 70's we are now living in the 21st Century.

Jack Evans, former mayor of Dallas, Texas famously said -  
"**You have what you tolerate.**"

According to the apostle Paul, that's not only true for business in the 21st Century, but it was true for the Church of Corinth in the First Century.

**Tolerance is now the law of our land** - *God keep our land, TOLERANT and free!* - is the 'unofficial' anthem of Canada.

**Tolerance** used to mean that we recognized and respected others' beliefs without feeling obligated to share them. Today, tolerance means that everyone's *values*, everyone's *belief systems*, everyone's *lifestyles*, are acceptable.

- We have become tolerant with **alcohol abuse** and **marijuana**;
- Tolerant with **sex trafficking and abortion**.
- Tolerant with every kind of **sexual immorality under the sun**;
- Tolerant with **pastors manipulating people**;
- Tolerant of **hypocrisy and the lack of Christ-like character in the Church**.

Tolerating sin will cloud your vision of God.

Tolerating sin will diminish good judgment.

Tolerating sin will make you feel like God.

Tolerating sin will hurt the people around you.

And worse of all - **Tolerating sin will lead to celebrating it** - and you will eventually become what you celebrate.

**We are living in the pandemic of our past sin.**

## So what does Paul tell us to do with sin?

Don't tolerate it, or celebrate it. **Purge it.**

Three times in this chapter he says - **remove it, clean it, and purge it.**

The story is told of **a man who sold his house for an incredible bargain with just one stipulation**: he would retain ownership of one large nail protruding over the front door. After several years, he wanted the house back, but the new owner was unwilling to sell it.

So the first owner went out, found the carcass of a dead wolf, and hung it from the single nail he still owned. Soon the house became unlivable and the family was forced to sell the house to the owner of the nail.

**If we leave even one small sin in our life,** Satan will hang his rotting garbage on it.

Paul says - **remove it!** He compares leaving a bit of sin within the body of Christ to "yeast" working its way through a whole batch of dough.

In ancient times, **leaven** was actually just an old piece of dough that had begun to ferment. When added to a new batch of dough, it spread its fermentation throughout the whole loaf. The longer the fermenting process continued, the greater the danger that the dough would become poisonous.

**2 Timothy 2:21** - Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these *things [which are dishonorable—disobedient, sinful]*, he will be a vessel for honour, set apart for a special purpose and useful to the Master" (AMP).

**Sin is to be grieved - not celebrated.** Pray that we will see sin as God sees it. And let us begin by purging the sin we see in ourselves, before we go trying to clean out our neighbour's house.

**Jesus is intolerant of sin.** He was so intolerant of man's sin that he left his heavenly home, became a human being, suffered at the hands of evil men and died on a cross to purchase our freedom from sin and death.

He couldn't just turn a blind eye, or tolerate a world held captive by its lusts and appetite for sin. He said, "*Whoever believes in me has eternal life. Whoever doesn't believe in me won't see life, but the angry judgment of God remains on them*" (John 3:36).

Jesus was intolerant toward **hypocrisy** and **selfish living**.

Self-centred living is a sin in God's eyes. And **sexual sin** is one of the greatest expressions of self-centred living.

**God has always been intolerant of sin!**

He says - "*Wash! Be clean. Remove your ugly deeds from my sight. Put an end to such evil*" (Isa 1:16).

*"Come back to your right senses and awaken to what is right. Repent from your sinful ways"* (1 Cor 15:34).

*"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the Lord and He will have mercy on him"* (Isa. 55:7).

**Will you return to Jesus today?**

Will you ask Him to **purge your heart of sin?** If you do so right now, He will give you the power to say no to sin - so you can celebrate life and experience God's blessing on your relationships.

*Will you pray this prayer with me.*