Fresh Start

1 Corinthians 5:6-8 ...Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

Throwing Out The Old
In Italy they have a strange custom for the New Year.

- As midnight on New Year’s Eve approaches, the streets are cleared.
  - There is no traffic;
  - there are no pedestrians;
  - even the policemen take cover.
- Then, at the stroke of midnight, the windows of the houses fly open.
  - To the sound of laughter, music and fireworks,
  - each member of the family throws something old out the window.
- Old dishes,
  - old decorations,
  - old furniture,
  - all kinds of old items go flying out the window.
- Every person is encouraged to get rid of some object that symbolizes something in the past year that they are determined to wipe out of their minds in the New Year.
  - As the New Year comes in the Old year is discarded!

Leaven
The Israelites had a similar tradition at the beginning of each New Year.

- In the first month of the year, according to their calendar, they had a very special celebration.
  - It was called the Feast of the Unleavened Bread.
  - And it all centered around Leaven.
- The first time that leaven appears in scripture is during the Exodus of Israel from Egypt.
  - You are probably very familiar with the story of how God helped the Children of Israel escape slavery in Egypt by-inflicting ten plagues upon the Egyptians.
    - The tenth and worst of those plagues was the death of the first-born.
    - It was this final plague that turned the heart of the Pharaoh and caused him to release the Children of Abraham.
  - The Israelites were instructed by God to mark the doorposts of their homes with the blood of a lamb.
• They were further instructed to eat the whole lamb along with unleavened bread.
  o On that night of nights the Passover lamb’s blood represented their redemption from Egypt
    ▪ and the unleavened bread represented their new life apart from the old influence of Egypt.
  o Both parts were essential to the process
    ▪ and both parts were immediately commemorated in the celebratory feast that God instituted as a religious ordinance.
• God gave instructions to Moses and Aaron that they were to command Israel to celebrate the Passover each year, at the beginning of the year
  o along with the "Feast of Unleavened Bread."
  o This feast, which involved casting out the old leaven and starting fresh began on the 14th day of the first month and lasted for seven days.
• During the first day of this feast, the Israelites were commanded to remove all leaven from their houses.
  o In addition, they were not to eat any bread that contained leaven for the whole week.
• The general idea of the feast was to represent in practice what their redemption had accomplished for them in reality.
  o It served to remind them that they were saved in order to be separated from the influence of Egypt.
    ▪ They weren’t saved from Egypt so that they could continue to live under Egypt’s influence.
    ▪ They were saved from Egypt in order to break free from that influence and become the people of God.
• The feast centers around “leaven.”
  o Leaven was regarded as a corrupting influence.
    ▪ Yeast, which occurs naturally in various grains and some fruits, causes things to ferment.
      • It feeds on starches and sugars
      • and given the right environment
      • where there is moisture and a little heat,
      • it literally devours any starch or sugars that it comes into contact with.
    ▪ If it is left to its own devices the leaven will consume all of the available starches and sugars before it finally burns itself out.
  o Now, we understand today that yeast is a single cell organism, that occurs naturally
    ▪ but they didn’t understand the microbiology behind the process of fermentation in ancient times.
      • They only knew that there was some kind of invisible hidden agent that,
        o under the right conditions,
        o would exert its influence
and corrupt whatever it came into contact with.
- Because it was a concealed thing, a hidden thing
  - and because fermentation was viewed as a
    process of corruption,
  - much like rot or decay,
- then leaven came to represent the hidden influences in
  our lives that corrupt us.
- The feast of unleavened bread served to remind the Children of Israel that
  they were delivered from the corrupting influence of Egypt.
  - As they cast the leaven out of their homes, they were reminded that
    they had been set free from bondage.
    - It also served to remind them that they must be vigilant to
      guard their lives
    - against the hidden influences in the world
    - that had the ability to corrupt their souls.
- Our text rises from the New Testament application of this Old Testament
  practice.
  - As we start a new year, I believe that our text contains some timely
    instructions that can help us become the people that God desires for
    us to be in the coming year.

A Little Leaven
The first phrase in our text speaks to the powerful influence of leaven.
- Paul says, “A little leaven leavens the whole lump.”
  - I don’t know how many of you have ever baked bread, but I used to
    have this nifty little “bread machine.”
    - It was kind of the “idiot-proof” way to make bread.
    - You mixed your flour and your water together in this machine
      and it does all the rest.
  - But the whole thing depends on one special ingredient: Live Yeast.
    - I used to buy these little packages of yeast and add them to the
      bread dough so it would rise.
- Back in Ancient Times, they didn’t have any packages of yeast.
  - However, it was well known that, if you mixed certain grains with
    water
    - and exposed them to the right temperature,
    - the naturally occurring yeast would begin the process of
      fermentation.
  - The only problem was that it takes a while for that process to work.
    - Depending on conditions it could take anywhere from a day to a week!
- Now, if your intention is to bake some bread for dinner,
  - the prospect of waiting a week for your dough to begin to ferment – or
    to become leavened – would kind of put a damper on your appetite.
- So they worked out a much faster system.
  - Each time they would mix their dough to make bread
• they would hold back a small lump of the fermented dough.
  o This dough was set aside and stored in a cool dark area to prolong the
    life of the already active yeast in it.
  o This small dough ball was leavened and ready to go.
  o The next time they got ready to make bread
    • they would mix up their new dough
    • and then add the little lump of old leavened dough to their new
dough
    • and set it out in a warm place to let the leaven work.

• What happened next was incredible.
  o That little leavened dough ball
    • would exert its powerful influence over the much larger
      unleavened dough ball
    • and in a short amount of time
    • the corrupting influence of the leaven would spread
      throughout the whole ball of dough,
      • rendering the whole thing ready to bake in a short
        amount of time.
  o Once again, before baking the bread, they would set aside another
    small dough ball for the next time they wanted to make bread.

• It’s a process that really works.
  o Some of you may have unwittingly participated in it if you ever made
    a batch of what they call friendship bread.
    • The way the friendship bread works is that you pass on to your
      friend a small lump of the already leavened dough
      • And they use as a starter lump for their new batch of
        bread.
  • This is what Paul is talking about when he says that a little leaven leavens the
    whole lump.
  o It only takes the miniscule amount of leaven that exists in that small
    dough ball
    • to quickly corrupt the whole of the larger lump of new dough.

**Purge Out**
Tonight, we have to understand that Paul wasn’t talking about making bread in our

text.
• Paul is talking about the corrupting influence of sin and carnality in our lives.
  o His point is that it only takes a little hidden sin in your life to corrupt
    the whole of your walk with God.
  o Watch what he says in the next phrase,
    • "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump,
      as ye are unleavened."
• The command is given to New Testament believers to “purge out” the “old
  leaven.”
Now that’s a pretty strong command by itself but Paul strengthens it by establishing the basis of the command.

- We are to purge out the old leaven that we might be a new lump because we are unleavened.

- The command is supported by the positional evidence of our redemption.
  - We've been redeemed by the blood of the lamb.
  - We've been set free by the cross of Calvary.
  - We've been declared, by God’s mercy, to be righteous.
  - We've been declared,
    - because we repented of our sins,
    - because we were baptized in his name,
    - because he has filled us with the Holy Ghost,
  - We've been declared to be unleavened
    - or set free from the corrupting influence of sin!

This is important.

- Paul isn’t preaching to the lost.
  - He’s preaching to the church!
- He tells the redeemed to purge out the old leaven from your lives so that you can become the new lump that God has declared you to be!
  - We are instructed by Paul to become “in practice” what we have already become “in position.”
- When God forgave us, he called us righteous.
  - When he washed us in his blood he declared us to be holy.
- The problem is that we are still carnal men and women.
  - Not one of us was made perfect.
  - But all of us were declared to be perfect!
- So, the command from God is to search out your life,
  - purify yourself,
  - purge yourself of the old leaven
    - because you’ve already been made a new lump.
- And, don’t you know, if you add the corrupting influence of the old lump into the new lump,
  - it only takes a little of the old lump to completely sour the new lump!

The whole commandment is built on the contrast between the “Old” and the “New.”

- When you came to God, you repented of your sins,
  - you were baptized in his name
  - and filled with the glorious gift of the Holy Ghost,
    - the “New” was birthed in you.
- God filled you with his spirit and declared you to be a new creature in Christ Jesus.
  - What happens is that the “New” begins to crowd out the “Old” in your life.
    - The old man begins to yield to the new man
• as the “New” asserts itself against the “Old.”
  o The power of this new nature in your life
    ▪ is the power to perpetuate itself through renewal
    ▪ as it overwhelms the old nature.
  o The new nature grows, and its influence grows,
    ▪ as you are exposed, over and over again, to the presence of God.
• This is what Paul is telling us in Romans 12:2,
  o “…be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the
    renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and
    acceptable will of God.”
    ▪ He’s saying, don’t conform to the world,
    ▪ don’t yield to the old man,
    ▪ but be transformed
    ▪ – how? –
      • by the renewing of your mind.
  o This process of renewal,
    ▪ this process of allowing the new man to assert authority and
      control of your life
      • PROVES the good and acceptable will of God.
• In other words, it establishes the evidence of the reality that has already been
  spoken over your life.
  o When you were saved, you were declared to be unleavened
    ▪ – now don’t yield yourself to the influence of the leaven,
      • but rather give yourself to the renewal of the new lump!
      • So that you may prove what God has already spoken
        over your life to be true!

Daily living for God,
• daily walking with God,
  o daily seeking the presence of God,
• these things crowd out the old influence
  o and establish the power of the new.
• The Old leaven in your life is the influence of who you used to be before you
  came to Calvary.
  o The little lump is the corrupting influence that used have full
    authority over your life.
    ▪ The sins that used to have you bound,
    ▪ the habits that used to control you,
    ▪ the patterns of thought that once held you captive,
    ▪ the way of life that kept you from becoming what God wanted
      you to be.
• So Paul commands us to “CLEAN OUT” the corrupting influence of the Old
  man.
  o Purge Out the old leaven.
Go thorough your life and search out the corrupting influences that used to have you bound and get rid of them!
Clean out the sin and vice that corrupt your soul,
get rid of the footholds that you had yielded in your life to the influences of sin.
Get rid of it.
Clean up your life!

Some folks struggle to live for God, even after they’ve been filled with the Holy Ghost because they never “clean out their lives.

- They never break the old ties that used to bind them.
  - I told someone this week that if you used to be a drunk
    - and you don’t want to be a drunk anymore
    - then you don’t hang out in bars.
- If you want the change that God has made in your life to be permanent,
  - if you don’t want to fall back under the influence of sin in your life,
    - then you have to be willing to make some changes.
- You have to search your life,
  - clean up your act,
    - get rid of the leaven in your life!

This isn’t something that you do once and then your finished with it.
- There’s nobody that can sit back on a pew tonight and feel all-smug and say, yeah I’m so glad that I’ve already done that.
  - There was a reason why God wanted the Israelites to revisit the feast of unleavened bread each year.
    - Because you must remain vigilant against the enemy of your soul or he will creep back in!
    - You must search your life, not just once,
      - not even just once a year.
      - This is a lifestyle.
- Make no mistake about it, the old man will kill you.
  - The old leaven will hold you back.
    - The influence of your old life will rob you of the opportunity to ever achieve God’s will for your new life.
- If you attempt to live for God and maintain the old influences in your life
  - it will thwart every effort you make to grow in God.
- A little of the old lump is all it takes to completely sour the new lump!
  - You will never achieve God’s plan and purpose for your life as long as you keep mixing the corrupting influence of the old lump into the new!

In the Jewish tradition, the process of searching the home and cleansing it of all leaven was something that started weeks before the actual feast.
- At the beginning of the month they would begin to scour their house,
from top to bottom, in a sincere effort to remove all leaven from their home.

* It was a diligent search.
  o It wasn’t taken lightly
    ▪ and it wasn’t carried out half-heartedly.

* With all seriousness,
  o recognizing the gravity of the task,
    ▪ they searched throughout their entire house
      • for days and even weeks before the feast
      • to insure that there was no hidden source of leaven in their homes.

* They spent many hours searching every hidden place,
  o every dark corner,
    ▪ because they recognized the powerful influence
      ▪ that just a little bit of the old lump could wield over the new.

* Then finally, when the first day of the feast arrived,
  o on the day after the Passover,
    ▪ they would, with great gravity,
      ▪ light a candle and search again,
        • one final time, throughout the whole house.

* That candle light search was more than just ceremony;
  o it was a serious effort to cleanse their homes.
    ▪ They shined the light into every nook and crevice in their home to insure that all of the leaven was removed.

The Travesty
At the end of verse 7 Paul makes another very powerful argument.

* He says, “For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.”
  o What he is saying is, “Look, our Passover lamb has already been slain, the Passover feast has already begun.
  o Jesus Christ was the lamb of God
    ▪ and his death has cleansed us from all sin.
  o We’ve already experienced the powerful spiritual application of the Passover in our lives.
    ▪ But, in the midst of such wonderful news,
    ▪ its quite a contradiction
    ▪ that we haven’t yet begun the process of cleaning out the old leaven.

* He’s saying, you guys are quick to accept Christ as the Passover lamb in your life,
  o you are quick to recognize his powerful influence over sin
    ▪ but you’ve failed to apply the rest of the Passover feast.

* You can’t just have the lamb and ignore the rest.
  o If Christ is really your Passover lamb
    ▪ then you will purify your life!
• You will cleanse yourself of the old leaven,
  o you will purge your life,
    ▪ your home,
    ▪ your heart from the corrupting influence of sin!

**Fresh Start**
Consider this, the practice of always carrying forward a starter lump of dough from the previous days baking wasn’t really that sanitary.
• Over the course of time the different germs and dirt and disease that a family encountered
  o were constantly being recycled back into their lives
    ▪ from the bread that was made each day.
• Because of this, the feast of the unleavened bread was recognized as a Fresh Start to a new year.
  o The old leaven was taken out and burned,
    ▪ any leaven that was found in their homes during the search was taken out and burned.
• And every home started fresh with a brand new batch of bread
  o that would be free from the germs and dirt and disease that may have infested the old batch.

That’s really what a walk with God is all about.
• It’s a fresh start.
  o It’s a new opportunity.
• God gives you a new heart,
  o a renewed life,
    ▪ and makes you into a brand new man.
• When you come to the altar and repent of your sins,
  o you get to start all over again.
    ▪ It’s a fresh start.
• But you must recognize that you can’t mix the new life with the old influences.
  o Not only would it be unsanitary,
    ▪ it would be quite silly, to go to the trouble of making fresh, new dough for your bread
      ▪ but then to go back and add to it the corrupting influence of the old leaven.
  o New creatures aren’t made to live under old influences.
  o New creatures aren’t created to be bound to the old life.
  o You are a new creature in Christ!

The problem is that some folks come to the altar,
• have a conversion experience
  o and walk away a new man
    ▪ but they never grow in the Lord.
• Instead they find themselves back at the altar,
o seeking another fresh start.
  ▪ And another.
    • And another.
    • Over and over again.
• Why?
  o Because they keep mixing the old leaven into the new lump.
    ▪ Make no mistake, when you mix in the old leaven,
      • it immediately begins to change the nature of the new lump
        o back into the corrupted nature of the old lump.
  • And, it only takes a little leaven to leaven the whole lump!

Keep The Feast
Verse 8 contains the second command to rise from this understanding about leaven.
• Paul tells the New Testament Church, “Let us keep the feast.”
  o According to the Greek scholars, the presence of the continual present tense of this phrase implies
    ▪ that we “continually” keep this feast every day of our lives.
• In other words, Paul isn’t saying,
  o let us set aside one day each year to search our lives
    ▪ and separate ourselves from the corrupting influence of sin.
• He’s saying, let us continue the practice, every day that we live!
  o As New Testament Christians
    ▪ our Passover feast is not something that takes up one week of each year,
      • it is a reality every day of our lives.
• Likewise, the admonishment to search our lives
  o and purify ourselves of the corrupting influences of the world
    ▪ is not something that we should do just every so often,
    ▪ it is something that should be a part of our daily living for God.
• So Paul says, let us continue Let us keep the feast.
  o Let us continue in this practice.

Close
Pentecostals of Lake City, I feel very strongly that God has admonished me to call your attention to the fact
• that you will never be the people that He has called you to be
  o until you break free from the leavening influences in your life.
• I believe that it is time,
  o at the start of a new year,
    ▪ to break out the candle
    ▪ and let the light of truth shine into our hearts.
• I am calling each family and every Christian
  o to start this year in much the same manner as the ancient Israelites started theirs,
- Let us search our lives,
- let seek out the strongholds of worldly, sinful, carnal influence in our lives
- and let us purge ourselves of all the old leaven.

- The presence of the old lump will always keep the new lump from ever being what it was created to be.
  - God is calling us to purify ourselves,
  - to purge our lives,
    - cleanse ourselves from the worldly, sinful, leavening influences
    - that we have allowed over time to creep into our lives.

- Its time to build again the altars.
  - Its time to bring prayer back to the forefront of who and what we are as a people.
    - Its time to renew our commitment to prayer.
    - Both in our homes and in our church services.
  - If you have a role of any type in the service – musician, praise singer, worship leader –
    - I charge you to make prayer a priority every service BEFORE you step on this platform.
  - We’ve allowed ourselves to become too casual about ministry.
    - We’ve allowed ourselves to become to complacent about prayer.
      - Its time to cleanse ourselves,
        - to put aside the influence of our flesh
        - and embrace the power of the spirit.

- Its time to reestablish our commitment to the word of God.
  - We need to bring Bible reading and family devotions back to our homes.
    - Back to our families.
      - We have time for so many other things,
      - its high time that we made time to pray together,
      - to read the bible together and to study god’s word together!

- These next two weeks are going to be a time of rededication for the church.
  - Let us start this year by searching out the influence of hidden sin in our lives.
    - Let us start this year by removing the influence of worldliness in our lives.
  - I’m calling you to prayer tonight
    - and to a time of dedication over the next two weeks.
  - Two weeks from tonight we are going to take communion in our Sunday evening service.
    - I admonish you now to begin to prepare yourself.
      - Put aside sin.
      - Put aside worldliness.
- Prepare yourselves to embrace the plan and promise of God for your life.

You have a promised future – this church has a promised future – but the old leaven is holding us back!
  - IT is time to purge it, to clean out our lives!