

# “The Forever Festival”

1 Corinthians 5:7-8

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SERMON 1908

by Michael David Henson

The sermon text is from 1 Corinthians 5:7b-8, “For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. <sup>8</sup>Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”

Grace and peace to you from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

With the words “For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us,” the Apostle Paul is announcing a new reality for believers in Christ! That new reality means that there is going to be changes for the believer. As it turns out, those changes are going to be permanent, and will not pass away. St. Paul is exhorting the Corinthians and us to keep a “Forever Festival.” Furthermore, he tells us what that forever festival should include and not include.” With that introduction as our map, let us begin.

Of course, the Passover sacrifice included the killing of a lamb, but that was not all. **The Passover lamb was more than just a death, it was a sacrificial death.** What’s the difference? On Thursday evening I received some yard signs that said, “He is risen.” I might have put my sign up right away, but with the next day being Good Friday, I decided not to do it. I joked with my kids that we should put up a sign for Good Friday that said, “He is dead.” One of my children remarked that it might be better to say, “He died for you.” Exactly. That wording is the difference. One is simply a death. But a sacrificial death is a substitutionary death. A sacrificial death removes a punishment and therefore gives benefits. Jesus’ death was to take away the death which we deserved and give to believers the free gift of eternal life.

All of the Old Testament God-ordained sacrifices were to be substitutionary. An animal was killed, in place of the death of the sinner. In addition to the killing of the animal, some of the meat from the sacrifice was to be consumed by the family who brought it. **Through this meal, the people participated in God’s covenant. They received the provided sacrifice through eating and the blessings through faith in God’s promises.** I spoke about this covenantal relationship a bit in the Maundy Thursday sermon. I explained Jesus words, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood.” (1 Corinthians 11:25). The old covenant was law-based and written on tablets of stone. The people broke it. The new covenant was promised by Jeremiah. It was to be Gospel-based so that it imparted forgiveness and changed the heart and mind.

However, on Thursday, I didn’t mention that in every Old Testament sacrifice, the people were not to drink the blood.

Leviticus 17:11 says, “For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.”

When Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper and told the disciples to drink his blood, that should have raised some eyebrows. Jesus’ new covenant was different, because it gave out the fruits of His sacrifice—the forgiveness of sins. Unlike the blood of the Old

Testament sacrifices, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world is the fulfillment of them all. He is the one in whose blood IS eternal life. His blood makes atonement for your sins. He gives us the new covenant in His Blood.

In 1 Corinthians 5, St. Paul uses the Passover sacrifice as a foundation, but he is not content to simply scratch the surface. **He wants us to understand the reference to Christ as our Passover at a much deeper level.** The eating of the Passover meal within the blood-stained door posts resulted in the angel of death passing over the house. And then before the next morning was complete, the Egyptians were hurrying the Israelites out of their county. They took their bread unleavened as it was and got out of the country. God's people were free. This is a type of Christ's Passover from death to life.

**When St. Paul says, "For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us," it includes not only the cause, but also the effect. It includes not just the death, but the resurrection.** Christ's sacrifice brings us a resurrection and life. Of course, the sacrifice brings death to an end, but Christ's sacrifice also brings a life that will never end.

--Christ's cry, "It is finished," brings with it "Christ is risen!"

--The sacrifice of death brings with it a new reality of life.

--Christ, our Passover removes the sting of death and produces a joy-filled resurrection from the dead.

Because of the death and the resulting resurrection of Christ, we have a new life. St. Paul's words, "Therefore let us keep the feast..." is not simply telling the believer to come to church on Easter Sunday. If that is all that is changed, then what a pitifully small benefit. No, **Christ's resurrection, the proof of Christ's accepted sacrifice before the Father, has continuing benefits.** It removes the wrath of God for my sins. It gives me a resurrection from the dead. It gives me an eternal dwelling with God. **It gives me a forever festival to celebrate!**

Now I am deeply disappointed that we were not allowed to gather this Holy Week and Easter Sunday to receive God's gifts and give thanks and praise to our Redeemer, who has risen from the dead. Nevertheless, when St. Paul tells us to "keep the feast," he is speaking of the entire life of the believer. **This feast is holding to faith in Christ as we live our Christian life in joy and peace, looking forward to the hope of the resurrection from the dead.** I have heard several people tell me about how they heard someone else make a profession of their faith. While at the store, a worker said, "I'm here working because I'm not afraid of dying. I believe in Jesus Christ, who will take me to heaven."

As Christians, we live in the time of that forever feast. We have heard the message and believe in Christ as our Savior from sin. Having been baptized into Christ, there is no time in which we are ever without the risen Christ. In the not-too-distant past we have received our Lord's blood of the new testament, and those benefits do not expire. His food still gives eternal benefits. We take necessary precautions, but we do what we need to do to serve our neighbor. With Christ as Our Passover, we can be content no matter our condition (Phil 4:11). 1 Timothy 6:8 says, "And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content."

Whether we are sheltering at home or traveling the world, we keep the feast. Whether our food is being brought to us or we are serving our neighbor who is at home, we are keeping the feast of Christ through faith in our heart. We are serving our

neighbor and trusting in Christ who has brought us over from death to life.

**Psalm 118** describe the words of the Christian heart which says, “

<sup>14</sup>The Lord is my strength and song, And He has become my salvation.

<sup>15</sup>The voice of rejoicing and salvation Is in the tents of the righteous; The right hand of the Lord does valiantly.

<sup>16</sup>The right hand of the Lord is exalted; The right hand of the Lord does valiantly.

<sup>17</sup>I shall not die, but live, And declare the works of the Lord.

<sup>18</sup>The Lord has chastened me severely, But He has not given me over to death.”

(Psalm 118:14-18)

**Will there be trials and chastening?** Yes, to strengthen our faith. Like Mary at the tomb on Easter morning, the transition to living in the feast of Christ’s Passover from death to life might involve some trembling. We don’t always know how to proceed in new situations or afflictions. Nevertheless, we have been rescued from death.

Believing Job, who went through the most difficult trials knew the joy of the Passover from death to life. He made mistakes in trying to figure it out, but he said,

“I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God. Whom I shall see for myself. And my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!”

I need to teach you **one more thing**. St. Paul uses the account of the Old Testament Passover to tell us **what that forever festival should include and not include**. In this week’s readings from Our Family Daily Prayers we learned about the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread from Exodus 12. When the Lord gave directions to commemorate the Exodus, He told them,

“For seven days no leaven shall be found in your houses, since whoever eats what is leavened, that same person shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he is a stranger or a native of the land. <sup>20</sup>You shall eat nothing leavened; in all your dwellings you shall eat unleavened bread” (v. 19-20).

St. Paul applies the seven-day Old Testament feast to the forever feast of the New Testament church saying,

“Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”

Because a little leaven works its way through a whole loaf, leaven has become a symbol of sin. **The forever feast, which follows our Lord’s Passover, is not a partaking in the leaven of malice and wickedness.** Left unchecked by confession and forgiveness, sin will infect our whole life. The Christian who is living in the forever feast, does not live in a life of sin. The Christian confesses and turns away from malice and wickedness. We are kind and gentle and help our neighbor in their need. Those who have been set free from sin, do not return to it. We love to receive the words of absolution, the message of the forgiveness of sins.

Second, those who are **believers eat “the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”** We do not feign to believe, but come to God with sincerity. That word, sincerity, means that there is to be no admixture of foreign substances. It teaches not to hold on to our sin even while we worship God. Our worship is not outwardly pretty words and Easter dresses. Our feast is not uttered words, while our hearts are far away. We cannot have two masters. **Our worship is to be pure and undefiled.**

We are to be honest about our thoughts, words and deeds. If we are strong then

we give thanks for his help. If we are struggling with our faith, then we come to God asking for help. He has promised, "A smoldering wick He will not snuff out." Our Lord has defeated death and passed over to an eternal life. Having defeated all His enemies, He can bring you to celebrate the forever feast of faith in Christ.

**Finally, when we have opportunity, we hear the truth read and taught.**

God's truth is found In His Word. You have the Word. Job's desires have come true. He said, "Oh, that my words were written. Oh, that they were inscribed in a book!" We even have the words of the angel sent from heaven. "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen!" There is one sure way not to let false doctrine gain a foothold. Have the Word of God forever ringing in your ears.

That word of God tells us that there was a death, because all had gone astray. Nevertheless, there is One who passed over from death to life. Through faith in Christ we share in His new life. We keep the forever feast and we eat the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.