

1 Corinthians 5:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?

Analysis

Your glorying is not good (οὐ καλὸν τὸ καύχημα ὑμῶν)—their boasting about spiritual superiority, knowledge, or tolerance was misplaced. True spiritual maturity produces humility and grief over sin, not arrogance. **Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?**—Paul introduces the leaven metaphor, drawing on Jewish Passover imagery. Zyme (ζύμη, "leaven, yeast") represents sin's pervasive, corrupting influence.

The principle is organic and inevitable: small amounts of leaven ferment entire batches of dough. Similarly, tolerated sin spreads through the community, normalizing immorality and weakening witness. The rhetorical question "Know ye not?" implies this should be obvious—elementary spiritual knowledge. Their pride blinded them to a basic truth: holiness is corporate, not merely individual. One person's persistent, public sin affects the entire body, requiring decisive action to preserve communal purity.

Historical Context

Leaven appears throughout Scripture as a symbol of corruption and sin (Ex. 12:15-20; Matt. 16:6-12; Gal. 5:9). During Passover, Jews meticulously removed all leaven from their homes, symbolizing separation from Egypt's corruption. Paul applies this imagery to the church as God's holy community, called to remove the 'leaven' of sin.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. What 'small' sins are you tolerating that might be spreading their influence in your life?
2. How does the corporate nature of holiness challenge Western individualism in your faith?
3. Do you view church discipline as protecting the community or merely punishing individuals?

Interlinear Text

οὐκ	καλὸν	τὸ	καύχημα	ὑμῶν	οὐκ	οἴδατε	ὅτι	μικρὰ
is not	good	G3588	glorying	Your	is not	Know ye	that	a little
G3756	G2570		G2745	G5216	G3756	G1492	G3754	G3398

ζύμη	ὅλον	τὸ	φύραμα	ζυμοῖ
leaven	the whole	G3588	lump	leaveneth
G2219	G3650		G5445	G2220

Additional Cross-References

1 Corinthians 15:33 (Good): Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.

James 4:16 (Parallel theme): But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil.

Galatians 5:9 (Parallel theme): A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.

1 Corinthians 5:2 (Parallel theme): And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you.

Matthew 13:33 (Parallel theme): Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.

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