



"Duty makes us do things well, but love makes us do them beautifully."

—Phillips Brooks

18-Apr-14

The Unleavened Bread of Perfection

Thirty-nine years ago, I observed the [Feast of Unleavened Bread](#) for the first time. I remember during those early years, getting the leaven out was heavily stressed. Understanding that leaven represents [sin](#) and corruption, we were taught that this feast represented the putting away of sin. We were to clean our lives of it. So, before the feast arrived, we diligently cleaned our houses and automobiles of everything that contained leaven, and during it, we were careful not to eat anything that contains leaven. Our primary focus then was keeping the leaven out.

Should that be what we concentrate on during the Feast of Unleavened Bread? Do not misunderstand, keeping the leaven out is very important in its own right. However, our primary focus, it seems, should not be on the leavened bread but on the *unleavened* bread.

Many years ago, an elder stated in his sermon that we did not have to eat unleavened bread every day during the feast, but if we were to eat bread, it had to be unleavened. I asked him about this after services, bringing up that Scripture says that we are to eat unleavened bread for seven days. He defended his statement, of course, repeating what he had said earlier. I did

not agree with him; my family continued to eat unleavened bread every day of the feast.

[God](#) emphasizes the command to eat unleavened bread repeatedly:

Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses. For whoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel. . . . In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at evening, *you shall eat unleavened bread*, until the twenty-first day of the month at evening. . . . You shall eat nothing leavened; in all your dwellings *you shall eat unleavened bread*. ([Exodus 12:15](#), 18, 20; emphasis ours throughout)

Similar commands are found in [Exodus 13:6-7](#); [23:15](#); [34:18](#); [Leviticus 23:6](#); [Numbers 28:17](#); [Deuteronomy 16:8](#); and [Ezekiel 45:21](#). We see from these scriptures that eating unleavened bread is a primary focus. We need to understand what it means to us.

[Hebrews 6:1](#) provides a starting point: "Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of [repentance](#). . . ." According to *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon*, the words *let us go on* mean "to carry some burden," "to bear with oneself," or "to move by bearing." It can also suggest "to endure," "to endure the rigor of a thing," or "to bear patiently one's conduct." Jesus says, "He who endures to the end shall be saved" ([Matthew 24:13](#)). It seems that the writer of Hebrews is warning that we may have to suffer a bit to reach perfection.

This should come as no surprise since Jesus, the One whose example we follow, walked this road: "For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings" ([Hebrews 2:10](#); see also [Hebrews 5:8-9](#)). What about the apostle Paul? He writes in [Philippians 3:8](#), 10-14:

Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the

loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ . . . that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the [resurrection from the dead](#). Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

What is the goal? It is to be perfected in Christ Jesus! That is the heart and core of the lesson of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which is why our primary focus needs to be on the eating of the unleavened bread. Unleavened bread is symbolic of that perfect unleavened bread from heaven, [Jesus Christ \(John 6:32-33, 48-51\)](#).

In [Psalm 138:7-8](#), David combines these two thoughts of suffering and perfection:

Though I walk in the midst of trouble, You will revive me; You will stretch out Your hand against the wrath of my enemies, and Your right hand will save me. The LORD will perfect that which concerns me; Your mercy, O LORD, endures forever; do not forsake the works of Your hands.

This is why we eat the unleavened bread. It is the message of [Ephesians 2:10](#): "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." Eating the unleavened bread reminds us that we are to become unleavened, to be purified, to be perfected!

So what are we to be perfected in? It can be summed up in one word, [love](#). God is love ([I John 4:8](#), 16). He is fashioning, shaping, and molding us into the likeness of His Son, Jesus Christ, changing our human nature, filled with lusts and sin, into His divine nature, which is love. Notice [I John 2:3-5](#):

Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep his commandments. He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him.

The apostle John states in [I John 3:2](#) that, when Christ returns for us, we will see Him as He is because we will be like Him. We will have been perfected in love! This is why our primary focus during the Feast of Unleavened Bread should be on the eating of unleavened bread, symbolic of that perfect Unleavened Bread of Life from heaven, Jesus Christ. Our eating of it for *seven* days also depicts perfection because in Scripture the number seven symbolizes perfection.

In [II Peter 1:5-7](#), Peter writes about adding virtue to our [faith](#), knowledge to our virtue, and so on. It is a kind of outline of the conversion process. The final step he mentions is adding love. In the resurrection, when we are finally perfected in love and have received an incorruptible body, we will no longer sin because we will be love like God is love, and our perfect love will not allow us to sin, just as God does not sin. Won't that be wonderful?

All the hard work we put into cleaning our houses and automobiles of leaven profits us nothing unless we are putting that symbolic act to work, doing our part to replace our sinful, carnal nature with the divine nature of God, which is love. This is what the Feast of Unleavened Bread is all about! Remember the words of our Savior in this regard, "Therefore you shall be perfect [in love!], just as your Father in heaven is perfect" ([Matthew 5:48](#)).

- Clyde Finklea

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[Love's Greatest Challenges](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

Laziness and fear are the greatest challenges to love. When Protestant theologians disparage "works," connecting them to salvation rather than sanctification and growth, they encourage spiritual laziness. If we are lazy, we might still be saved, but we will have built nothing to fulfill God's purpose in us. If we refuse to work hard at character building, the principle of entropy will turn our efforts into a state of disorganization. If we make no effort to overcome, the principle of inertia will keep us going in the same way we have allowed ourselves to drift. An irrational fear of loss prevents the development of agape love within us—we fear that keeping God's commandments will cause us to lose something valuable. Like a musician who practices everyday, by continual effort at commandment keeping, we will soon develop feelings of confidence by knowing what we are doing is right (I John 3:17-19; John 15:9-10).

From the Archives: Featured Article

[Remaining Unleavened](#)

by John O. Reid

We have a tendency to put matters behind us once we are finished with them, but we cannot afford to do this with the lessons we learn from the Days of Unleavened Bread. John Reid shows that those lessons are eternal!

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