

Leavening: The Types

Recongnizing Leavening

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We are going to begin with two scriptures and just read them back-to-back very quickly. The first one was one that we went through during the Passover service, and I am sure that everywhere it was held this scripture was read:

John 13:15-17 "For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. "Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. [Verse 17 is the verse I really want here.] "If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.

—with the emphasis on "if you do them" and the fact that they are going to produce something that is very good, enjoyable, and right. God certainly intends that we have it and that it is a blessing from doing His way.

James 1:25 But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the word, this one will be blessed in what he does.

In terms of rituals and ceremonies, God has not given us very many things like this to do, like the footwashing or putting leavening out of our homes. There are not very many requirements along those lines for us and His way of life.

I understand that in certain areas in the church of God that the cleaning of leaven from ones home is looked upon as something that is "unfashionable"—that would probably be the best way of looking at it—and that one major church of God is considering eliminating the footwashing. I understand that they decided not to do it this year but it is like it is on hold and I would

imagine that maybe they want to gradually introduce the idea to the membership of the church, and by the time next Passover rolls around, if their present plans continue, that group will not be doing the foot washing.

It is very plain there in John 13 that Jesus did it and that He commanded His disciples to do it—and we are His disciples and we are supposed to do it. So I think we need to ask the question, why continue to go over these days and the practices that are part of the tradition of the church of God? To others it is almost as though they have become to them a tired tradition and that [the practices] no longer serve any purpose.

The reason that God wants us to go over these things and continue to do them is because they are a very good teaching experience. It is one thing to learn something by reading it in a book and to have that become a part of our mind, a part of our memory, but it is another thing altogether to have a practice ingrained in one's mind. A practice ingrained in one's mind is a far more effective teacher than just merely reading something in a book.

We have to keep going over them and over them and over them, do we not? Even though we do them we still, every Days of Unleavened Bread, receive some instructions regarding the theme of the Days of Unleavened Bread and so we talk about getting leavening out, getting sin out, we may even talk about doing the footwashing.

The reason for that is because we do not learn something so that it is ingrained in our character by doing it one time. Another reason is that these types and symbols and practices are multifaceted in terms of what they teach us. One year we may learn one thing, another year we remember what it was that we learned last year and something else is added that we did not understand before and so on.

Each year, a little bit more of the picture becomes more deeply ingrained in our understanding and therefore, part of our mind, and therefore, part of our operating procedure. They become the basis for our judgments, the basis for the choices that we make, but only if we are positively doing them and see them for what they are intended to be. So our constant repetition of these things is because God understands human nature. It is very easy for our memories to become dulled.

Do you realize that—I have been told, and I have read this, and in my own experience—maybe the figure that I am going to give to you is very generous—but I understand that when we hear something, like a sermon or a lecture in college class or whatever it might be, that within twenty four hours we have forgotten ninety percent of it?

I say that might be generous. With me I forget ninety-five to ninety-nine percent of it and maybe remember one percent. Sometimes I think that I am getting so old that things that happen fifteen minutes ago, I have forgotten already, like it slipped my mind. This morning I forgot my "preaching" glasses. They were right on my desk. I have a special pair of glasses that I use for preaching because I can see from a distance a little bit better. Not only that, I forgot the list of songs we were supposed to sing. I declare that if I did not have a wife who walks after me I would forget probably about 90 percent of the things that I am supposed to do. It is a good thing that God blessed me with her.

The same principle is at work with God's holy days. God has us repeat things over and over again because we have this tendency to forget things so easily.

We will see an example of this from the Israelites in Psalm 78. Taken together they tell quite a story regarding memory.

Psalm 78:40-57 How often they provoked Him in the wilderness, and grieved Him in the desert! Yes, again and again they tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel. They did not remember His power: The day when He redeemed them from the enemy, when He worked His signs in Egypt, and His wonders in the field of Zoan; turned their rivers into blood, and their streams, that they could not drink. He sent swarms of flies among them, which devoured them, and frogs, which destroyed them. He also gave their crops to the caterpillar, and their labor to the locust. He destroyed their vines with hail, and their sycamore trees with frost. He also gave up their cattle to the hail, and their flocks to fiery lightning. He cast on them the fierceness of His anger, wrath, indignation, and trouble, by sending angels of destruction among them. He made a path for His anger; He did not spare their soul

from death, but gave their life over to the plague, and destroyed all the firstborn in Egypt, the first of their strength in the tents of Ham. But He made His own people go forth like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock; and He led them on safely, so that they did not fear; but the sea overwhelmed their enemies. And He brought them to His holy border, this mountain which His right hand had acquired. He also drove out the nations before them, allotted them an inheritance by survey, and made the tribes of Israel dwell in their tents. Yet they tested and provoked the Most High God, and did not keep His testimonies, but turned back and acted unfaithfully like their fathers; they were turned aside like a deceitful bow.

It is entirely possible that one of the reasons that Israel had the difficulty that they had was because they were bystanders, looking on at what was going on in the lives of those hapless Egyptians that God—whose power He was breaking and the pride that He was destroying—was doing. They did not have to do very much at that time but stand aside and watch God work.

In what we are involved, we find that God is putting us through drills, if I can put it that way, and that we have to go over things very frequently. We can also add to this that mankind is "thick" where God is concerned. Does not Romans 8:7 say that "the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God neither indeed can be"?

There is a natural resistance to the things of God and that is largely because we are so self-centered. Our world usually consists of that which is going on around us and so that is what our mind is focused on. Those are the kind of things that we remember and most of those things are what we are caught up in the everyday rush of events. And so events like the Holy Days, and their traditions and practices must be commanded by God to be repeated over and over for many years so they will motivate us to good and positive things in relation to Him.

Just a bit further back in Exodus 13 and we will put ourselves right in to the midst of an event that occurred right after the children of Israel came out of Egypt.

Exodus 13:3 And Moses said to the people: "Remember this day in which you went out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the Lord brought you out of this place. No leavened bread shall be eaten."

If you learn anything about the Days of Unleavened Bread, there should be a relationship that is made between slavery and leavening, freedom and unleavened products. That is the lesson, the symbol, the major type of the Days of Unleavened Bread and we eat unleavened bread because of those concepts that He is getting across to us through this object lesson that He put the children of Israel through.

Exodus 13:4-10 "On this day you are going out, in the month Abib. And it shall be, when the Lord brings you into the land of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, which He swore to your fathers to give you, a land flowing with milk and honey, that you shall keep this service in this month. [That is eating things unleavened for this week.] Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a feast to the Lord. Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days. And no leavened bread shall be seen among you, nor shall leaven be seen among you in all your quarters. And you shall tell your son in that day, saying, 'This is done because of what the Lord did for me when I came up from Egypt.' [What did He do? He gave them political liberty, a type of spiritual liberty. He freed them from their bondage.] It shall be as a sign to you on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes, that the Lord's law [or instruction] may be in your mouth; for with a strong hand the Lord has brought you out of Egypt. You shall therefore keep this ordinance in its season from year to year. . .

Exodus 13:16 It shall be as a sign on your hand and as frontlets between your eyes, for by strength of hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt."

Verse 16 means, "You must keep these things in mind." He has given us then an exercise, a drill to help keep these things in mind. The drill, the exercise is

getting rid of leaven and not eating leaven during these days and they are to remind us that we are free, and because we are free, there is an obligation and that obligation has to do with not sinning, you see, which leaven represents because that is what is going to keep us free from bondage: not sinning.

In chapter 14, the story continues:

Exodus 14:10-13 And when Pharaoh drew near, the children of Israel lifted their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians marched after them. So they were very afraid, and the children of Israel cried out to the Lord. Then they said to Moses, "Because there were no graves in Egypt, have you taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you so dealt with us, to bring us up out of Egypt? "Is this not the word that we told you in Egypt, saying, 'Let us alone that we may serve the Egyptians?' For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than that we should die in the wilderness." And Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see again no more forever."

It seems that they had forgotten what happened in Egypt. They had not really forgotten the events. The events, I am sure were fresh in their mind, but they never either learned, or if they had learned, they forgot the lesson. It's like I said last week: Israel believed that God existed. Israel believed that He had worked in their behalf but somehow or another, it never translated into a faith that will save.

The same thing can happen to us. It is less likely to occur though because God has given us His Spirit. But we have a responsibility to search out the lessons for the Days of Unleavened Bread and Passover and all the other days. The drills that God puts us through has to do with the lesson and inscribing that upon our mind.

It is interesting that the word "character" means, "to be inscribed upon; to be cut into stone." So it is the lessons that we want to make sure that we understand and of course then the tradition, the ritual, is given by God to

help enforce that, reinforce it, and make sure that it becomes inscribed on our minds.

So the events that involved God's liberation of them from their bondage should have been a learning experience to change their lives, but since they did not learn the lesson, it never translated then into a living faith.

Another place where this is reinforced is Deuteronomy 16:3-4. You may remember from the sermon on the last Sabbath that these verses do not pertain to the Passover itself, the festival, but rather they apply to the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Deuteronomy 16:3-4 You shall eat no leavened bread with it; seven days you shall eat unleavened bread with it, that is, the bread of affliction (for you came out of the land of Egypt in haste), that you may remember [there it is, "that you may remember"] the day in which you came out of the land of Egypt all the days of your life. [Eating unleavened bread has to do with reinforcing our memory of liberation.] And no leaven shall be seen among you in all your territory for seven days, nor shall any of the meat which you sacrifice the first day at twilight remain overnight until morning.

If we are going to get anything valuable from this experience it is going to come because it has affected our memory of the spiritual things that are involved with this day, because if we do that then it is going to be a more vivid object lesson. That is what the putting out of leaven is for us, it is an object lesson for you and me, something that we are told to actively do in order to enforce the teaching that is there.

I will give you an example here. To me it is a vivid example—maybe not quite so vivid to you—of how deeply involved someone can become in the activity that they are doing, but to me this is a telling illustration because I am interested in athletics.

I have heard baseball pitchers, who just pitched a whole game, being interviewed by somebody on the radio or television. When you consider that that man pitched to a whole team. Let us say the opposing batters got up thirty-five or forty times during the game, I mean cumulatively. The man, if

he pitched the entire game, would have thrown probably somewhere near one hundred pitches. If it was a game in which he had to pitch a great deal more because he was a little bit wild and gave up some walks, he might be pitching 125, 130, 140 pitches in a game, and yet he can remember every pitch to every batter. He could tell you what kind of a pitch it was; tell where it was in relation to the batter—whether it was over the plate, whether it was a little bit outside, a little bit inside. It is burned into his memory, every pitch that he threw. That was because he was actively involved and he was concentrating on what he was doing.

If an athlete can do that, it is certainly possible for every one of us to vividly experience whatever it is that we are going through to such depth that we acutely remember what it is that we are doing. God hopes that will occur. We know in reality it does not occur and the reason it does not is because our mind is not as acutely involved as it should be, and that is why my wife has to follow me around everywhere or I would forget my head on occasions because it is distracted with other things.

We get distracted by what we are doing. Most of the time it is not a terrible thing, but again, I am trying to reinforce by this illustration why God makes us do these things over and over and over again, so that they will become deeply inscribed as part of our character and we will get the lesson of what it is that we are going through.

Now let us begin to turn to something that is a part of this principle and go back to the New Testament in Matthew 16.

Matthew 16:6-12 Then Jesus said to them, "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees." And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "It is because we have taken no bread." But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, "O you of little faith, why do you reason among yourselves because you have brought no bread? Do you not yet understand, or remember the five loaves of the five thousand and how many baskets you took up? Nor the seven loaves of the four thousand and how many large baskets you took up? How is it you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread?—but to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." Then they understood that He did not

tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

What is it that brought us into our spiritual bondage? It was teaching and that is what doctrine is, doctrine is a teaching. All of us have had religious and spiritual teaching prior to conversion even though we may have never belonged to a church.

There is spiritual teaching out there in the world and we pick it up from family and friends, we pick it up even in business. There is no way that some form of spiritual teaching cannot come into our mind because Satan is the ruler of this world and he is a spirit being. His spirit permeates this entire earth and we are going to have spiritual teaching whether we like it or not, whether we were ever part of a church, whether we were ever religious or not.

Jesus said, "To beware of the leaven, beware of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees." So if we can just get the lesson and understand what it is that has brought us into bondage is the spiritual teaching that we received prior to converting to the truth. What He also tells us here, without saying it directly, is that leavening is something that is ingested so that it becomes a part of us. And we have to add one more thing that is not here directly, but indirectly—leaven is bad in a spiritual sense, otherwise why would Jesus say "beware"?

There is nowhere in the Bible that God calls His Word leaven. It is just not there, because the two do not equate. It would be like an oxymoron which sort of tells you two things at the same time, something that is impossible. Leaven, therefore, is something that could lead to disaster in terms of remembering or getting a lesson and it is also a symbol of something that could be innocently ingested.

These disciples were not even aware that they were taking in something that was bad for them. Even when we were part of the world, we were innocently taking things into us that we did not understand, ignorantly, but they were not good for us, they were bad for us, it was simply a part of society. In fact, what we take in, in regard to spiritual things, may even appear very good and pleasurable.

How many times have you heard, maybe even sung, "give me that old time religion"? Sounds like fun, sounds like it is good, sounds like it is pleasurable, it might even be stimulating. When I was a boy, I attended some Pentecostal churches of God with my grandmother and some of my aunts and uncles and boy, those people were stimulated there. They were fired up. But, you see, if it is leaven, there is no end to its bad consequences even though at the time that it is ingested it seems to be pleasurable and stimulating.

All conduct is the result of what we have learned in the past and nothing will change in our lives unless we remember the lessons of our experiences and consciously choose to do the good now that it is available to us. This is not always easy.

Learning something requires repeated drilling—practice, practice, practice—whenever we are confronted with the responsibility of changing something that was innocently learned in the past. We practice all of our lives until we find out that it needs to be changed, and then reverse what was accepted in the past innocently and willingly. When we go to try to change that, getting that leaven, that old teaching, the doctrines that are false out of there, is difficult to an extreme.

We are not only required to practice, practice, practice, drill, drill, drill by God, doing exercises, but those exercises are designed to ingrain a certain procedure that will produce a certain result that is good, you see, in God's eyes. But all too often the drilling and the practice and the doing of exercises in the past was in the wrong things. Taken in innocently but utterly devastating to character and to attitude and the product was not what God intended.

I Corinthians 5:6-8 [Paul says] Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore [a summary statement] 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.

These verses, again by inference, indirectly teach us something regarding being unleavened. That is, that God has a responsibility but so do we. On the one hand you see in verse 7, we are unleavened. But on the other hand, in the same verse we are told to purge out the old leaven. Is there a contradiction? No, there is not, because God's operation is to merely (if I can put it that way) put us into a state in which He can consider us clean, acceptable, and it is a legal maneuver. It is a legal operation that He does so that we can then approach His throne.

But on the other hand, He wants us to understand that the real cause of the problem, the root of the problem is still with us and it is our responsibility to purge it out. This is why Israel failed in the wilderness—because they brought with them their Egyptian-trained mind and they never did overcome it, they never got rid of it, and so it always affected their conduct and that is why they could not have faith. But we can, with the help of God, get rid of that leaven.

The Days of Unleavened Bread then define our responsibility in God's plan, and that is to purge out the old leaven so that we may be new, that is converted. So we have to purge out the leaven of the old teachings, habits, attitudes, and ways so as to conform with God's doctrines, His habits, His attitudes, and His ways.

Paul says here, "the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." The word "sincerity" (this is more or less just an aside), is a little bit misleading because it tends to give you and me the impression of having good intentions. But how in the world can bread have good intentions? Not so. It means that it is pure, it is undefiled, it is uncontaminated. The Word of God, you see, the truth of God, is uncontaminated. It is unalloyed with anything. That is the basis for becoming unleavened. It has to do with the Word of God.

Titus 2:11-14 (*Moffat translation*) For the grace of God has appeared to save all men and it schools us to renounce irreligion and worldly passions and to live a life of self mastery, of integrity and of piety in this present world, awaiting the blessed hope of the

appearance of the glory of the great God and of our Savior Christ Jesus, who gave Himself up for us to redeem us from all iniquity and to secure Himself a clean people with a zest for good works.

Forgiveness, redemption through Christ's blood, the grace of God, has a long-ranged purpose. We have a tendency to think of grace—rightly so—as God's free gift, unmerited pardon. God does this with a purpose in mind. It is not an end-all for everything, but rather it is only a beginning of a process that will end in whatever it is that God wants to be produced and so grace, though it is free, has a process attached to it.

Moffat reads in such a way so that we see three areas that God wants this process to take place within. He translated them self mastery, integrity, and godliness. They are much more accurate than what we tend to see in the King James or the New King James. But without going into them deeply, the grace of God teaches us, schools us, that we should have self-control, self-mastery. That we should become self-governing and this has to do with a person's control of his own appetites, his own passions, his own feelings.

Integrity has to do with one's relationships with other people. Godliness has to do with one's fellowship with God. It becomes clear, then, that God gives us grace to relieve us of the penalty of our sins against His government so that we can be *changed*. Grace, in effect, becomes a teacher. We begin to see that though grace is freely given, it has a cost to it to those who receive it, and the cost is that the person who receives it has to give his life over to the accomplishment of self-mastery, integrity, and godliness.

Human nature wants the good life, but it neither wants to work to achieve it nor does it want to pay the penalty. God removes the penalty, but we are obligated in return to allow grace to have its work in us to prepare us through self-mastery, integrity, and godliness. Human nature wants the good things, it wants to have the penalty removed, and it wants to be rewarded with good things.

Notice what Moffat said in verse 14, "God is creating a people who are zestful for good works." Grace teaches us that part of the cost is good works required of those who receive it.

Somehow or another, goodness has become equated or synonymous with dullness. If you are good you cannot be any fun, that kind of thing. If you read what Paul says there, he equates goodness with something being an exciting pursuit. Zestful—he uses words like that. Let me tell you something: The world is full of bored people looking for excitement. Where do they look? They try to do novel things, they use stimulants, they seek possessions or power or freedom from obligations.

Do you know what? That is why they are bored. God shows us in this Book of His that the good things of life are not something you chase after, they are the product of doing other things. If you do the right things then the right things will be produced. But if you chase after these things, this excitement then is going to produce the wrong things because they cannot be chased after. They are products of something else.

What is life's purpose? Life's purpose is to prepare for the Kingdom of God through service. It is a life that is bound up in the needs and concerns of others. That is always new and fresh and it is satisfying as well. That is why Christ said in the Passover service, "blessed." It is the Greek word *makarios*, and it means happy. "Happy are you if you *do* them."

Happiness is a byproduct, it is a fruit; it is not something that can be produced by chasing after it, but it is produced by doing the right thing. That is what Jesus said, "happy are you if you do them." You are not happy if you chase after these things. "Happy are you if you do them." Footwashing of course represents the attitude of service.

The greatest leaven of all is the egocentrism of Satan's spirit, which is going to serve the self, do its own thing regardless of its effect on others. So mankind then is very confused about the right way to live, but we have been called out of this, we have been given recognition of this doctrine that we have imbibed in the past. Thinking it even as maybe being good, but it has to be overcome if we are going to get out from under its lingering effects.

To remove doubt from the minds of the called, God has given us this Book and He has given us also the example of His Son. In John 15, on this last night of instruction, He gives His teaching—what He wants to be inscribed upon our minds:

John 15:9-16 "As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; [continue you] abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full. [Joy is a byproduct; joy is something produced by doing what Christ says.] This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. [That is hardly egocentric, just the opposite, this is what is going to produce joy.] You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you. You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you."

He lived according to the instruction in God's own Word. He lived His life by laying it down for His friends—us.

Do not believe those who say that the only thing that matters is one's relationship with God. It is a cliché that I have heard going around: "The only thing that matters is one's relationship with God." It may be said, "It is only me and God." That may be what is actually said.

Did Jesus say that the only thing that matters is our relationship with God? Or did He say, by inference, that if we want to have the good relationship with God, we better love our brother? That is what He said.

When we sin, the sin is against God, but it does nothing against God. Is He affected by it? Can we hurt Him? It may sadden Him to see us do that. No, you see, our sins are committed in the environment with other human beings. They are the ones who are directly hurt by our sins, and that does not make them happy and it does not make us happy either because that is not what will produce joy or happiness.

What am I saying here? I am saying that the way we get the leaven out is primarily through our relationships with other people because that is where the problems really are.

John 14:5-9 Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him." Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us." Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

Jesus is saying that His life is the example of how you can get to where He was going. That is how the chapter began. Where was He going? He was going into the Kingdom of God and so He said, "If you want to get there where I am going, then you follow what I did." It will produce the right things.

If the Father and the Son's positions had been reversed, we can understand from this that the Father would have lived exactly the same way that Jesus did. Do you know why? Because it is the only way that will produce what God is working toward producing. It is the only way to live that makes life worth living eternally. Any other way—conforming to any other teaching or doctrine—will not produce a life that is worth living eternally and that is why God wants conversion.

He wants to share eternity with people who live the way that will produce the things that we want out of life: Joy, a sense of well-being, peace, happiness. You see, those things are fruits of a way. If they are pursued, which is what the leaven of this world teaches us to do, they will not be produced except superficially and for a brief span of time, and then they will dissipate.

Now, sin is deeply-rooted leaven and it is not tolerable to the Kingdom of God because it will not produce the right things and because it has the property of effecting the whole lump.

Look what happened when Helel sinned. Even among those of spirit composition, leaven spread. It does not matter whether one is physical or spirit, leaven has that property. Sin has that property. So God has constituted His purpose so that our character, our heart, our mind has to be set before He gives us eternal life. And then He knows that we will not be tempted to go into a way of living, or to follow a doctrine that will produce the wrong thing. Our mind, our character, will be set so that we will not go that way. We will just automatically reject it should the opportunity present itself.

Again, thinking back on Israel's experience, you can see that they never got rid of it because their mind was not changed while they were in the wilderness.

James 1:21-22 Therefore lay aside all filthiness [a synonym, really, with leaven] and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, [the pure truth of God] which is able to save your souls. [Because it inculcates within us a way of life that will produce the right things.] But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

Anybody who thinks that they are going to please God by doing away with the footwashing service is not going to please God at all because His own Son said we better do it. If we want to be happy, it is part of life, part of the whole way.

James 1:23-24 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.

Why are we doing these things? God has given us an object lesson to help us to remember. We do not want to be forgetful hearers and so God helps us along. He insures that the possibility of us remembering the lessons will be much greater, they will be enhanced because we go through a tradition, a ritual. It is part of His tradition.

James 1:25 But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty. . . .

What are the Days of Unleavened Bread about? It is about liberty and maintaining liberty, hanging on to the state that He has put us into.

James 1:25 . . . and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed [there is that word *makarios* again. Happy.] in what he does.

We all want it, do we not? Sure we do. We all want to be happy, but it is directly tied to getting rid of leaven by doing. A people zestful for good works, a people who consider that they have received grace and that grace carries a price tag and that price tag is giving ourselves over to the development of self mastery, the development of integrity, the development of godliness, and all those things working to put us into the image of the Creator.

Let us look into some types here, things that have to do with leaven and why it is that this is part of the lessons of the day. Type number one is this: God chose for us to put out something that seems to be necessary for life. In Ephesians 4:17, the overall context here involves unity. It is sin that drives apart, that divides congregations.

Ephesians 4:17-24 This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardening of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt [that is what leaven does, it corrupts] according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

The world realizes that sin is bad, but they accept it as a necessary evil. "Well," they say, "that's the way it is. That's the way human nature is." Yes,

that is the way human nature is, but it does not have to be that way. That is just the point of conversion. It does not have to be that way. Mankind is choosing to go that way.

Certainly there is ignorance of the deeper things of God's way. But most of this Western world subscribes to some form of Christianity they supposedly get out of this Book. They call themselves Christian religions. They know enough that if the right steps were taken, it would lead them to God. But they choose to follow human nature. It is necessary to just follow that path.

The world assumes that the perfection of which Paul speaks is impossible. Martin Luther, if you have read any of his works—and I have—bewailed strongly that it was impossible. So did Augustine, the great saint of the Catholic Church, and they came to the conclusion that God has to put up with us because that is the way we are. No, He puts up with us because of what we *can be*, not because of the way we are. He wants us to cooperate with Him and to change. Sin is *not* necessary!

I remember a certain situation where a young fellow said to his grandfather after a particular mess up in the family, or in the business or whatever it was. He just shrugged his shoulders and he said to his grandfather, "Well I guess it takes all kinds," and the grandfather said, "No, it's just that there *are* all kinds." It does not take all kinds. God's Word says that. Yes, human nature has its way and we give in to it, but it does not have to be that way.

So we have to approach the getting rid of sin with the understanding that what God has given us to do is not impossible. Difficult, yes, to get rid of ingrained habits. Difficult, yes, to get rid of the former teaching. Sin seems to be necessary, but it is not. That is a deceitful lie of Satan. Jesus proved it! It is not necessary. Life can be lived without it. Just remember that.

Number two is that leaven is pleasurable to eat and we have to deal with that. Leavening is responsible for qualities in many things that we enjoy that otherwise would not be there and we enjoy these things. Everything from donuts to cakes and pies, all kinds of wonderful tasting pastries. Leaven is even responsible for the wonderful wines that we drink and so we think these things as being what they are.

But look at Hebrews 11:24-25. It is an interesting lesson here:

Hebrews 11:24-25 By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin.

Sin is appealing and it is pleasurable for a while as well. Moses showed us that a man can turn his back on fun even when the pressure against turning is almost to the point of being overwhelming because of the promise that seems to be there. The promise of power, the promise of riches, and all that those things will afford to us.

I know that I have thought from time to time that Moses, probably in a material way, gave up more than any single person ever in the history of this earth (if we want to exclude Christ). Maybe the only other one who came close was Abraham, but he turned his back on it, did he not? He was a well-educated intellectual, a leader, and he knew what power could do, he knew what money could do, but he walked away from it.

Sin appears to be pleasurable and to give one a sense of power, but if something is going to be pleasurable and fun it *always* has to be pleasurable and fun. And Moses knew that the pleasure and fun, the power, the wealth that Egypt would give him would only last until he died or until Egypt came under the heel, was subjugated by, another nation. Now you see what happens is that sin has a catch to it and it turns out to be either a useless vanity or exceedingly painful.

I have a letter that I received from a young lady. She was twenty-two years old when she wrote this, and at the time she wrote it she was living in Bell, California and I was pastoring the Norwalk congregation out there. I do not know what has happened to her. But here are some sentences that she wrote in this letter, just to give you an idea, a concept.

I have been into witchcraft and Satanism for almost seven years. I have had three suicide attempts since November 1972. I had been living with my boyfriend for almost three years but I caught him with another girl, she was sixteen, so I kicked him out. I am now

off welfare because my son is no longer with me, but I got a job, my first one. I earn two dollars an hour and I work forty to forty-eight hours, I bring home sixty-eight dollars per week. I work from ten p.m. to six a.m. I have been suffering from epilepsy since last July; in fact, I had a seizure which lasted over an hour last Saturday night. The doctors could not even control it.

[Now she says she is] on Valium, Phenobarbital, and Dilantin three times a day but the seizures continue. But welfare thought I was on the verge of another breakdown, they average at least five a week. The convulsions lasted for more than an hour and the doctors could not control them either. One thing that really bothers me is the abortion I had last year.

That is far enough, I just wanted to give you an overview. Twenty-two years of "fun." Twenty-two years of doing what seemed right to her. She experienced in twenty-two years what many of us have never experienced in forty, fifty, sixty, seventy, eighty—a lifetime of pain. Was she having fun? That is the fruit of leaven, sin.

Certainly she is perhaps an extreme example. But I think as we move toward the end it is not an extreme example, it is becoming more and more the common example. There is certainly a lesson there contained in this young woman's life of why God wants us to get rid of the leaven. "Well, it seemed pleasurable at the time," but, boy, did it have its kickbacks a little bit later.

Number three is that leaven puffs up.

I Corinthians 8:1-3 Now concerning things offered to idols: We know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies. And if anyone thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know. But if anyone loves God, this one is known by Him.

Knowledge by itself is neutral. It does not automatically make a person conceited or arrogant, as it were. It depends on what one does with it. If love is associated with knowledge, it will build up and unify. You see, love takes a person one step beyond knowledge.

What we have to be careful about is whether our knowledge, our understanding, was garnered in this world or whether it has been garnered since God called us. Whether it is being used in the right way. Chapter 8 begins a very long explanation that does not end until the end of chapter 13, and basically what he is showing here is the priority of love over our liberty to do something we feel we have the right to do out of obedience to God.

Now he is not saying that knowledge automatically puffs one up. He is saying though that there are those who are subject to conceit because they feel that they have a superior position due to their intellectual insight. But Paul is saying that there is a limitation. "A little knowledge is a dangerous thing," he says.

What is it that Paul is getting at here? What does sin and leaven have to do with being puffed up? Well, its product is pride. Sin's product is pride or we might say pride's product might be sin. It can be turned in either direction. But what pride does, is that it makes one feel and act independent of God.

You see, it puffs him up and puts him on the same level, he thinks, as God, and free to choose to set his own rules, his own standards of what is right and good. This is what Adam and Eve did. We find an example of that here in I Corinthians 8—13; that their pride made them feel that they had the right to impose their idea, their belief, their right on other brothers who did not know or who were ignorant of it, and in the process they offended their brother. But sin, leaven, puffs up.

Number four is: leaven spreads. A little leaven leavens the whole lump. You know what happens when a little bit of leaven is put into a lump of dough. You may put it into one place but very quickly—it does not take very long—it permeates the entire lump and the whole thing becomes puffed up.

There is a place in the Bible where it talks about the course of sin. The course of sin eventually produces death and so if it is injected into the flow of a person's life, if it is not gotten rid of, it will produce death. Unfortunately sin has the property of being able to spread within the body that it is injected into, which means if sin is injected into a congregation it has the tendency to spread within it.

That was what happened in the Corinthian church. The man was committing *porneia* in I Corinthians 5 and that is where Paul warned, "a little leaven leavens the whole lump." You see it had already infected the whole congregation in that they were very tolerant to this man's sin. Paul called them conceited and arrogant for being tolerant of this person's sin and that was the effect of it there.

So God has chosen this property to teach us that we have a responsibility to each other, we have a responsibility to ourselves and to Him and to regard the getting rid of leaven because if it remains unchecked it will spread.

Number five is that leaven is hard to find. I think that I will just give these to you and maybe proceed on them at some other time. Leaven can be very tiny. You know in your operations in trying to clean your home in looking for it, it can get into the strangest places and it is not always easy to be gotten rid of, but we have to work at that. It is our responsibility to look for it very, very hard.

Another one is that the effect of leaven is immediate and certain, though often unseen for a time. A good illustration of this is Adam and Eve in Genesis 2. God said to them, "In the day that you eat thereof, you shall die." We can see from what actually occurred, they did not die until almost a thousand years later and what it could easily be translated into is, "In the day that you eat thereof you are as good as dead."

What God is warning us is this: that sin, because it has the property to grow, may not be easily or quickly visible but it will be doing its deadly work regardless of what we think about it. So, steps have to be taken to get rid of it or it will do its deadly work.

Leaven is everywhere and it seems to be necessary.

Leaven is pleasurable to eat.

Leaven puffs up.

Leaven spreads.

Leaven is hard to find.

Then number 6, which I did not give you:

A leavened lump cannot be de-leavened.

That is an interesting one. It takes a miracle for God to de-leaven us, we cannot do it ourselves. It takes His operation working with us.

The effect of leaven is certain unless it is miraculously stopped.

Well, I hope that you will at least learn the principle of this sermon, and that is that God makes us go through these things for very good reasons. They are object lessons that He puts us through to engrave or more deeply inscribe on our minds the understanding of our responsibility that God frees us. The Days of Unleavened Bread have to do with liberty, with spiritual liberty, but we have to understand that getting rid of sin is what keeps us free. So if you will learn that from this message, I will be very pleased.