

Remaining Unleavened

Renewing the Mind

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Well, most of you have heard of the second law of thermodynamics. But I would bet, if I were a betting man, that most of you could not tell me what it is. I am sure you did have science classes in high school or college, especially physics, and you probably had to be able to tell the professor or the teacher just what it was or at least give a layman's explanation of it. Whatever the case, it is a pretty important natural law to know because it has such practical applications to our everyday lives. We can see it around us all the time in its essence.

I want to go back just a little bit here. The first law of thermodynamics states that energy cannot be created or destroyed. The total quantity of energy that is available in the universe always remains the same. And what happens is it just changes forms.

Rather than quantity of energy though, the second law of thermodynamics is about the quality of energy. This second law asserts that as energy is transferred or transformed, more and more of it is wasted. It goes to a lower form of energy, we might say. The second law also maintains that any isolated system has a natural tendency to degenerate into a more disordered state. And this is that famous word or well-known word that we use every once in a while. It is a condition called entropy, a state of disorder or decay.

All physical processes result in an increase in entropy. When processes start going, when they start working, when they start happening, however you want to put it, things start breaking down. It is impossible to convert heat energy to mechanical energy at a 100% efficiency.

For instance, most of you drive pretty much every day. After heating a gas to increase its pressure, to drive a piston, some heat in the gas is always left over. You do not use it all when that piston drives up and you start getting motion on the drive shaft there, everything is moving, there is still something

that must be discarded and it is usually heat. Heat is one of them, one of the things that is still there, and it has to be put into a kind of a heat sink, it is called, where it can be dissipated into the atmosphere. In a car that heat sink is your exhaust system. And the spent mixture of fuel and heated air is exhausted out the tailpipe. And so, you have a car that they try to be efficient with and they do all these things to make sure that you do not waste any of your gas, you get as much miles per gallon, but you are still sending some of it out your tailpipe because they just cannot create a system that uses it at 100% efficiency.

Another example. Any machine, anything with movable parts, produces friction. As much grease as you want to put in between the pieces and the parts of whatever machine it is, there is still some friction that that occurs. That oil or that grease starts to heat up and so that has to be removed to a heat sink as well. If you do not remove it to a heat sink, that heat builds up and you ruin your parts. It will jam all together and you will not have a machine that works.

It is this idea, the second law of thermodynamics, that movable parts produce friction and that it produces heat and that sort of thing, a by-product of the movement, this is why the U.S. Patent Office summarily rejects claims of a perpetual motion machine because that is just the way it is. Anything you have that moves is going to create some sort of heat, some by-product that is going to mess up the works in time.

And of course, it is this second law of thermodynamics, especially the idea that everything is moving toward a disordered state, that really puts the kibosh on the theory of evolution right from the very start. Because in the theory of evolution, it says just the opposite—that organisms and things are going from a disordered state into a more finely-ordered state, into a better thing, and that is just not how the world works. God did not set it up that way.

If we look for it, we can see this natural process of disorder and disintegration happening all the time around us. Go to a car dealership, buy the nicest car in there right off the showroom floor so you have this brand spanking new car. Well, in the world of finance, this law works too because as soon as you drive that car off the lot, you lose a couple of thousand dollars in depreciation.

But then, before you get home, before you drive that nice brand spanking new car into your garage, the car and its systems have already begun the process of breaking down the engine, going through cycles of heating and cooling, as well as the movement of all of its internal parts, has already begun to wear. It is not pristine as it was when it came off the assembly line. The fluids that were in the car to help it go, they have started to break down too and you are already on the clock for your 3,000 mile oil change.

The tires, having gone over the road, have already begun to wear, even though they look like they have great tread in them still. You have only just driven it home, but some of that rubber has been left on the road. The leather in the seats that you are luxuriating in as you drive home have also begun to wear because of your body and its friction that has been on there. The oils in your skin have begun to break down the paint of that car. Nice clear coat shine on there. It has already begun to be abraded by the particles in the air and even by the sun and the radiation that has hit it for just a few minutes that it has taken for you to drive from the dealership to your house.

That is life. I think of my Chevy S10 that normally sits out here in the parking lot, 5 days a week. It is 20 years old (or will be next year) and I thought of it the other day when I was thinking about these things and I thought, you know, that is just a broken down hulk compared to what it was when it came off the assembly line.

Consider your own bodies. I would love that thick brown hair that I had at 20 years old. That would be great. I could wear it like Jared. I would love the strong and healthy body and the physical stamina I had when I was 20. When I bruise these days, my 51 year old body does not want to heal. It seems to linger for days or weeks and I still see the smudge on my skin for I do not know how many weeks after. It used to be, I would just heal up, snap!, just like that. I turned my ankle at the end of December over at Paul's house (it had nothing to do with Paul, he did not do it except he threw the football that I was chasing). But that is okay. But you know, that was the end of December and I am still feeling twinges of pain every once in a while, even though Kyle tells me it should be pretty much completely healed up by now. It is just that I am 51 and I just do not heal like I used to. That is just the way the cookie crumbles, I guess.

I especially wish my mind was as sharp as it was when I was 20, when words and ideas and connections and things just came so easily I hardly had to think about them. They were just there and all the synapses were firing. And now I wonder if I have any left.

But in a physical world, that is the direction of processes and entities of all kinds. That is just the way it is. Everything is moving toward deterioration, disintegration, dissolution, decay, and disorder. God designed it this way. He had a reason to make everything break down, wear down, because He had in mind a cycle in which we would have to participate in a great many of these things—and this cycle is perpetual. You produce something, whatever it is, a widget or an idea or whatever it happens to be, it does not matter it seems, but it goes through this cycle of production and then maintenance. You have to maintain whatever it is. But all the while it is deteriorating and pretty soon it is destroyed. And once it is destroyed, then you have to produce again.

And so you go from production to maintenance to deterioration to destruction, and then around to production again and then you have maintenance and deterioration and destruction, and it just keeps going and going and going and going. That is why you need a new dishwasher every few years. It is the same sort of thing. It is in the same cycle of production, of maintenance, of deterioration, and destruction. That is life on Planet Earth.

There are important principles in that that we have to understand. But have we ever thought seriously that what God asks us to do spiritually in a way works in the opposite direction, against entropy? He takes clay, dirt, the broken down remains of something that was once better, fitter, smarter, stronger, and faster, and He calls us to transform into something holy, righteous, loving, joyful, faithful, and ultimately glorious and everlasting. That is not the way entropy works. Entropy goes the exact opposite way. Of course, we could argue that He does not do this with our physical selves, although that is coming, that is down the road, where He will transform our mortal corrupt bodies into immortal and incorruptible bodies, as we find in I Corinthians 15.

But He does this to a mind, *our* minds that have been overwhelmed by the breakdown of everything in this world. Even if He called you when you were

a teenager or in your early twenties, you still experienced enough of the breakdown of things in this world to understand that what God is doing is a real miracle.

If you will, please turn to Romans the 12th chapter. We will read the first two verses. They are very well known scriptures.

Romans 12:1-2 [Paul writes here] I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. [mostly aiming here at verse 2] And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

He gives us here at the beginning of verse 2 two commands. One is in the negative and one is in the positive. Do not be conformed to this world as the negative and be transformed by the renewing of your mind is the positive one. God is renewing our mind against the law, the second law of thermodynamics, if you will. He is taking it from something that was old and beaten down and moving toward deterioration and destruction, and He is making it better, making it new.

This word renewing is *anakainosis*. It means basically this, renewing, a renewal, a renovation. I like this one better though because I think it helps us to understand where I am going at least in the sermon: a complete change for the better. God is reprogramming our minds, if you would like to use modern language. He is reprogramming our minds throughout our converted lifetimes so that our thinking resembles more and more the way *God* wants us to think. He does not want us to think the thoughts that follow the path of the second law of thermodynamics, the kind of thinking that leads to chaos and entropy. He is giving us something that is completely better. Taking a mind that was impure and futile in its thoughts and turning it into something that is God-like, transforming it into His own mind so that we think the thoughts of God. He is trying, and He will succeed if God is God—and He is—to change our minds completely and forever.

This process begins when He gives us His Spirit, changing our perspective and granting us faith and strength to believe in Christ and believe in His Word. So in one sense, it begins at a specific point. But the main work happens over time as we are transformed by time and experience within our relationship with the Father and with His Son. When we have intercourse with Him through prayer, through Bible study, through whatever means it is that we and God are working together. Of course, He lives in us by His Spirit so that should be all the time. While that is happening, He is working on us to change us from something *less* to something far, far *greater*. And that mostly occurs within the mind, or in the biblical way of talking about things, in the heart.

So this is what we call in theological language, the sanctification process, and the Feast of Unleavened Bread assists us with this part of Christian life. Passover is all about what He did and we glory in Him and we thank Him for the part that He did—which was awesome and fantastic and great. Nothing that we can do is possible without that. But then He gives us the Days of Unleavened Bread which show us what we do *together with Him*. So the Feast of Unleavened Bread assists us with this part of Christian life, becoming and remaining unleavened before Him and that leads to growth into bearing fruit.

Let us go back to Exodus 13 and pick up some of the instructions for this day. We will read verses 3 through 10.

Exodus 13:3-10 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. 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.

Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a feast to the Lord [which we are doing today].

Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days [says it again, just flipping things around]. 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.' It shall be as a sign to you on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes, that the Lord's law 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."

Notice the way these instructions are balanced, and I kind of made an intimation of that with one of my comments that I interjected there. But it starts in verse 3 with saying, no leaven shall be eaten. No leavened bread shall be eaten. Verses 6 and 7 say to *eat* unleavened bread. It says it there twice, showing us this balance, this symmetry, as I mentioned in my interjection there, that it starts out saying, "Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread" and then it flips it around, "Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days." And then it tells us a little bit later in verse 7, "No leaven bread shall be seen in all our quarters."

It is giving us a balance here of the two commands that we are to enact in our life. We are to *not* eat leavening and we *are to eat* unleavened bread. So there is the negative, as we saw there in Romans 12, verse 2, "Do not be conformed to this world," and we have the positive, "Be transformed by the renewing of your mind." So the not eating anything that is leavened is not conforming to the world, and eating unleavened bread is analogous to being transformed by the renewing of your mind.

By the time we get down to verse 9 and telling the child about why we keep this day, it focuses, at least in my eyes, on the reason after the word "that." "It shall be a sign to you on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes *that*. . ." This is the reason, because of, due to the fact that "the Lord's law may be in your mouth." Or this is why you are doing these things. Because God wants the Lord's law in your mouth.

What does this mean? This thing about being a "sign to you on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes" has nothing to do with phylacteries. The Pharisees took everything literally and so they rolled up little verses and

bound them to their foreheads and to their arms. This was not the thing that God was looking for. He was thinking more in terms of that these are kind of a metaphor. The symbols of the hand and the forehead represent two actions that we do. The first is work. The hand is what we work with. That was what we do things with. And the forehead is right in front of your brain. That is where you do your thinking.

So the hand represents working, the forehead represents thinking, or you could put it as more generally doing and reasoning. That is where God wants us to place the emphasis of how we are going about our lives. He wants the Days of Unleavened Bread to remind us of these two things in these specific areas. You could even say that these represent practice on the hand and belief in the mind, behind the forehead. So what God is telling us here in verse 9 is that all this ado about unleavened bread is an exercise in the hand and a reminder to our minds, we could call it their annual drills, annual prods that God's law, His instruction, should be in our mouth.

So He makes us go through a physical activity, that is, cleaning out the leaven, to remind us of this thing, that we need to make sure that we are not conformed to this world. And then He makes us go through the spiritual exercise of keeping leaven out, in our mind, being reminded that we need to do this all the time so that we can remember that this instruction, God's instruction, should be always front and center.

Obviously, the Feast of Unleavened Bread is all about eating and not eating. We do it three times a day or more. We eat all the time and it should be a constant reminder of what it is we are talking about here. When we eat, we put food—bread—into our mouths. That is the idea behind this phrase here, God's law may be in your mouth. It is talking about what we ingest. So God's command at this time of the year is to abstain from leavened bread and to consume unleavened bread and this is to remind us what we should be ingesting His instruction, His teaching.

This feast reminds us each year of this dual principle of living. Conquer sin, which is the negative, do not be conformed to this world, and replace it with His righteousness, which is the positive statement, be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

Let us go just quickly to Proverbs 23 just to pick up a principle here. And I just want the first phrase here, we are breaking into a longer proverb. But Solomon writes,

Proverbs 23:7 For as he thinks in his heart, so is he.

This a principle here. That a person *is* what he thinks. Let us add a common adage to this, which is, "You are what you eat." And add another one, a more modern proverb that has come around because of computing and that is, "Output always equals input."

Now that we have these three ideas going through our heads, we come up with an incontrovertible truth. What goes into a system is what comes out of it—and that is what it is. This applies to food and the physical body, it applies to programming and what you get coming out of your computer. It applies to any project or any endeavor that you want to do. If you want to put up a fence in your yard, your fence is going to look as good as the effort that you put into it and the quality of materials that you put into it. So what goes in is what comes out.

And this is especially true of the mind. What the mind takes in is what the mind will spew out. This is what Jesus talked to His disciples about after His discussion with the Pharisees about the traditions of men. We might as well just go to Mark 7 just to pick up a verse or two here. Let us start in verse 20. He is speaking to His disciples and explaining what He had said to them. He says,

Mark 7:20-23 "What comes out of a man, that defiles a man. For from within, out of the hearts of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornication, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man."

Well, that jumps to the end of the story, but you have to ask, how did they get there in the first place? And the answer is, it was put there, it was brought in at some point. We could put it another way: what enters a person's heart from his upbringing, his parents' education of him, his schooling, his relationships with his friends, his reading and study, his observations of the

world, whatever it is, all these things are inputs. They will all influence how the person thinks, what a person says, and ultimately, what he does. Inputs and outputs are equal. What goes in will eventually come out.

It is a simple concept. A person cannot be exposed to sinful influences and not be affected, especially if he does not have the mind of Christ in him by God's Spirit to be able to fight those things off. And it gets even worse. The influence gets even worse when he begins to participate in them. And when he begins to participate in them, it is like the proverbial seed that grows and it is going to produce some very bad fruit, ultimately.

And so we have the Feast of Unleavened Bread, God's annual reminder that we are to shun and refuse the leavened bread, the corruption, the sin that is out there, and we are to seek and to ingest unleavened bread on a daily basis—all seven days.

Let us go to John the sixth chapter. I do not think what I am going to say here is anything new. It is a very basic sermon on the meaning of unleavened bread, but it is good to go over it every once in a while.

John 6:47-51 "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness and are dead. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread [Jesus says] which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread [pointing to Himself], he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world."

John 6:57-58 "As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me. This is the bread which came down from heaven—not as your fathers ate the manna and are dead. He who eats this bread [pointing to Himself again] will live forever."

And so we come to the heart of the matter here. Jesus spoke these words right around the Feast of Unleavened Bread. If you would care to go back to verse 4 of the same chapter, it says that the Feast of Unleavened Bread was

near. The principles and lessons of unleavened bread were on Jesus' mind at the time. And the feeding of the 5,000, which happened just before this, gave Him a perfect entry into this subject that He wanted to talk about, because they kept telling Him that they, by their actions, wanted Him to feed them. So He used this opportunity, it was a marvelous opportunity because it was on everybody's mind.

He used this opportunity to press it into their minds, particularly the disciples' minds, that the real reason, the real lesson of the Feast of Unleavened Bread lay, not in physical bread, not in all their work to get the leavening out or anything like that. That is not what the lesson is. But the lesson is that we should be seeking the food that endures to everlasting life. He says that very clearly in verse 27. He says, "Do not labor for the food which perishes."

Do you remember the manna that God gave to the Israelites every day? Do you remember what happened to that manna? It came down in the dawn, I guess, in the early morning with the dew, and they had to go out there early and pick it up off the ground because as soon as the sun was hot, it melted away. It was very short-lived. Even though He gave it to them constantly for 38 years, it was still laying on the ground each day for only a short period of time and then it was gone, it disappeared.

But there is a bread that is being given us that will last forever. So He says, "Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him." He set Him apart for this work that He is doing for us to feed us the unleavened bread that leads to everlasting life. And then He ends His message, if we will go forward in the chapter to verse 63, he makes a very plain statement about what He was getting at.

John 6:63 "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life."

So here is His main point, if you will, focused down, concentrated into two sentences here, that real life is in the Spirit and it is His words that are spirit and they will lead us to life. So all this talk about eating Him and eating His flesh and eating the bread that came down from heaven, all of that is

referring to these two elements being put together, having God's Spirit and using it, and taking God's words and ingesting it so that we can have eternal life.

Let us go to II Corinthians 4. Remember, He told them that they were looking at things physically and that that was futile. He said, do not go for the bread that perishes, that disappears. You know, once you put it down into your mouth and it goes into your stomach and it just goes through your body and it is gone, it does not last. So here we have Paul saying a similar thing. He says,

II Corinthians 4:16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed [there is that word again] day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen [which are physical, he just puts it in a different way here], but at the things which are not seen [those things are spiritual]. For the things which are seen are temporary [just like that manna that went after just an hour or two], but the things which are not seen are eternal [these things of the Spirit that God provides for us so that we can ingest them and live, live as He lives].

So once we are converted, we have to make an adjustment in our minds. God does the bulk of this, but we have to do it too. We have to make an adjustment to see everything through a spiritual prism, like we are looking through spectacles (just to use that) that show us the spiritual things that are out there. We have to adjust our thinking so that we can begin to have a perspective that puts those things in a higher category, as being a greater priority for us.

Put another way, more simply maybe: we need to really begin to see what really matters. And the things that really matter are those things that lead to everlasting life.

Let us go back in thought to John 6. (You do not have to go back there in your Bibles. As a matter of fact, we will be coming here to II Corinthians in a minute or two.) Thinking back to what Jesus said in terms of

the manna and the bread that came down from heaven and what we are supposed to do with it, and also thinking about Romans the 12:1-2, especially verse 2. So we have, not conforming to this world, or as it was put otherwise, that is, not eating leavened bread. Those are the two things here that we are talking about, the commands that were given during Unleavened Bread.

So not conforming to this world is analogous to not eating leavened bread and being transformed by the renewing of our minds is analogous to eating unleavened bread. Pretty simple.

Now, with our culture's emphasis on education and knowledge, it is always being pushed—going to school, going as far as you can, getting a degree, getting an advanced degree, getting all kinds of certificates and advanced knowledge on certain things. That is fine, that is good. But it makes our minds think of things in a strange way because we think of Christian growth purely in terms of knowledge and what we learn by studying a book. And that is not bad, that is not wrong. We are supposed to do this, but it makes us miss a greater point.

So we tend to think of Christian growth in terms of knowledge and understanding, we could call it theology. As a matter of fact, my degree is in theology, Bachelor of Arts in theology. Great. I took so many classes and I passed them well enough to be moved on and given a degree. Well, I cannot say that that theology degree has helped me all that much in my Christian life. It has given me a wider, broader understanding of God's Word with the insights that would be given by my professors. But that is not everything. We think about gaining insight so that we can explain the doctrines and that is fine. Some of us are pretty good at that. We can go through and figure out, untangle all the Pauline verbiage in the New Testament in his epistles, and say, "You know, this goes with this and that goes with this other thing. And if we put them all in this particular order, then we can understand the doctrine of X, Y, Z." And that is fine. That is a good thing. I am not saying that it is not, I really respect people who can do that.

That is not where my strengths lie. I may be fairly intelligent, but I do not have that kind of mind that puts things together like that. And I am glad there are people that help to explain those things. I understand the doctrines, you

might call them a little bit more organically. And I can usually go to the places and explain it okay. But that is not really where the thrust of my thinking goes. It is just not. I tend to like stories and characters and imagery and that sort of thing. And that is where my mind goes, although I understand the other things just fine too.

But what I am saying is that being able to explain a doctrine or knowing a certain area of biblical knowledge backward, forward, upside down, and inside out, that is not what we are talking about here, the being transformed by the renewing of your mind. And that is not what exactly Jesus means either about eating unleavened bread. Remember He said, specifically, that it was eating *Him*, because He was the bread of life.

So do not get me wrong. We are to learn those things. We are to learn the doctrines. We are to get a very good sound knowledge of what is in God's Word and we will do that over time. We have been converted years, decades, who knows how long. Those things will come if we continue to study God's Word on a daily basis, and we will learn those things. It will be ingrained in our minds and that is fine. But God is not going to test your Bible IQ before He allows you into the Kingdom. You are not going to be raised from the dead and you have to go through a series of college classes to be able to then become a God being. He is not going to ask you to recite all the fruit of the Spirit in order. That is not the way it works.

See, we think of matriculating to what would you call it higher office or a higher position by going through these tests and becoming certified. God does not think that way. He wants you to learn, to know these things, but He wants it to come in a slightly different way. He is not going to give you an A or a B or a C on a report card and that is how you will be ranked in the Kingdom of God. That is not how it works. What He is testing us on, and He is doing it every day, right now, is how we resemble Jesus Christ through our study. Yes, He does want us to study, but also in our imitation of Him, how we walk in His steps. He is more interested, not what could be put down on a piece of paper as the sum of your knowledge, He wants to see as you think and speak and do whatever it is you do every day, whether you are reflecting the very character image of His Son. That is what He is going to grade us on, if you will.

Jesus was serious when He said that we must ingest Him, a person, a personality. Maybe to put it in a better way, maybe more understandable way, is that we must consume the character image of Jesus Christ. We have got to lap it up. We have got to put it on, to use another metaphor. We have to search it out. We have to really think through: what would Jesus do. (That is not a terrible saying at all.) And then we have to make sure that we follow through with it. The unleavened bread we are supposed to be consuming is the very bread of life, the Savior Jesus Christ Himself—His example, His way of thinking, His words, what we see in the gospels, what the apostles commented upon and expanded through their epistles. And let us not leave out the Old Testament because the Old Testament pointed to Him. So many of the prophecies are specifically about Him and the way He will be, He will act.

Look at Isaiah 53. There is just verse after verse after verse of the character of Jesus Christ shown long before, 500 years, 600 years, or 700 years before He was even born. The Psalms are full of the character of Jesus Christ. The song we just sang about asking God for forgiveness, Psalm 51. That is the character of Jesus Christ shown through the person of David, but Jesus Christ is David's greater Son. So what he wants us to learn is Jesus Christ and have that image stamped upon us.

I told you to stay in II Corinthians. We are now going to II Corinthians 3, verse 18. If you stayed there, it is probably just across the page or one page over. Paul puts it in a nutshell here.

II Corinthians 3:18 But we all, with unveiled face [meaning we do not have the veil put over us that the unconverted do], beholding as in a mirror [or in a looking glass] the glory of the Lord, [we] are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

By being given God's Spirit and using it, we have been given the opportunity to see and to know Christ as He really is in all His spiritual glory. Not the physical glory that would be the light and radiance. I am talking about the glory of His holy and righteous character, the way He is. And by that means, by the closeness of the relationship through the Spirit, by abiding in Him, we can be transformed into that very same image and ever increasing in glory.

You may not be able to shine like the sun. In the dead of night you put your hand in front of your face, you still cannot see it. You do not have that kind of glory. But when you put on the image of Jesus Christ, and it begins to work in you and you begin to function by it and through it, there is great glory there, the glory of the holy character of the Son. Because we are transforming into that image and ever increasing in glory, the glory of His character.

I am just going to pop over to I John 5:20 just to read something there.

I John 5:20 We know that the Son of God has come and given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son, Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.

That is the state we are in right now.

II Corinthians 4:3-6 Even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them. [now notice verse 5] For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For it is God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

So the apostle Paul says here that we do not have that covering over us. We do not have the veil. We do not have anything coming between us and the knowledge of God and this glory in the character of Jesus Christ. We can see Him, as it were, face to face. And so Paul says that his preaching centers on Jesus Christ Himself. And that may sound like an awfully Protestant thing, but it is biblical. (But they forget a lot of things that they should be preaching.)

The gospel centers on Jesus Christ, how He lived, what He said, how He reacted, how He thought, how He exemplified the fruit of the Spirit, how He kept the Ten Commandments, and especially, and this is the part that the

Protestants often leave off and get themselves into trouble, especially the gospel He Himself preached, which is very clear. He came preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God. It was not a gospel of Himself alone, but it was a gospel that focused on Himself and pointed toward a great and glorious future in the Kingdom of God.

So we are to gaze on, if you will, this light that has shined out of darkness. And when we see through it all, we see the face of Jesus Christ, the character image of Jesus Christ that is supposed to be put upon us, growing in us.

At this point, I am going to kind of move into a more practical area of the sermon. Let us go to Hebrews 1, verses 8 and 9. If the message is focused on Jesus Christ, what have you learned? In these are several quotations from the Old Testament that the author of Hebrews puts here in order to show Jesus Christ is the great Son of God and he is leading to something showing that He is greater than angels, which he gets to pretty much in the last few verses but verses 8 and 9 is a quotation from Psalm 45.

Hebrews 1:8-9 But to the Son He says: "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; therefore God, your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness more than Your companions."

Here is a good general yardstick to compare your transformation process into the image of Christ to the actuality of Jesus Christ. And we are just going to take those first, that first major phrase in verse 9. Do you, like Jesus Christ, love righteousness and hate lawlessness? Like I said, it is a yardstick. It is a way that we can figure out how much we have grown or how much we are like Christ—this One who has been exalted to the highest office in the universe as King of kings, the One we are supposed to be emulating—loved righteousness and hated lawlessness.

Now, it is very easy for us to say, "Oh, yeah, I *hate* sin. It's bad and I love doing good. That's what God wants me to do." And we could be almost flippant about it. Sure, that is the way I am. But do we *really* love righteousness? That is the question. Do we *really* love it? Do we enjoy doing

it? Is it our first reaction? And do we *really* **hate** lawlessness? Do we abhor it and look at it as an unclean thing? Do we think that we really love righteousness, doing what is right? But when push comes to shove, we kind of only grudgingly do it.

Like the Sabbath, keeping the Sabbath. That is righteousness. But do we really *love* keeping the Sabbath or do we look at it as if it is keeping us from doing something that we would rather be doing and we find ourselves doing it on the Sabbath, or at least thinking about it all the time and making all our plans for when we are out of the Sabbath and we can go ahead and do that thing.

But what does God say about the Sabbath in Isaiah 58? He says it is His day and we are supposed to be thinking His thoughts and doing the things that please Him on that day, not what pleases us. I know I do things like that on the Sabbath. One of my biggest bugaboos is sports. I do not do those things on the Sabbath. I do not watch them on the Sabbath, but I sure do think about them a lot on the Sabbath and I often talk about them on the Sabbath. I am not saying that you cannot talk about stuff like that on the Sabbath, offhand stuff. But if you are really concentrating on it to the exclusion of God, then you have got a problem with the Sabbath. You really do not love righteousness, not the way Jesus did.

Do we think that we hate evil and sin and all that transgression and everything that is going on, but really enjoy it to a good degree still and easily give in to it with little resistance? I think there are a lot of times when that happens, if we are honest with ourselves, that we are really not as righteous as we would think we are.

Jesus was not this way at all. He loved righteousness so much that He did it automatically, with no thought to do otherwise. Even when His life was on the line, He would not do anything that would compromise with God's law or what God expected of Him. He did this because He knew that doing righteousness would not only please the Father, which He said a couple of times, John 8 29 for sure. He said, "I only do those things that please the Father." But He also did righteousness because He knew it would produce the best results all the time. Go back and read Matthew 4 (I believe it is in Luke 4 as well), where the Devil tempted Him time and time again and He

would not give in. He quoted Scripture back to the Devil and said, take that, that is what I am going to do. And after a while the Devil had to slink away from Him because Jesus would not give in one bit. Not one inch!

He abhorred lawlessness with such a passion that He never once submitted to it. He ran from it like it was a plague, which it is. It is a fatal plague on the soul and He did not want to be contaminated by it. As I mentioned earlier, because of His love of righteousness and His hatred of sin, God has elevated Him as far as He could go and every knee will bow to Him.

So how do we compare? If Jesus is at the end of the yardstick as perfect, where along the line are we? One inch? 10 inches? I do not know. You have to figure that out for yourself. But that is why God gives us such a long time of conversion in which we can make changes and grow.

Let us go back to Luke the 16th chapter. We will read just one verse. It is also in Matthew in the Sermon on the Mount, but I pulled it out of Luke. Luke 16, verse 13 says almost exactly the same thing that Matthew's does. Just pretty much one word changed. Luke writes here:

Luke 16:13 "No servant can serve two masters [that is the word change, from no man to no servant], for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."

Here is another yardstick. Jesus Christ is on the far end. He is perfect. Are we nearly as devoted to serving God as Christ was? Not by a long shot. Our loyalties are divided between many things—and God. Sometimes He is an afterthought. Sometimes we are just so into what we are doing in our physical lives that He comes in only when we have time. Only when we can make a little bit of time. When He was tempted by Satan on this point, Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 6:13, which He lived by. Notice this.

Luke 4:6-8 The devil said to Him, "All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. Therefore, if you will worship before me, all will be Yours." [Quite an offer. I am going to give You all the earth here, all the kingdoms of the world, You can rule them.] And Jesus

answered and said to him, "Get behind Me, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve.'"

So Jesus tells us how we should live here. Whom we should serve. We are that servant there in Luke 16:13. Are your loyalties all divided or are you *only* serving God? Do we still serve mammon? Money? Sure, we do. We are anxious about money. We are always trying to get more money and we think we need more money because things are so bad and they are getting worse and we do not have this and we do not have that. And sometimes it can become so much a part of our thinking that it crowds everything out, including God.

And I have not even talked about that we serve ourselves a lot. We serve our desires for whatever it is that we desire. We serve our comforts all the time. If something is uncomfortable to do, oh, let us not do it, even though God may say that we *should* do it. We are very reluctant at best sometimes. I know I do all of these things myself. I worry about money. I want a nice car. I want to do this. I do not want to be put out in any way. It is part of being human, I know, that these things rear themselves up and we make so much of them. But the goal is to be like Christ who said, "Him *only* shall you serve," and not have divided loyalties between one thing and God. Or many things and God. And so we need to ingest more of the unleavened bread, more of Jesus Christ and His character to assist us in renewing our mind to reflect His own mind so that we are more like Him.

Let us go across the page here to Luke 17. Another area in which we can grow, another yardstick that we could measure ourselves by next to Christ.

Luke 17:1 Then He said to the disciples [that is you and me], "It is impossible that no offenses should come, but woe to him through whom they do come."

When you are among people, interacting with people, somebody is going to offend somebody else. It just happens that way. Jesus says it is impossible that it does not happen because carnal human nature put into a confined space with other carnal human natures are going to make problems, sometimes big ones. But Jesus said, make sure that it is not you causing the

problem. So ask yourself, how are you doing on that? Whether it is a body like a congregation in the church or whether it is a family or whatever situation it is, are you constantly causing people to be offended? It does not matter what the reason is, does not even matter if you are right. Jesus said, do not be the one who causes the offense.

Luke 17:2 "It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones."

He is concerned about the ones who do not have maybe the sophistication of understanding or maybe are just being converted and do not understand why we do such and such a thing, yet we do it in such a way that they are, *gasp "Is that ok? Should we really be doing that?" We may have the freedom to do such a thing. We know that our understanding of that thing may be that even though it may seem to be a bad thing, but it is not, it is fine. We run into that here in the south with all our Baptists here and drinking alcohol. My neighbor does not drink alcohol. He is a good Southern Baptist. I do not invite him over for a beer. Of course, he has invited me over a few times for pork on the grill. But that is okay. I have learned to forgive him for that.

But just how careful are we not to offend? To get along with one another? Are we considerate of each other? Do we know each other well enough to know what the hot points are and to stay away from them? Let us go on.

Luke 17:3 "Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him."

Do not hang on to it! If somebody does something to you and you say, "Hey, that's not right. You shouldn't do that. God says. . ." whatever. And the person says, "Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't know that. I hadn't gotten that far. I haven't figured that out. I didn't know." Jesus does not say, "Oh, after 30 days, if he still hasn't done it again, then you should forgive him." No, He just flat-out says, "Forgive him."

Luke 17:4 "And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you saying, 'I repent,' you shall forgive him."

That is a command from our Lord and Savior. Forgive him! It does not matter whether he went about it the right way or the wrong way. If he asks for forgiveness and says, "Hey, I'm not going to do this again." Forgive him!

A friend of the Ritenbaugh family from many years ago, just posted something about this on Facebook. He put it in an interesting way. He said, "I just went through one of those experiences where I had to put something in a box before God and give it to Him and forgive and forget." And he said, "I feel better already." Evidently, it was something that was lingering over months or years and he just decided to let it go.

Cannot we do that? Why hold grudges? It does not help the other person and it certainly does not help us. We could put these things behind us if we just forgave one another and determined to start afresh. But because we are not anywhere near having the character image of Jesus Christ, we hold grudges, we refuse to be forbearing with our brethren, and the problems just continue. They should not, they should stop it. And it is no wonder that the apostles said in verse 5, right at the end of this,

Luke 17:5 "Increase our faith."

Because forgiving somebody of a slight or a sin or whatever it happens to be is hard to do. It is hard to let those things go. And it is only hard because our carnal human nature wants to get even. It wants something back from something that we have suffered. And Jesus said, if you want peace, forgive it. It is hard and it takes a lot of faith, but it must be done.

We will conclude in Ephesians 4. We will read a fair amount here. But I want you to understand that this process of transforming by the renewing of your mind (that is especially what I am thinking about during this sermon), is

something we do together, something which God has given many gifts to the church to perform, and especially that major gift of the Holy Spirit within each one of us. But notice this, starting in verse 7.

Ephesians 4:7 But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.

Ephesians 4:11-16 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints [that is you, to give you all that you need so that you can be like Jesus Christ] for the work of ministry [or serving, that is part of why God puts the ministry in the church, to help us in these two areas, to help complete us and to help us learn to serve], for the edifying of the body of Christ [the building it up, taking it forward so that we are more like Christ], till we all come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. [That is the goal, so that we *all* come to that, not just a select few of us, but everyone in the church comes to bear the glory of Jesus Christ in His very character image.]; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the trickery of men [These gifts were given so that we will be stable.], in the cunning craftiness by which they lie in wait to deceive, but speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies [we are all part of this, we are all part of the body, and we are all contributing], according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

So Paul gives us the overview here. That God has provided for His church so that the character image of Christ can be taught and built. The goal is unity of the faith and knowledge of the Son of God so that we can grow up in every area—in Him. So that we reflect His glory here on earth. And of course, he says, we are all in this together. We all have our parts to play in building the church in love.

Now verses 17 through 24 get back to the to the idea I had at the beginning.

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 [or licentiousness], to work all uncleanness with greediness. [now we get to the unleavened bread part]

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 is, if you are putting on Jesus, or if you are ingesting the word of Jesus Christ and His example that He has given us]: that you put off concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts [that is, do not be conformed to this world], and be renewed in the spirit of your mind [that one is obvious], and that you put on the new man [Jesus Christ] which was created according to God, in righteousness and true holiness.

That is what is laid out for us here in the Days of Unleavened Bread. This idea that, with the help of Jesus Christ by His Spirit and by the teaching that has been given to us—which we ingest—we will ultimately become just as the Bread of Life. This is the essence of the Christian life. The constant struggle to live the unleavened life of sincerity and truth, as Paul says in I Corinthians 5.

Though difficult—very difficult—the reward for enduring it far surpasses anything that we could imagine. So as we put this Feast of Unleavened Bread behind us, think about focusing on the life and teachings of our Savior Jesus Christ, the true bread from heaven, the One who is our example and our guide in remaining unleavened.