

You Have Not So Learned Christ

Coming out of Sin

Martin G. Collins

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There is risk in prosperity and comfort, when we get so wrapped up in the blessings that we forget the One who gave us the blessings in the first place. Because of this, Moses admonished the Israelites to praise God after they had eaten their meals, so that they would not forget the Giver of every good and perfect gift. He spelled out the danger inherent in the abundant prosperity that they were receiving.

In the wilderness, the Israelites had to depend on God for their necessities of life. In their newfound prosperity, they had the human tendency of letting affluence conceal their need for the same dependence. Moses emphasized a sure solution for this danger: praise the Lord your God. In fact, failure to praise Him for His blessings was a step toward forgetting God and then disobeying His commandments. An Israelite who ceased to praise God sincerely would find that his heart had become proud in his abundance and forgetful of God's generosity. Moses knew human nature, and he wrote this before the Israelites actually had this problem:

Deuteronomy 8:10-20 "When you have eaten and are full, then you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land which He has given you. Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God by not keeping His commandments, His judgments, and His statutes which I command you today, lest—when you have eaten and are full, and have built beautiful houses and dwell in them; and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and your gold are multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied; when your heart is lifted up, and you forget the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage; who led you through that great and terrible wilderness, in which were fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty land where there was no water; who brought water for you out of the flinty rock; who fed you in the wilderness with manna, which your fathers did not know, that He might humble you and that He might test you, to do you good in the end—then you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth.' And you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day. Then it shall be, if you by any means forget the LORD your God, and follow other gods, and serve them and worship them, I testify against you this day that you shall surely perish. As the nations which

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the LOORD destroys before you, so you shall perish, because you would not be obedient to the voice of the LOORD your God."

The Israelites eventually forgot their miraculous deliverance from Egypt, the land of slavery, and the wilderness with its venomous snakes and scorpions, as Moses mentions. The person who forgot would be inclined to credit his own ability—his own power and strength—for his wealth, when in reality it was as much a gift from God as the water out of hard rock had been in the wilderness. The provision of manna was a test to see if Israel would depend on God's word. This dependence is inherently humbling. The people could avoid pride in their wealth and strength if they would constantly remember the LOORD. The main lesson of the wilderness is that all of life is a gift from God and nothing that matters is possible apart from Him.

Today, we still have this tendency to neglect true thankfulness to the Source of the provision of our needs and lack the feeling of dependency on our Creator from whom all blessings come. I ask you the question today, "What is in your heart?" Is it lifted up with pride or realistic in humility?

It does matter what we think and imagine. When we set our minds on self-empowerment and self-focused idolatry, the consequences can be devastating. Repeatedly, God's Word shows His concern over the corrupting influence of our rebellious, unthankful thoughts.

Genesis 6:5 Then the LOORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

That certainly fits our society today. Moses was telling the Israelites not to look back into Egypt but to always be thankful for what God had provided them on their way to the Promised Land.

Though God is wonderfully patient with us, all humans must arrive at a point when they must deal with human wickedness. God promised Abraham that his descendants would be "strangers in a land that is not theirs...for four hundred years." Much of the reason for this captivity in Egypt was unthankfulness and forgetfulness. They absorbed the wickedness of the gentile Egyptians.

For this reason—this lack of fear of the consequences of forgetting God—the Apostle

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Paul felt it necessary to remind the brethren that, in his own words, they had "not so learned Christ," that they should not want to return to Egypt. In Ephesians 4, it is obvious that Paul felt that it was essential to distinguish what those in the church had been before being called by God. He contrasts what they were as pagans with what they now were as Christians, between their old and their new lives. In doing this, he could help them further grasp the underlying spiritual basis of this change.

Ephesians 4:17-21 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 blindness 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.

Paul emphasizes the intellectual factor in everybody's way of life. While describing pagans, he draws attention to the futility of their minds and then adds that they are darkened in their understanding. He attributes their alienation from God to the ignorance that is in them. In this way, he refers to their empty minds, darkened understanding, and inward ignorance, as a result of which they had become callous, shameless, immoral, and insatiably polluted. In contrast to them, those answering God's call had learned Christ, heard Him, and been taught in Him, all according to the truth which is in Jesus.

Paul sets the truth of Christ that the Christians had learned in contrast to the darkness and ignorance of the pagans. Truth has the power to liberate, elevate, and refine; ignorance degenerates into slavery, shamefulness, and dishonesty. What a contrast it is, as different as night and day.

In verse 18, Paul attributes their dark condition prior to their conversion to being "because of the blindness of their heart." Although the word *blindness* signifies a true aspect of the unbeliever's mental state, it does not seem to be the only meaning to which Paul was referring. The Greek word Paul uses is *porosis*. On its derivation and history, *poros* was a kind of marble, and the word was used by medical writers to picture a callous or a bony formation on the joints. That is why the verb *poroun* meant "to petrify; to become hard and therefore insensible" and even, when transferred from the organs of feeling to the organ of sight, can refer to blindness.

However, in this view, it does not mean stubbornness. It is actually intellectual dim-

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wittedness, mental denseness, scholarly stupidity. The Gentile attitude of which Paul wrote was obtuseness, or dulling of the faculty of perception equivalent to moral blindness—hardheadedness but not the steeling of the will. In biblical usage, *heart* and *mind* cannot be separated, since the heart includes our capacity to think and understand. Nevertheless, there is a definite distinction between ignorance and obstinacy.

Paul seems to be depicting the terrible downward path of evil, which begins with obstinate rejection of God's truth. First comes their hardness of heart; then their ignorance, being darkened in their understanding; next and consequently they are alienated from the life of God, since He turns away from them, until finally they have become callous and have given themselves up to decadence, greedy to practice every kind of uncleanness, as Paul wrote in verses 17 and 18. Once a person loses all sensitivity, he loses all self-control.

Verse 20—"But you have not so learned Christ"—is a dramatic and even abrupt statement. The Apostle Paul describes the kind of life that these Ephesian Christians themselves used to live, the life that was still being lived by the other Gentiles who had not believed the gospel of Jesus Christ. He finishes his description and suddenly uses this word *but*. "But you have not so learned Christ," says Paul, "if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus."

Paul is calling attention to this statement to grab us and to bring out the significant contrast that he has in mind. The initial emphasis is on the *but* and the *you*. "*But you have not so learned Christ.*" These two words convey to us a feeling of relief and thanksgiving because Paul has just finished dissecting the life of the pagan unbeliever. This is the outsider who is in a state of darkness and is alienated from God. When Paul says to us, "but you have not so learned Christ," he is telling us that we are not in that state any more or should not be. We can be thankful that we are not.

These words of Paul from Ephesians 4 show us something else about members of God's church and their character: We are to present a complete contrast to our previous worldly lives. Nothing should reflect the same lives that we used to live. Paul emphasizes the word *so*. We are not in a situation in which we say that we believe in Christ but still go on living as we did before. The world is full of those types of people who are professing Christians and claim that.

Ephesians 4:20 But you have not so learned Christ.

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Paul uses one of his favorite figures of speech here, called a *litotes* [l 't -t z']. It is defined as "a figure of speech consisting of an understatement in which an affirmative is expressed by negating its opposite, as in 'This is no small problem.'" What you are emphasizing in that example is that there is a great problem.

"You have not so learned Christ" is a negative statement. What Paul means, however, is something very positive. A *litotes* is a very effective figure of speech to use if you are eager to bring out emphasis.

Let me give you another example of it: In Romans 1:16 Paul says, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ." What he means is that he is tremendously proud of it, that he has absolute confidence in it, but he expresses it by an emphatic negative, "not ashamed." Similarly, he says here, "you have not so learned Christ." He means that the very suggestion is utterly impossible; it is unthinkable. Paul is emphasizing that the life of the Christian is to be totally different from that of "other Gentiles," that is, those outside of the church.

Our life as a Christian is not something vague and indefinite, not something difficult to define or difficult to recognize. It is clear-cut and obvious; it stands out; it is perfectly definite. Anybody should be able to recognize that something is different about it compared to the life of those with the mindset of the world.

Let us look at some of the terms which are used in scripture to bring out this point. Jesus said that the Christian is to be the "salt of the earth." He also says that we are to be "the light of the world." Paul uses similar words in writing to the Philippians. In the second chapter, he tells them that they are to "shine" and that they are "lights in the world." Since we know that the world is described as being in absolute darkness, we can see a direct and opposite contrast. In fact, it is one of the greatest contrasts of which we can think. The contrast between Christians and people who are not Christian is the contrast between light and darkness.

Again, Christ says that when a man lights a candle, he does not put it under a bushel but on a candlestick so it can light the whole house. He also says that His disciples are like "a city set upon a hill, which cannot be hid." It is there for all to see. A Christian should be as impossible to hide as a city set on a hill. The whole terminology is designed to bring out these contrasts. Paul writes:

II Corinthians 6:14-17 Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial?

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Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people." Therefore "Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you."

The Christian is one who stands out in society because he is a Christian. This does not mean that he will delight in being odd or make himself eccentric or foolish; it is setting a good example. It is as we read in Mark's gospel, that Christ "could not be hidden." It is also true about the Christian because of the very nature of the Christian, and because we have learned Christ in that way.

When purity appears in the midst of impurity, there is no need for it to exaggerate itself or to send a trumpeter before it to announce its presence, as the Pharisees did by flaunting their phylacteries. Purity advertises itself; the contrast does it all. When observing our lives, people in the world should not be surprised when they are told that we are Christians. Our lives should not be the manifestation of a mere morality that has lost contact with the truth.

In contrast to the hardness, darkness, and recklessness of the unbeliever, Paul sets forth a whole process of Christian moral education. He uses three parallel expressions which center on three verbs, all in the aorist tense, meaning "to learn," "to hear," and "to be taught," with a final reference to "the truth is in Jesus" (Ephesians 4:20-21).

First, you learned Christ (verse 20); the single Greek word for this is *emathete*. Second, you heard Him (verse 21); the single Greek word for this is *ekousate*. Third, you were taught by Him (verse 21); the single Greek word for this is *edidachthete*. I just wanted to show you that those Greek terms are from one single word.

According to the first, Christ is Himself the substance of Christian teaching. Just as God's ministers preach Christ, their hearers learn Christ and receive Him, that is, doctrine about Him, His teachings, and His way of life. We are to imitate, follow, and copy Him. It is not enough to only learn about the person of Jesus Christ, "the Word made flesh," who died, rose, and reigns. The implication of the context of verses 20 and 21 is that we also have to preach and learn about the coming Kingdom of God and all the moral demands of the new life that Christ taught during His life. The Christ that the Ephesian Christians had learned was calling them to standards and values totally at odds with their former pagan life. Paul was warning them to not allow themselves to slip

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back into their old, familiar, comfortable, worldly ways.

Second, Christ who is the substance of the teaching (in that, "you learned Christ") is Himself also the teacher (in that, "you heard Him"). Paul assumes that through the voices of their Christian teachers, they had actually heard Christ's voice, which echoes the voice of His Father. When sound biblical instruction is given, we rightly say that Jesus Christ is teaching about Christ.

Third, they had been taught by Him. Jesus Christ, in addition to being the Teacher and the teaching, was also the context—even the atmosphere—within which the teaching was given. When Jesus Christ is at one and the same time the subject, the object, and the environment of the moral instruction being given, we can have confidence and feel secure that it is truly Christian.

True moral instruction is not based on human reasoning. This type of reasoning leads to the perversions we see in our society today: homosexuality, pedophilia, and pornography. Pop culture now refers to being assaulted and/or robbed with a much softer term: The word is *compromised*. The true victim was "compromised," not attacked; but the evil assailant was the sufferer of bad handling by his parents or the government or society. The world cannot even call things what they are. You are attacked, assaulted, injured, hurt—but the world says that you are "compromised," because they do not want to put the negative connotation on the one who is the criminal.

Ephesians 4:21 ...The truth is in Jesus.

The change from His title, Christ, to His human name, Jesus, seems to be deliberate. The human Jesus was Himself the embodiment of truth, but what exactly is this truth that is in Jesus? If the unbeliever is in darkness, which leads to reckless uncleanness, what is the truth that sets Christians free and leads us to righteousness? The next verses give the answer:

Ephesians 4:22-24 That you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt 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.

To learn Christ is to comprehend the new creation that He has made possible and the

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entirely new life that results from it. It is to comprehend how to live a righteous life, and that can only be done if we know the truth, truth that is acquired through Jesus Christ.

The verbs *put off* and *put on* are not new commands that the apostle Paul is addressing to the Ephesian church but old ones that he gave when he was with them before and of which he now reminds them. These commands are part of the truth that is in Jesus, that they had been taught and had learned. In other words, Paul tells them, "You did not so learn Christ, assuming that you were taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus, namely, that you were to put off your old human nature and put on the new nature that is in Jesus Christ." They had been taught that becoming a Christian involves a radical change process, that is, conversion and re-creation.

Paul tells us in verse 23, "and be renewed in the spirit of your mind." This verse indicates that implicit in conversion and in addition to the decisive rejection of the old and assumption of the new, a daily—in fact a continuous—inward renewal of our outlook is involved in being a Christian. The renewing of our mind is a constant thing, a constant battle against the ways of the world and the influence of Satan. Remember what Paul says in verse 20: "But you have not so learned Christ." We have not learned that mindset of the world because we have come out of and rejected it. At least, that is the way it should be if we are indeed Christians.

Our reaction here should be thankfulness to God that we are no longer of the world. It is very important that we feel a sense of relief and profound gratitude to God. With this simple word *but*, Paul is contrasting and turning his view from sin to salvation. This is the purpose of the Days of Unleavened Bread: to cause us to take note of this change of attitude that God requires so that we may receive God's gift of salvation. The plan of God for the salvation of humanity is a process, and ridding our lives of sin and overcoming it is our responsibility in this process.

If we merely hold the truth theoretically in our minds, this will not move us to action at all. If we have distanced ourselves to the point of hearing the description of sin in a kind of detached, scholarly manner we will have no sense of relief and thanksgiving as a result of our relationship to God. However, if we realize that all that Paul says about our life before our knowledge of Christ was true, if we realize that we were in the grip of sin, if we realize that we still have to fight against it, then these words give us a sense of great relief. "But you have not so learned Christ."

We read Paul's words, and then we read our newspapers and internet news sites. As we look at what is going on all around us, we recognize the contrast between life in Christ and life in this world. Then, when Paul reminds us by his words that we are set

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apart—"but you"—we feel instant relief and thankfulness, because it gives us a sense of hope. Paul uses it to mark the entry of the gospel. This contrast is exposed by the gospel, that is, the truth. The gospel has nothing to do with this world, its mind, and its outlook; it is something that comes from above and it brings hope with it.

The truth always comes as a contrast. It is not an extension of human philosophy or human reasoning; it is not just an appendix to the book of life or merely an addition to something that humans have been able to evolve for themselves. No! It is altogether from God. It is something that comes in as light into the midst of darkness and hopelessness and insufferable despair. God Himself is light, and He is continuously speaking to humanity through His creation. Both heaven and earth declare His glory.

We are realistically looking at the modern world in terms of this accurate description of it, and we see that everything of which human beings have ever been able to think has failed to solve its overwhelming problems. Does political action or the many religions dealing with the moral situation accomplish anything positive at all? Is government education solving family problems? Turn on the news or read your newspaper and you have your answer. Out of control, insane people are not limited to coming from the uneducated or poor. It is a human tendency for all classes of people to reject God and have enmity toward Him.

How can the social agencies of this society deal with a situation such as what Paul describes as people who are beyond feeling? When you are dealing with a dark mind, with a hardened heart, with an immoral society enticing all of mankind and always opposed to God, what is the value of a little moral talk? What is the power of any government legislation?

The solutions arrived at by the social engineers are so far off the mark that they are literally "shooting in the dark"! It is impossible to change the wickedness of society by passing laws in Congress and throwing money at the problems through entitlements to the poor and minorities. A new house or anything else that is given to people by the government will not change anyone for the better. Only people who take personal responsibility for their own lives will make any character improvements—but even that is limited without the help of God.

The truth of God comes into the midst of despair and hopelessness; it gives us a basis from which to look at life with a realistic eye. Remember, Paul said, "You have not so learned Christ." We have not learned from Christ to view things in a distorted way as the world does. Members of God's church see sin for what it is: destructive slavery.

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In contrast, there is nothing in this world that can afford to be seen realistically. Everything must try to persuade itself in a kind of self-hypnotism that bad is not bad and sin is not sin. The world lies to itself about the true solutions to its problems because it does not want to accept individual responsibility; it refuses to limit the desires of its human nature with self-control.

The first lie a person must tell himself is that if he sins, he will not surely die. Ecclesiastes 8 exposes a tendency that is at work in human nature. Since the natural human inclination is to love to hear only nice things, society is willing to hear that the economy is doing well and that all things are good, and that housing is still increasing, even though not as fast as it was. The government paints a happy picture when reality is just the opposite of that, since the United States is on the verge of bankruptcy.

Ecclesiastes 8:11-13 Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. Though a sinner does evil a hundred times, and his days are prolonged, yet I surely know that it will be well with those who fear God, who fear before Him. But it will not be well with the wicked; nor will he prolong his days, which are as a shadow, because he does not fear before God.

This is what the Israelites wanted to go back to when they feared the soldiers of the army of Pharaoh coming after them. They wanted to go back to those wicked ways that are nothing but a shadow.

When punishment for wrongdoing is not carried out immediately, human nature is intent on continuing to do wrong things. This principle is at work within all of us. Once a person has sinned, it is easier for him to sin again and again. When he sins repetitively, it becomes habitual—and when it becomes habitual, it has become his way of life.

The more a sinner sins without noticing any negative resulting consequence, the more at ease he feels about continuing to live sinfully. However, it will not always go well for the wicked, nor will he live a long abundant life, because his life is merely a shadow of life, the result of not fearing God. He has no guarantee that life will go on indefinitely. We in God's church do have that guarantee, that our lives will go on indefinitely with excellence when we are changed. In sharp contrast to end of the wicked, all things ultimately turn out well for those who love and fear God.

Just because the penalty for sin does not happen immediately does not mean that it will never come. Adam and Eve overlooked God's instruction because they became

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convinced that the penalty—death—would never come. When they seemed to get away with disobedience to God and death was not immediate, they were even more convinced that Satan was right. However, other curses came upon them throughout the remainder of their lives that could have been avoided. Eventually death did come, and the final death will come at the White Throne Judgment for anyone who does not repent.

Remember, this is part of the way God carries out His plan. He gives us time to learn lessons and time to come to a better knowledge and understanding of Him. He gives us time to realize that for every action there is a reaction; for every cause there is an effect. Good always produces good, and bad always produces bad!

What if God reacted immediately with His justified wrath when we sinned? We would have the "freedom" to sin only once and then our life would be over! Be thankful for God's mercy. When would we learn by experience? When would we build character? When would we be able to grow in the knowledge and wisdom of God? If God sent His wrath the first time we sinned, we would never have an opportunity to learn these things. The world is deceived because the penalty does not seem to come quickly. We have had our eyes opened; therefore, we cannot allow ourselves to be blinded to this principle.

A quality of the truth is that it is the only thing that can confront a human being as he is, at his very worst and at his most hopeless, and still benefit him. This is because the power of God is in it. His is a power that enables the truth to be in Jesus Christ.

At the beginning of his epistle to the Galatians, Paul reminded the Galatian members of God's wonderful work in Jesus Christ and put it like this:

Galatians 1:3-4 Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father.

This is one of the major reasons that Christ died. The first goal of His dying was to deliver His people from this present evil world. He takes hold of us and pulls us out of it. Paul wrote something similar to the Colossians: "Who has delivered us from the power of darkness and has translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." It is God who delivers us, of course. When we respond to God's call, we change our association with one kingdom and become loyal to another—from a dark kingdom to a light-filled kingdom. We are no longer in the kingdom of Satan; we belong, in embryo, to the Kingdom of God and of His Son, Jesus Christ.

Paul's terms emphasize this movement, this translation. We are not simply improved a little bit just where we are. God does not say "Come as you are!" the way most mainstream religious denominations do. It is something entirely new—and it is going to end in a new heaven and new earth where only righteousness dwells.

The purpose of the church is not to improve or change the world but to feed the people God calls out of the world, to save us from it, to build and expand this new kingdom. The Bible does not teach that we are to Christianize the world. People are to come out of it and be separate from it. Peter put it like this in the second chapter of his first epistle: "Who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."

We are taken out of Egypt and put into Canaan; it is not an improvement of the conditions in Egypt. Quite the contrary, the Israelites were taken out of Egypt, taken on their journey, and brought into Canaan. They were taken out of sin. They were freed from the slavery of sin and given the opportunity to be free to live righteously.

The two million newly-freed Israelites that jubilantly marched out of Egypt escaped the bondage of slavery. After a few exhausting days of travel they reached an area near the Red Sea, free from the harsh Pharaoh. Then, though, Pharaoh decided to pursue them with his mighty army. On the sixth day, the Egyptians caught up to the Israelites; but to the army's dismay, a cloud supernaturally separated them from the Israelites. That night, Moses stepped to the shore of the sea, stretched out his hand over it, and a strong wind miraculously began to blow. By morning, walls of water formed and dry land appeared. The Israelites marched across the dry seabed to safety.

However, the Egyptians were cursed when they tried to follow. Their chariot wheels fell off and the walls of water came crashing down, drowning the soldiers and their horses. In safety on the opposite shore, the Israelites rejoiced over their deliverance. This is the type of rejoicing that we are to do, since we are in God's church.

These events that occurred more than three thousand years ago have important symbolic meaning for us today. Pharaoh represents Satan; and Egypt, the slavery of sin. Israel leaving Egypt is symbolic of Christians coming out of sin. Both Egypt and leavened bread are types of sin. Leaven is also considered a corrupting influence. Leavened bread was not to be eaten by the Israelites during the seven days of the Exodus. Unleavened bread, representing purity and the absence of sin, was to be eaten every day of the seven days of the feast.

I Corinthians 5:6-7 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

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may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.

Just as a poison must be eliminated before it pollutes and a weed must be plucked out before it spreads throughout the whole yard, so also the leaven of sin must be removed—purged out—before it spreads and infects the whole body and mind. Likewise, Egypt's society encouraged wickedness, which Moses forsook.

Hebrews 11:24-27 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, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible.

Moses knew that to inherit eternal life in God's Kingdom, he had to utterly forsake the ways of sin, forsake the ways of Egypt, forsake the ways of this world. Christ died so that we would not have to pay the penalty of eternal death. Now God expects us to obey His law—to "unleaven" our lives. God does not want us to continue in sin, for Christ is not "a minister of sin," as Paul told the Galatians. In contrast, Moses foreshadows and symbolizes Jesus Christ, our Deliverer from sin.

Acts 3:20-22 "And that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began. For Moses truly said to the fathers, 'The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you.'"

The Israelites picture true Christians, and the Promised Land for which the Israelites worked symbolizes God's Kingdom.

The apostle Peter pleaded with the elect of God, as temporary residents of this world, in I Peter 2:11, "Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul." We are only spiritual sojourners in this world, if we are Christians. Sojourners temporarily reside; pilgrims temporarily visit. This means that our homeland, our seat of government, is there; our citizenship is in heaven, as Paul

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reminds us in Philippians 3:20. We are still in the society of the world; but if we are Christians, we do not belong to its mindset, its outlook, its point of view. We are sojourners and pilgrims; we are people away from our true home.

The Last Day of Unleavened Bread does more than help us to understanding what the events of the Exodus picture; there are definite spiritual lessons that it teaches. Here are four:

1. Satan does not want us to escape from sin. Just as Pharaoh pursued those newly-freed Israelites, so Satan pursues all Christians, especially newly-baptized ones. He is angry that we are escaping sin and wants us back under his evil dominance.

I Peter 5:8-9 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.

Peter's word for *devour* means literally "to drink down," picturing the ferocity of a beast of prey. Peter is not speaking of the threat of martyrdom in an amphitheater that affected so many Christians in the last half of the first century. The danger he sees does not come simply from suspicious neighbors or from hostile authorities. Lurking behind the authorities and powers that dominate pagan life there moves a more fearful destroyer, the purely evil Satan.

Although for most of the last hundred years, there has been a general disbelief in the devil, it does not affect his temporary success. Satan, like a lion, may hunt by stealth as well as by terror; he could not ask for better cover than the illusion that he does not exist or that his comeback is merely metaphorical.

Peter calls Satan the "enemy" or "adversary." The term has a legal connotation; it reflects the Old Testament picture of Satan as the accuser of the saints before the throne of God's justice. In the book of Job, Satan appears in the role of a heavenly prosecutor. In fact, he seems to patrol the earth collecting evidence. Satan's motivation is not zeal for justice; rather, he seeks to discredit God's word and destroy God's works.

Satan's opposition to the "offspring of the woman" comes into view when he tempts Jesus. Their encounter resembles a combat, an ordeal in which Satan attacks Jesus with respect to both His calling as Messiah and His identity as the Son of God. Satan's power is seen in his claim to control the kingdoms of the world; his subtlety is evident in

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the skill with which he quotes scripture and calls on Jesus to test God's promises.

Our adversary is a shrewd deceiver, not a kind giver like our advocate. God has allowed Satan a measure of authority for a finite period of time, but his power is limited to that which serves God's overall purposes. Our loving Father allows trials in our lives to train us to rely on His strength and wisdom, not our own. We do not have the luxury of loafing and we cannot afford to be ignorant now, at the end of this age.

The apostle Paul tells us to "be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might" and to "put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." To avoid experiencing evil, we need to discern evil. Satan never fails to claim his slaves of sin. He does not want us to escape from sin, as Pharaoh did not want the Israelites to escape from Egypt.

2. We may want to return to sin. Does this surprise us? When Pharaoh appeared with his army, what did the Israelites want to do? They wanted to return to Egypt, where it was familiar and less threatening, easier going and not a constant swim upstream.

Exodus 14:10-12 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."

Sometimes over the years, we have heard children of brethren make similar comments in different words to their parents, especially when they come of age eighteen, nineteen, twenty. They want to pursue the world and make up for lost time, so to speak, and sometimes they become even worse than the world itself. It is the same carnal attitude that the Israelites had here. They wanted to go back into the figurative cesspool in which they had been.

As long as the Israelites kept their eyes on the fiery pillar and followed the Lord, they were walking by faith and no enemy could touch them. However, when they took their eyes off the Lord and looked back and saw the Egyptians getting nearer, they became frightened and began to complain.

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Although Israel cried out to God for help, they had no confidence in Him. Despite all the previous manifestations of the faithfulness and loyalty of the true God, their next reaction was to blame Moses. They were typically human, looking for someone else to blame for their problems. As armchair quarterbacks, we recognize that this accusation was very wrong but very human. It is easy for us to look back at what they did and accuse them or point the finger at them, but we Israelites, both spiritually and physically, are complainers. The spiritual side should be more powerful and should keep us from complaining.

The fact that the Israelites complained about dying and leaving their graves in the wilderness is a bitter irony in view of the abnormal pre-occupation of the Egyptians with tombs. They were the masters of the tomb builders of the world. Their additional comments in verse 12 about their situation were exaggerated by their cowardly despair. It was only when the oppression increased after Moses' first confrontation with Pharaoh that they complained about what Moses had done. At first, they had accepted his proposals with thankfulness, and even implicitly obeyed his directions later.

However, before we criticize the Israelites, perhaps we had better examine our own hearts. How much disappointment or discomfort does it take to make us unhappy enough with God's will to stop believing and start complaining? The same reaction can happen to us. We should be walking by faith, not by sight. While in danger or under temptation, we can easily want to sin because we are far more accustomed to leaning toward our own human nature than disciplining ourselves to be righteous.

When we forget God's promises, we start to imagine the worst possible outcome and begin to panic. Faithlessness has a way of erasing from our memory all the demonstrations we have seen of God's great power, and all the instances we know of God's faithfulness to His Word. Human nature always has the tendency to return to sin as the Israelites desired to return to Egypt.

3. God can deliver us from sin. By themselves, the Israelites had no way of escape from Pharaoh and his army. They were trapped by the mountains and the Red Sea—but God made a way of escape that led to the Promised Land. Likewise, we, by ourselves, are unable to overcome sin.

Romans 8:7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.

However, with the help of God, we can overcome. He can give us strength of mind and

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character to resist evil.

I Corinthians 10:13 No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

For the Israelites, it was a watery grave that destroyed their adversary. For us, it is also a watery grave—that of baptism—that helps us leave behind our sinful way of life, the old man. More importantly, God gives us the power of His Holy Spirit to overcome temptation.

Romans 6:4-6 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

Acts 2:38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

However, this overcoming does not happen automatically. We must diligently call upon God and then put forth the effort to do the right thing. We must be convinced that God can deliver us from sin as He did, using Moses, when He delivered the Israelites from Egypt.

4. Our deliverance from sin brings happiness. The pursuing Egyptians were dead; the Israelites were finally free. They had feelings of immense joy, triumph, and jubilation. For us, deliverance from sin brings real happiness. When we refrain from sin and overcome it, we no longer have to eat the bitter fruit of sin, suffer the pangs of guilt, or deny ourselves the joy of righteousness.

The New Testament both continues and transforms the Old Testament image of happiness under the shade of the vine. Christians are still happy under the shade of a

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vine, but now the vine is Jesus Christ Himself. God gives the shade of happiness, as the truth is in Jesus, to all who have learned Christ.

The Old Covenant picture of happiness was primarily in terms of conditional physical well-being. The New Covenant image of happiness is centered on Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul wrote:

Philippians 4:4 "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!"

In the New Testament, happiness has a moral dimension. We are not to use it for self-indulgence but as an opportunity for thanksgiving.

Romans 6:17-19, 22-23 But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness...But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Paul uses a double metaphor. "Sin's pay is death," he says, "but God's free gift is eternal life." Paul uses two military words. For *pay*, he uses *opsonia*. This was the soldier's pay, something that he earned with hard labor and the risk of his body, something that was due to him and could not be taken from him in physical terms. For *gift*, he uses *charisma*, which was a totally unearned gift that the army sometimes received. On special occasions—for instance, on the emperor's birthday, or on his ascension to the throne or the anniversary of it—he handed out a free gift of money to the army. It had not been earned; it was a gift of the emperor's kindness and will.

Paul says, "If we got the pay we had earned, it would be death—but out of His grace God has given us life." Our deliverance from sin brings happiness, as the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt brought them great happiness and jubilation! No longer are we slaves to sin, but we are now servants to the great God who guides us. We must not get in the way of God freeing us from sin so we can enjoy the fruits of righteousness—forever!

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Thanks to God's mercy and calling and His Son's sacrifice and help, our life is much different, much better! The end result is our promised land: the Kingdom of God and eternal life. In the meantime, we must come out of our sinful past and march on through the wilderness to the Kingdom of God. The Israelites had much to overcome and so do we.

If we are to receive the gift of eternal life and become members of God's Family, we must prove our willingness to obey God by working to get the spiritual leaven of sin out of our lives. This is our part, our responsibility in God's great master plan, as pictured by the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Because of this, at this time every spring, we are to renew our resolve to live in harmony with God's laws from now on, to rededicate our lives to continual spiritual growth.

God knows that to overcome and obey Him, we need His spiritual help; therefore, He promises to give us the power of His Holy Spirit. Without using this power, we tend to slip back into the ways of Egypt, but we "have not so learned Christ." Satan and the world do not care about what is true, only what serves their desires—the futility of their minds. "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 Christ."