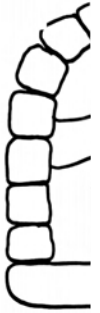

A Little Leaven

“Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”

— 1Corinthians 5:6-8



A Little Leaven

LEAVEN is what we put in bread dough to make it light and fluffy. When leaven is added to flour, it grows and grows until the dough is over twice the size as when it started.

During the week of the Passover, the Jews were to rid their houses of all leaven or anything else which would ferment or corrupt. Even today, the Jews take this command very seriously. Some even go so far as to throw away their toasters and buy new ones so that not even a crumb of leaven would remain in their houses.

But why is it important for the Jews to clean their houses of leaven. And why did the Apostle Paul advise Christians to purge out the leaven? First we must understand the lesson for the Jews which comes from the first Passover written in Exodus 12:1-20:

“And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, This month shall be unto you the beginning of months... speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house.... Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of



the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats: And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening. And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it. And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it.... And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the LORD's passover. For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt. And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall



keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever. Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread; even the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses: for whosoever eateth leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel... And ye shall observe the feast of unleavened

bread; for in this selfsame day have I brought your armies out of the land of Egypt: therefore shall ye observe this day in your generations by an ordinance for ever.”

And, so, God, through Moses, established an ordinance for ever that the Jews should not eat leaven nor have leaven in their homes during a special time of year when they remember their deliverance from the bondage of Egypt.

But why did God make such a strange ordinance? We know that everything that happened to the Nation of Israel was a picture of something which would happen to either the world of mankind, to Jesus or to his Church:

“Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.” 1Cor. 10:11 “Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.” Galatians 3:24

So, how is leaven a schoolmaster or teacher? Jesus explained this lesson to his disciples in Matthew 16:1-12: *“The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would shew them a sign from heaven. He answered and said unto them...A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign...And he left them, and departed. And when his disciples were come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread.*

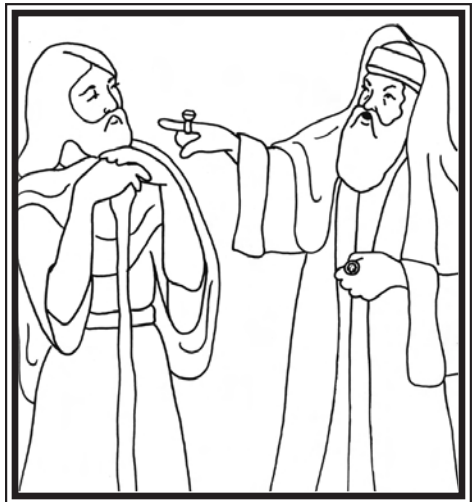




Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees. And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have taken no bread. Which when Jesus perceived, he said unto them, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread?

Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees? Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.”

Leaven is a perfect picture of the pride and wicked doctrines of the Scribes and Pharisees. As we mentioned before, leaven





is put in bread dough to puff it up. The pride of the scribes and Pharisees puffed them up and made them believe false doctrines. It usually follows that where a person is prideful, he will also have problems of understanding truth. "... be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under

the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time." 1Peter 5:5-6

Now, then, why do Christians have to understand the lesson of leaven? Why is it so important to keep our house, picturing our hearts and minds clean of leaven, picturing pride? Just like leaven in a lump of dough, pride and the false doctrines which come as a result of pride, spread throughout our minds and make us unable to serve God to his glory and honor. "*Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?*" 1Corinthians 5:6 God desires anything done for him to be done from a pure and humble heart. Again, we can turn to the example of the Jews and what they did unto God. In all of their sacrifices, they were not to present them with leaven. "*Thou shalt not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leaven....*" Exodus 34:25 God wants us to understand that all that we have is from Him. He wants us to be thankful for His many gifts to us. If we are puffed up with the

leaven of pride when we sacrifice something to Him, then we don't really understand that God provided for us to be able to sacrifice in the first place.

Pride is one of seven sins which God hates! *“These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren. My son, keep thy father’s commandment... Bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck. Proverbs 16:6-21*

Pride will cause a multitude of sins to spread throughout a person’s mind. It can cause someone to lie, to shed innocent blood because of jealousy, to make up all kinds of bad thoughts and stories about someone else, to make someone walk more and more in the ways of unrighteousness, and worst of all, to cause discord or controversies among the brethren.



God wants us to remember to *purge out the leaven* in our hearts especially at the time when we remember Jesus’ death. Jesus was *“the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world.”* His *Memorial* is also a time to remember that Jesus is gathering a Church to share in his sacrifice for the sins of the world. He calls the Church his *body*. What would happen to this body of Christ if leaven—pride—false

doctrines and sin were to enter in? It would cause great confusion and strife in the Church! The world cannot be blessed by the ransom sacrifice of Jesus until the Church, the body of Christ is complete and all glorified with the Lord. We all pray, *“Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven.”* Matthew 6:10 So, we should pray that the Church would prove faithful by keeping herself free from the leaven of pride and false doctrines.

Therefore, because it is so important to keep the Church humble and pure, each Christian must do his part and always try to keep leaven out of his heart and mind; especially at the Memorial time. And since Jesus is the true Passover Lamb, the Memorial is the time when Christians are told to purge out the old leaven. *“Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”*

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