

Why Did God Choose Leaven to Represent Sin?

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Well, as John pointed out in the sermonette, we are just starting the Days of Unleavened Bread. We've spent days putting leavening out of our homes. And Christ likened leaven to sin. Let's go to Luke chapter 12 and just read the first verse. And we see that Christ drew a parallel between leaven and sin—something that we would do well to pay heed to these days. Luke 12 verse 1, it says:

Luke 12:1. In the mean time, when [they] were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, (KJV)

A giant press of people wanting to follow Him, hear Him.

Luke 12:1b. insomuch that they [stepped] upon one another, [and] he began to say unto his disciples first of all, (KJV)

He's addressing this mainly to the disciples. They're the recipients of this sentence that He's going to say. He says,

Luke 12:1 continued. Beware [you] of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. (KJV)

We know hypocrisy is a sin. And yet He's saying that the Pharisees had that sin. As in Matthew 23 we know, we have a whole chapter about their hypocrisy. But the point I'm making is that He is saying that *leaven* is like sin. He's saying that *leaven* is like sin. There's some connection there. There's an analogy between *leaven* and sin.

And in the Days of Unleavened Bread, we know that in part they teach us that we need—as John pointed out—with the help of God's holy spirit to put sin out of our lives as we have spent time putting leaven out of our lives. I mean we look in nooks and crannies. We get into the couch in the corners there and we blast out the toaster and all of that. We spend time looking for leaven to get it out of our lives. And Christ is saying, "Leaven is like sin."

And so the question then comes to mind: Why on earth did Christ choose to picture sin as leaven? What about leaven? What is there about leaven that corresponds to sin? Maybe there's some characteristics of leaven that would instruct us and teach us more about sin. Since we're starting now the Days of Unleavened Bread and we have several days ahead of us to put sin out of our lives, I thought it might be instructive to look at this subject of leaven, look at the characteristics of leaven and then see what lessons we can learn about putting sin out of our lives.

I'm going to give you Five Properties of Leaven that teach us about sin.

First—I get grins from some quarters of the audience here, those of you out in DVD and CD land because I speak with points and topics. And some people when I mention the first one, they'll roll their eyes or give me a smile saying, "Here he goes again!" So here we go again.

Number One:

The fact is that leaven starts small.

We have to understand that. Leaven starts small. Let's go to Galatians 5 and verse 9 and see a characteristic of leaven that tells us a whole bunch of things. We'll refer to this later on, too, in some other points. Galatians 5 and verse 9, Paul is trying to tell the Church at Galatia an important point. And he's trying to instruct us about a characteristic of leaven that we would do well to pay heed to. Galatians 5 and verse 9 says:

Galatians 5:9. A little leaven [leavens] the whole lump. (KJV)

It starts small, but then it grows and grows and grows until the whole pot or the whole wad of dough is fully leavened. But it starts with just a tiny little thing. And we know that the air all around us contains microscopic spores of leaven that are invisible to the naked eye. And yet you can lay out some dough and it will attract those spores. The spores will come in and it will rise by itself in many cases. Unknown to you; unknown to me! You don't even see it—these little microscopic spores.

So what does that tell us? What does that teach us about sin? Well, we know that Satan has the ability to broadcast thoughts, moods, and emotions into our mind. Let's go to Ephesians 2 and verse 2.

Mr. Armstrong hit on this for year after year after year. Being a man that was well-versed in radio and he began his ministry on the radio, understood the nature of radio in the sense that you can have a little transistor radio and there's nothing around it. There's no wires. There's nothing and yet it receives a signal that we can't see and turns it into electrical energy and then acoustic energy and we can hear. And yet there's nothing there. It's just floating in space, this machine. And Mr. Armstrong likened that and often referred to it when he talked about Ephesians 2 and verse 2.

Ephesians 2:2. Wherein in time past [you] walked according to the course of this world, (KJV)

And we did. And we still have to put the "course of this world" out of our lives.

Ephesians 2:2b. according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit (KJV)

It's a spirit that you can't see; you can't measure. Scientists claim it doesn't exist because they can't put a measuring tape to it.

And he says,

Ephesians 2:2b. the spirit that now [works] in the children of disobedience: (KJV)

It is a spirit that is broadcast into our minds in thoughts, moods, attitudes. Let's understand that. And those are likened unto these little infinitesimally small spores of leaven that can come into the human mind and begin to take root and begin to grow and grow and grow.

Let's go to James chapter 1. We're going to read verses 13 and 14. And let's look at another principle about how sin begins to start in the human mind because we need to focus on our mind. We've been focusing on the last few days on physical things—getting leavening out of our homes and cars and all of that. But at the same time we need to focus on the spiritual matters of getting leaven or sin out of what's up here between our ears. James 1 verse 13:

James 1:13: Let no man say [or no woman say] when [she] is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither [tempts] he any man [or woman]: (KJV)

Verse 14 though is the key.

James 1:14. [For] every man [every person] is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. (KJV)

Now the fact is that lust is not like a pill you take. Lust is not something that you get an injection of lust. Lust begins in the mind. It begins with a thought. One thought! And then just like the spores of leaven, it can grow and grow and grow until the whole mind is leavened. It is expanded to the point that it leavens the whole mind. But my point is here is that sin originally in the beginning in our head, a specific sin, begins with just a thought.

And we know where that thought comes from. It comes from Satan. It comes from our human nature. And we have a wrong desire. We have a negative thought about another human being. We have a critical thought. We have a judgmental thought. We have a cynical thought. We have a lustful thought. And it comes into our mind and the question, of course, becomes: Are we going to let it grow or not? Are we going to do something about it or not?

Let's go to 1 Peter 2 and verse 11. Peter knew this and he was telling the Church of God that they had to do something about it. He says in 1 Peter 2 verse 11:

1 Peter 2:11. Dearly beloved, (KJV)

He loved the Brethren. He cared for the Brethren. And he said:

1 Peter 2:11b. I beseech *you* [I'm crying out to you.] as strangers and pilgrims, (KJV)

Yes, we're strangers and pilgrims on this earth. This is not our society. This is not our government. This is not our nation. We belong to the government of God and Christ. We belong to the body of Jesus Christ and not a human government.

But he says, "You're strangers and pilgrims". Yes, we are. But he's advising them, he's beseeching them. He says:

1 Peter 2:11 continued. abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against [your life]; (KJV)

Abstain from them! And a fleshly lust is the jump start of sin. The thought comes in. And if we allow that lust to continue, it's just like putting battery cables to your battery and jump starting your car; it just jumps it up a notch or two. And then the sin begins to grow and grow and grow. And please remember if you don't remember anything from this sermon, just remember the fact that sin begins with a tiny thought. It just begins with one thought just like a tiny little spore lands on a loaf of dough, a wad of dough, and begins to grow and grow and grow.

And we need to be constantly aware of our thoughts. We have to be constantly aware of what's coming into our mind. And I've had times where I'm just bopping along. Things are going fine. I'm happy. I'm content. And then all of a sudden something comes into my head and within ten seconds-thirty seconds I'm ticked off about something or I'm upset about something or my stomach's in a knot or I get agitated or aggravated about something whereas a minute before I was peaceful and tranquil and content. I've learned over the years when that change comes, you have to stop what you're doing and ask yourself, "Where did that thought come from? Where did that emotion come from?" It didn't come from God. It didn't come from the holy spirit. Guess where it came from?

And we need to be on guard. Just like we're on guard about not letting leaven into our homes now that they're unleavened, we must, must be on guard against letting those leavened thoughts come into our mind, leavened emotions coming into our mind, or feelings—bad awful feelings—could be against other people, could be against anything! We have to be on guard and stop it early. We can't let it grow and grow and grow

We have to remember our nature. And sometimes we deceive ourselves thinking, "Ah, we're pretty good," or "humans are pretty good," or "There's good in everybody." Let's go to Jeremiah 17:9, very familiar Scripture. I think it's probably the first Scripture I ever memorized back in the sixties when I came into the Church. Jeremiah 17 verse 9 and we're going to read that. We're also going to read the next verse, which we don't often read. Jeremiah 17:9, we need to remember at this time particularly:

Jeremiah 17:9. The heart *is* deceitful [It says.] above all (KJV)

Above everything!

When a person is deceitful, it means that they appear to be one way when they're actually another way or they say one thing when their agenda is something else. And the human heart is the same way. It will deceive us into thinking we're right when we're wrong. It will deceive us thinking that what we said was okay when it really wasn't. It will deceive us thinking that the thoughts we're having are alright and justified when in reality they are not. Our heart will deceive us.

And it says:

Jeremiah 17:9b. who can know it? [It is so desperately wicked.] (KJV)

So let's understand that. That is the nature that we have. Now that's not the nature we are supposed to continue with. That's not the nature that we should be exhibiting now because of God's spirit coming into us after baptism made possible through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

But notice verse 10. God says:

Jeremiah 17:10. I the [Eternal] search the heart, (KJV)

God knows what's inside of us, our deepest emotions, our deepest thoughts, our deepest motives.

He says:

Jeremiah 17:10b. / try the reins, to give every man [or every woman] according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings. (KJV)

And so when the thought comes in, this little spore of leaven comes in, then the question that God is looking at—and He doesn't stop Satan from broadcasting. He hasn't put an invisible protective shield about us. Yes, He protects us from Satan's direct onslaught, but He doesn't stop the broadcasting of Satan. He doesn't stop the influence of the world, what we watch on TV, what we put into our ears through radio and so on. He doesn't stop that, but He watches us when He says, "I judge the hearts." He watches us to see what we do when the thought comes in. Do we immediately recognize it and push it out, thereby controlling our minds? Or do we chew on it and stew on it?

A cow will, the term is called *ruminates*. And they will—it's a good thing we're not eating in the next few minutes! A cow will urp up what it's chewed on before and it will chew on it some more. And then swallow it down and it'll do the same thing again.

So what God watches us to see "Are we going to ruminate on this evil thought? Are we going to just chew on it and play with it and let it take root in our mind? Or are we going

to control our thoughts and say, 'I'm not going to think that thought?'" I don't care if it's thinking four-letter words or thinking lustful thoughts. I don't care what it is. We have to be able to control our mind and stop this spore from growing and growing and growing. God holds us accountable for what we think and what we do and what we chew on in our minds.

And the point here in Number One is "Leavening starts small." We've got to keep it small and stop it before it grows. That's a huge lesson that God's people need to learn.

The Second Point, Characteristic of Leaven is that:

Leaven spreads by itself.

Leaven spreads by itself! A little pinch of leaven in the dough, you don't have to do anything. Now, yeah you can stir it and mix it in and it happens faster, but if you don't do anything, it'll spread through the whole batch of dough—all by itself! It spreads without the help of any other agent. It doesn't need a catalyst. It doesn't need anything else to help it spread. It just does it by itself.

And if we draw that analogy in parallel to sin, if we don't do something about it, guess what? It's going to spread and spread and spread and spread until it consumes us.

Now let's go to James chapter 1 and let's look at the beginning of verse 15—15a. Here is a principle that leaven spreads, and look at the result. James chapter 1, we were at verses 13 and 14 earlier, verse 15 it says:

James 1:15a. Then when lust [has] conceived, it bringeth forth sin: (KJV)

We could say regarding leaven, "If leaven isn't stopped, if it's allowed to stew and brew, it will permeate the whole loaf and it will, by analogy again, begin to grow into a gigantic sin, and begin to affect our whole mind."

It's interesting the definition of that Greek word *conceived*. It's Strong's 4815 and it means to seize or to take one as prisoner.

Very interesting! When lust starts it can take you as a prisoner. It can seize you. It can take over your mind and sin results. And we have to be very, very careful. Once a thought is dwelt upon, it leads to another sinful thought, another sinful thought, then action, and, as we're going to see, then action on other people's part. It spreads to other people and then you have a calamity. You have a disaster.

The most obvious example in the Bible is in Numbers chapter 16. This is the example of Korah. And we'll briefly go through this, but I want you to go through it from the standpoint of "How did this all start and how did it spread?" We know the result—horrible result! But how did it start and how did it spread and how did it get to this point where people started dying as a result of a single thought? And this is a lesson for us

today that people can die as a result of a single thought not dealt with! Numbers 16, I'll skip through. As we go through, I'll try to remember to let you know what verse we're on. We're going to start off with the first four verses.

Numbers 16:1. Now Korah, the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, (KJV)

And, as you remember, the sons of Kohath had a special place in the administration of the temple—the tabernacle. And in one case, they were tasked with putting up one whole wall of the tabernacle. And that was their purview. And it was a very serious thing and a very honorable thing for the family of Kohath. Also they were the ones that put the staves on their shoulders and carried the Ark—very honored position. And so, in that sense, his pedigree—Korah's pedigree—was better than Moses'. If you want to put a marker on that, if it was something big and important, which it's not, but in somebody's mind it could be. And probably in his mind, it was.

So:

Numbers 16:1b. the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, and Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On, the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took *men*: (KJV)

Now how did they get to the point of taking men? How did it get to that point? Well, what happened is, since Korah was mentioned first, I think it's obvious that at some point a thought came into Korah's mind. And he did nothing about it. He did not reject it. And that thought grew and grew and grew just like leaven in the loaf. And then Korah mentioned it to somebody else. They didn't stop it, and it grew and grew and grew. Then that other fellow might have mentioned it to two or three and then Korah was mentioning it to more and then it grew and grew and grew. From one thought in one person's mind, notice where it grows. It got to the point that they took men. Now instead of thinking it, they were talking about it and, instead of just talking about it with one or two, now they had a group.

Numbers 16:2. And they rose up before Moses, with certain of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown: (KJV)

So this thing spread from one thought to two hundred and fifty very important people in the congregation.

Verse 3:

Numbers 16:3. And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, [*You*] *take* too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the [Eternal] is among them: wherefore [why] then [do you] lift up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord? (KJV)

So it went from a thought to talking and then saying that Moses, "You're unfair. You're exalting yourself," and then to the point of taking action of gathering these people together and having a confrontation to Moses. All of this resulted from one thought not dealt with!

And poor Moses, when he heard it, in verse 4:

Numbers 16:4. he fell upon his face: (KJV)

Meaning: he went down to the ground, put his forehead on the ground, and started praying to God. Now that shows you a difference in attitude. One took it immediately to God. They took it to Moses.

Verse 8:

Numbers 16:8. And Moses said unto Korah, [he says,] Hear, I pray you, [you] sons of Levi: 9) [he says,] [*Seem*] *it* a small thing unto you, that the God of Israel [has] separated you (KJV)

Referring particularly to the sons of Kohath.

Numbers 6:9b. separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to himself to do the service of the tabernacle of the Lord, and to stand before the congregation to minister unto them? (KJV)

Moses is saying, "Look, you have this very important job, this very honored position. Isn't that enough for you? You want more than that? You're accusing me of wanting more. Look at yourselves!"

Verse 10, and he said:

Numbers 16:10. And he [meaning God] [has] brought [you] near to him, and all [your] brethren the sons of Levi with [you]: and seek [you] the priesthood also? (KJV)

"You want that in addition! You want to replace Aaron!"

Verse 11:

Numbers 16:11. For which cause *both* [you] and all [your] company *are* gathered together against the [Eternal]: and what *is* Aaron, that [you] murmur against him? (KJV)

"Why are you doing this thing? How did this get to this point?"

Verse 19:

Numbers 16:19. And Korah gathered all the congregation against them unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation: and the glory of [God, the Eternal] appeared unto all the congregation. 20) And the Lord [spoke] unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, 21) Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment. (KJV)

Blast them all to smithereens—the whole bunch!

Numbers 16:22. And they fell upon their faces, and said, O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, (KJV)

Now that's an indication that the sin began with one man, one man's mind. It was Korah. He was mentioned first. And Moses knew this.

Number 16:22b. shall one man sin and [will you] be [angry] with [the entire] congregation [of Israel because of that]? (KJV)

Moses knew where it started. He knew how it started.

Verse 23:

Numbers 16:23. And the Lord [spoke] unto Moses, saying, (KJV)

God backed off because I think He was testing Moses to see what Moses' attitude would be. And Moses showed love for the innocent people that might have been caught up in this or were innocent bystanders.

And then in verse 14, He said:

Numbers 16:24. Speak unto the congregation, saying, Get you [away] from the tabernacle of Korah, [and] Dathan, and Abiram. 25) [So] Moses went unto Dathan and Abiram; and the elders of Israel followed him. 26) And he [spoke] unto the congregation, [and he told them to get away] from the tents of these wicked men, [don't] touch [anything] of theirs, lest [you] be consumed in all their sins. (KJV)

Verse 27:

Numbers 16:27. So they [got] up from the [congregation] of Korah, [and those that were him and then] Dathan and Abiram came out, and stood in the door of their tents, and their wives, and their [kids], and their little children. 28) And Moses said, Hereby (KJV)

He's prophesying now. He says:

Numbers 16:28b. Hereby [you] shall know that the [Eternal has] sent me to do all these works; for *I have not done them* of [my] own mind. (KJV)

Remember the burning bush? And he wanted to back off. He had four excuses—the four excuses of Moses. And he said, "Send somebody else. I don't have the ability to do this. I can't speak." He didn't want it! And yet they were accusing him of engineering the whole thing.

Verse 29, he says:

Numbers 16:29. If these men die the common death of all men, or if they be visited after the visitation of all men; *then* the [Eternal has] not sent me. 30) But if the [Eternal makes] a new thing, and the earth [opens] her mouth, [swallows] them up, [and] all that [*pertains* to] them, and they go down quick into [a] pit; then [you're going to] understand that these men have (KJV)

We would say today "Ticked God off." And they indeed did.

Verse 31:

Numbers 16:31. And it came to pass, [that just] as he [stopped] speaking these words, the ground [opened up underneath] them: 32) And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and [Notice!] all the men that [*pertained* to] Korah, and all *their* goods. 33) They, and all that [*pertained*] to them, went down alive (KJV)

And this is a scary thought! They're going into this abyss alive screaming! Probably wishing with all their might they had listened. And now they know their fate.

Numbers 16:33b. and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation. 34) And all Israel that were round about them fled at the cry of them: (KJV)

We'd be putting our hands over our ears because you don't want to hear people dying.

Numbers 16:34b. for they said, Lest the earth swallow us up *also*. (KJV)

This was a powerful lesson about how sin starts and spreads by itself if it's not checked. Just like leaven spreads by itself if it's not checked, if it's not stopped.

Now David had something to say about this in Psalm 106. Let's turn over there. We'll begin in verse 7. Psalm 106 beginning in verse 7. We'll jump to specific verses here to make a point. Notice what he says in verse 7 of Psalm 106:

Psalm 106:7. Our fathers understood not [your] wonders in Egypt; (KJV)

And, as you know, Israel forgot the miracles. They turned on God. They whined. They complained. And they forgot about the marvelous miracles that God did in Egypt. So they "understood not [your] wonders in Egypt." Going on in verse 7:

Psalm 106:7b. they remembered not the multitude of [your] mercies; but provoked *him* at the sea, *even* at the Red sea. (KJV)

Now jumping to verse 14:

Psalm 106:14. But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert. 15) And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their [life]. 16) They envied Moses also in the camp, *and* Aaron the saint of the [Eternal]. 17) The earth opened and swallowed up Dathan, and covered the company of Abiram. (KJV)

Verse 24:

Psalm 106:24. Yea, they despised the pleasant land, [and] believed not his word: 25) But [they] murmured (KJV)

This is the key now!

Psalm 106:25b. [they] murmured in their tents, (KJV)

They murmured in their tents! And so over time, that one thought went to Korah and then they began to talk. He began to talk probably to his wife. And then he went and visited the tent of somebody else and then they began to talk. And then those people went to other tents and began to talk and murmur, murmur. And then all of a sudden this sin grew and grew just like leaven spreads through dough.

They didn't listen to God. And then the next verse there—Psalm 106:26:

Psalm 106:26. Therefore he lifted up his hand against them, to overthrow them in the wilderness: (KJV)

So we see here than a whole clan of people die. Earth opens up, swallows them, slams shut in a horrible death. And it's the result of one thought! One thought not dealt with! One thought not put out of the mind and it spread outward and onward to others and infected others just like leaven goes through a lump of dough.

This sin you see—now when you think back, the sin could have been stopped at many points along the path. Korah could have said, "Hey! No, this isn't right thinking. I just got to stop this." Or his wife could have said, "Hey! You're barking up the wrong tree. You better stop it." Or the first tent he went into, the fellow that he met there said, "Unh uh we can't do this. We can't be thinking about this." And it could have been stopped there. Or some of the two hundred and fifty princes could have gotten together and said, "Look, we're not supporting you on this. We're not going to do this! This isn't right." It could have been stopped at any one point over several days, several weeks, maybe several months, it could have been stopped, but they just let it grow and grow and grow.

Let's turn to Ephesians 2 and verse 3. Notice what Paul says to us today through the Church in Ephesus. He said:

Ephesians 2:3. Among whom also we all had our [conduct] in times past in the lusts of our flesh, (KJV)

And before God called us, we were just dragged around by the nose by the lusts of our flesh. That's what we did. We just fulfilled whatever bodily desire we had at the moment.

He says:

Ephesians 2:3b. fulfilling the desires of the flesh (KJV)

But notice!

Ephesians 2:3 continued. and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. (KJV)

And so let's understand that leaven spreads by itself and we have to use our mind—the converted part of our mind—to stop the thought, to stop the lust, to stop the desire of the mind. And like leaven, sin, when it is allowed to linger and work, if it's not checked, it spreads by itself. It spreads by its own nature. The nature of leaven is to spread by itself. It doesn't need any other agent. The nature of sin is to spread by itself unless something counteracts it, which has to be the spirit of God. So let's understand that.

That leads us to the Third Point. Now think about this for a minute:

Leaven changes into its own nature the substance with which it is mixed.

I'll say it again.

Leaven changes into its own nature the substance with which it is mixed.

You have leaven. Let's say you have bread dough. They're two separate things. But then leaven gets into the bread dough and begins to change the dough into something different. And there's a powerful lesson!

It's like cancer. We have so many Brethren with cancers. And what cancer does is it can get into any tissue, any internal organ, external organ. And it begins to change it. If it gets into a kidney, the kidney will not be a kidney anymore. It won't function—the pancreas, the heart, the lungs. And so, like cancer that changes into this growing mass of just mass of fast multiplying cells, what leaven does is changes into its own nature whatever substance it gets mixed into.

And if you liken it to sin, guess what? Sin can take a pure mind and turn it into a leavened mind. Sin can take a pure heart and turn it into a leavened heart. Over time all

becomes leavened. Over time everything that we allow sin to touch and we don't get rid of it becomes leavened in that sense also.

Remember in James—we won't turn there—James 1 and verse 15, it says: "When lust is conceived it brings forth sin." It's unchecked. If you don't check it, it will bring forth sin. The object will become fully leavened. A sin dwelt upon in the mind picks up momentum. Just like one spore of leaven begins to multiply and then it begins to geometrically multiply and then it begins to quickly invade and go through the dough, a sin left unchecked in the mind begins to do the same thing. It brings forth sin. It picks up momentum.

And in the example of Korah that we just read, in this sense it was the spirit of criticism of Moses. It began to grow and grow and grow. And it began to multiply because it started in one tent and then it begins to geometrically spread. And every day it gets bigger and bigger and bigger just like leaven does.

And today, if we allow that to happen, it can not only go beyond our mind, but it can influence our mate. It can influence our children. It can influence our friends in the Church. It can influence other Church groups in that regard.

Sin becomes a habit that becomes pleasant and delightful in a human sense. Sin becomes a habit that becomes pleasant and delightful. Look at Hebrews chapter 11 referring to Moses. Moses had choices to make in his life. And he rejected that which was pleasant and delightful. Hebrews 11, we're going to read verses 24 and 25.

Hebrews 11:24. By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; (KJV)

He could have stayed the way he was. He could have had all the riches of Egypt, but he chose not to.

Verse 25:

Hebrews 11:25. Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a [little] season [or for a little time]; (KJV)

Because we ultimately know what the end of man is. And even if that pleasure lasts ten-twenty-thirty-forty-fifty years, ultimately it will end. Sin can offer physical pleasure for a short period of time and that's the attraction of it. But the long term result, as we saw with Korah, is disastrous.

And if we allow sin to come into our mind and then sometimes it's pleasant to think about putting somebody else down or focusing on somebody else's sins and thereby we subtly exalt ourselves. "Well, I would never do that, but they're doing that. Therefore, I am better." And so this begins to grow and it's pleasurable to human nature. It's pleasurable to point out other people's faults. Of course, we're told in Paul's second

letter to the Corinthians, it says: Examine what? Examine the other person during this time? No. It says: Examine yourselves. Not the other person! Yet all too often we examine other people and we don't examine ourselves.

Sin takes sinners captive. And that's the danger. It starts with this little spore of leaven. It grows and grows and grows until finally with the leaven spread through the dough, how do you get it out? You can't get every little spore out anymore because it is a different thing now. It is a different nature. It has a different nature.

Look at Romans 7 verse 23. Leaven changes the nature of what it invades. Sin changes the nature of what it invades if it is allowed to. Romans 7 and verse 23, Paul says:

Romans 7:23. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, (KJV)

Meaning: the Law of God in his mind. He says:

Romans 7:23b. and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. (KJV)

He's saying that if you don't stop it, it will take you captive. It will change who you are. Just like leaven changes what dough is, sin changes who and what we are. And that's what we have to be very careful about.

Clarke's Commentary says about this verse Romans 7 verse 23; it says:

"Most people who follow unlawful pleasures think they can give them up whenever they please (i.e. Smoking)."

Smoking, drinking, drug abuse, whatever! Going on Clarke says:

"But sin repeated becomes customary: custom soon engenders habit; and habit in the end assumes a form of necessity."

So what starts with something just the first time, it becomes customary. Then it becomes a habit. Then it becomes a necessity.

Take gossip for example. It seems some people can't live without gossip. It's like food they eat. If they're not gossiping, life isn't pleasurable for them.

Going on:

"The man becomes bound with his own cords, and is led captive by the Devil at his will."

From Clarke's Commentary—very true words!

Sin becomes an addiction that is hard to break and that is why it is so important to stop it in the beginning. Because you don't want to stop it later! It's like a drug addict or an alcoholic. It's so much easier to stop after the first drink or the first time somebody gets drunk.

I did that in college. I experimented with alcohol. Not drugs, thankfully! But I went out and got blasted sometimes—several times. And then finally the light bulb went on and said, "This isn't worth it!" You know you wake up the next morning, take a drink of water, and start heaving all over again! "What am I doing to myself? It's not worth it!"

But if it's not stopped early, it can lead to alcoholism. And then it is really difficult to stop because you have to go into rehab. And then the recidivism rate of rehab is not good. And so let's understand that sin becomes an addiction that's hard to deal with.

Let's go to Romans chapter 7—we're in Romans 7 already, but let's go to verse 14 through 16. I'll read it out of the NIV. Verse 14, it says:

Romans 7:14. We know that the law is spiritual; but [Paul is saying] I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. (NIV)

Apart from God's spirit, we are indeed.

Romans 7:15. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. 16) And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. (NIV)

Because the Law then condemns us.

But let's understand that if sin is unchecked, it will change our very nature. And it will push God out. It will push God's spirit out if we don't deal with it. Proverbs 5 and verse 22 says that very thing. Proverbs 5 and verse 22, this is really important for our young people because you can't start down that path. Once you do, it is so hard to get off that path! So the important thing is not to start it in the first place. Proverbs 5 and verse 22 says:

Proverbs 5:22. His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be [held] with the cords of his sins. (KJV)

Bound by his own sins! An addiction! A slave!

Now let's understand that leaven breaks down and corrupts. You put leaven in a pot of grapes or mash up the grapes, tread on them with your feet and throw some leaven in there. That stuff boils and stews and everything begins to break down. And it ferments the entire vat. And it breaks down everything! It will break down resolve. It will break down character. It will break down strength if we let it go on and on and on. And so sin breaks down our conscience and it corrupts our character if we allow it to continue.

And this is the danger of playing with sin, allowing a little bit of sin because over time it corrupts us. Over time, it destroys our character. And that's the danger particularly with our young people. You can't go there in the first place because you run the risk of corrupting yourself over time.

And if we allow that to happen, then the horrible thing that happens is we begin not to hate sin. We begin not to hate the sin. And when we don't hate sin, guess what? We become blind. We become blind to ourselves, blind to our deeds, blind to our thoughts, blind to our action, because we don't hate it.

Look at Matthew 23 and verse 24. The whole chapter of Matthew 23 is a rant against the scribes and the Pharisees and their religious hypocrisy. But just this one verse, notice what Christ says to them! They were the religious leaders of the day. They were the guides. Matthew 23 verse 24:

Matthew 23:24. [You] blind guides, (KJV)

"You are absolutely blind! You don't see it." He says:

Matthew 23:24b. which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. (KJV)

Meaning: they would tithe with the little mint leaves—nine over here and one over here—trying to be oh, so righteous and trying to strain out anything that was unclean, and they turned out swallowing probably the biggest unclean animal in the Middle East and that's a camel! And He said, "You omit the weightier matters of the law, and you focus on these tiny little things because you don't see yourself. You're blind to your sins."

Notice what Peter says in 2 Peter 1, 2 Peter chapter 1 verses 4 through 9.

One of the biggest issues in counseling with people is to get them to see themselves. And this is hard for all of us to get us to the point that we see ourselves the way God sees us. And this is one of the things I fast about and pray about prior to Passover. I ask God, "I don't want to see myself the way a human sees me. I want to see myself through Your eyes. I want to see all the warts, all the faults, all the zits, all the sins, all the shortcomings. So that we can get rid of them and then be like You and Your Son Jesus Christ."

Notice 2 Peter 1, we're going to read verse 4 through 9.

2 Peter 1:4. Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: (KJV)

Absolutely! We have the most wonderful promise! And we were at the Williams' house last night. And Mike mentioned that in his prayer before the meal. I mean what promises we have! What joy we should have at being called!

2 Peter 1:4b. that by these [you] might be partakers of the divine nature [these promises], (KJV)

That we can actually be God, be like God, be like our "Daddy"!

2 Peter 1:4 continued. having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. 5) And beside this, giving all diligence, [He says,] add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; 6) And to knowledge temperance [self-control]; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness [being like God and like Jesus Christ]; 7) And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness [love]. (KJV)

It ends up with love. And we should end up at the end of the day, our whole nature is love. Not lust. Not jealousy. Not envy. But love.

Verse 8:

2 Peter 1:8. For if these things be in you, and abound, (KJV)

Which we all hope they are! That's what we want!

2 Peter 1:8b. they make you that [you] shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. (KJV)

But notice verse 9!

2 Peter 1:9. But he that [lacks] these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and [has] forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. (KJV)

If we allow sin to come back into our life, we crucify Christ again. We return to the vomit as is said in other Scriptures. And the bad thing is by being blind, after a while you get to the point you don't care. You don't care about sin. You don't care about God. You don't care about Christ. You don't care about anything except satisfying the self.

Let's go to Titus 1 and verse 15. We don't ever want to get to this place. We don't ever want to let the leaven grow and grow and grow and change our very nature and cause us to go back the way we came. We can't let that happen. Titus 1 and verse 15, Paul is saying to this minister—he's giving him some advice—he says:

Titus 1:15. Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled (KJV)

In this case: by leaven or by sin.

Titus 1:15b. unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and [their] conscience is defiled. (KJV)

And that is the huge danger of not stopping the leaven or the sin in its tracks and allowing it to grow and grow and grow and grow.

So remember that sin that is allowed to spread that's not checked will change you into something that God will not recognize! Now think about that. We're supposed to be growing in the image of God and Jesus Christ. If we're going to be married to Christ, He's not going to marry somebody who He doesn't recognize, who He doesn't understand, who He doesn't know, and is not like Him! And so if we allow sin to go in our lives unchecked, it changes us into a being that Christ will say, "You know I don't know who you are. I don't recognize you anymore. You're a different person than you used to be." And we need to be very careful about that because He is not going to marry somebody He cannot recognize. So let's understand that.

Now we go to the Fourth Point. This is one that probably comes to mind the very first thing when you think about leavening.

Leaven puffs up.

It causes those beautiful soft rolls and all those wonderful things that you put butter on and jam on and melt in your mouth kind of stuff. And, of course, we're sometimes with the hard bread and the flat bread now, but the fact is that leaven makes it nice, makes it wonderful. It becomes puffed up.

But if you draw say "Leaven is sin" as Christ did, then what does sin do to us? It puffs us up! Paul said—we won't turn there, but Paul said—"Knowledge puffs up." 1 Corinthians 12 says "Knowledge puffs up." But love is something that goes beyond that. Love edifies.

But if we allow ourselves to be puffed up, then once again, does God recognize that? Does Christ want to marry that?

Look at Colossians 2 and verse 18. Paul is saying to the Church there and to us today that a fleshly mind is puffed up. The carnal human mind is puffed up. Colossians 2 and verse 18, it says:

Colossians 2:18. Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and [the] worshipping of angels, (KJV)

Now this was a problem, a heresy, back then. Thankfully it's not one of them that we have to deal with now.

But he says, "Don't let anybody seduce you or beguile you of your heavenly salvation, of your reward, by having voluntary humility and worshipping angels,"

Colossians 2:18b. intruding into those things which he [has] not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, (KJV)

Not a spiritual mind, but a fleshly mind.

And some people get on a doctrine or do some research on their own. And I've talked to people who have an agenda. They want to find something that's *their doctrine*. They discover. Nobody else knows. They're the first to introduce this new doctrine in the Church. And so they do all this research and the whole purpose is not to edify in humility. The purpose is to exalt the self—"Look what I've come up with! Look what my new teaching is! Look what God has given me and I'm up here and you're down here, but I'm going to edify you by my tremendous knowledge." And you see the motivation behind that is vanity and pride.

And we're told here, "The fleshly mind is puffed up." The Greek for *puffed up* is Strong's 5448. And it means to bear oneself loftily, to elevate the self, exaggerate the self, or to be proud.

And so, if we allow sin to come into our mind and Satan can appeal to our human nature, we can allow ourselves to be vain and prideful and puffed up. But what does Paul say about love in 1 Corinthians 13? What does he say about love? Love is just the opposite. Look at verse 4 of 1 Corinthians 13. He tells us that any effort to exalt the self or to elevate the self or to puff the self up is not from love. 1 Corinthians 13 verse 4, Paul says:

1 Corinthians 13:4. [Love suffers] long, *and* is kind; (KJV)

Very gentle, very patient, very kind!

1 Corinthians 13:4b. [It doesn't envy]; (KJV)

If somebody gets promoted, if somebody gets recognized, nobody's jealous of that or envious of that.

1 Corinthians 13:4 continued. [love vaunts] not itself, (KJV)

What did Christ say? "Take the lowest room. Go to the lowest room. Not the uppermost room at a feast."

And then it says:

1 Corinthians 13:4 continued. is not puffed up, (KJV)

Because what leaven does in puffing up, sin does in our lives by causing vanity, pride, arrogance when we all should be seeking humility and putting ourselves below our neighbors in service. And we did that physically at the foot washing ceremony. And that's why Christ did that. Before you could take the bread and the wine, you have to have a humble attitude. And to get us in a humble attitude, He did the foot washing.

And isn't it amazing that most of the Churches—the Protestants, the Catholics and all of those who take those symbols—99.99% of them don't start with the very first step. They skip the step of humility and go right into the symbols and that is wrong. That is an error because Christ said, "I want you to do everything that I've taught you."

And we do that for the very purpose of instituting this ordinance of humility to get us into the right mind. And if you wash somebody's feet, it's hard to have the high and mighty attitude. It really is! It's a physical thing. And some of the stuff you see in the water after—particularly the men, ha ha—after the feet are washed, you just realize we're stinking human beings and there's all kinds of crude that we carry around with us. So it's hard to get puffed up about that. That's why God did it. So we need to be aware of pride and vanity and to seek humility.

Okay: Fifth and Final Point. This is something where we don't want to go.

In a leavened product after the moisture is gone—you take all the moisture out of it—what results is something that is hard and useless and unrecognizable.

You lay a piece of bread out in the hot sun—soft delicious white piece bread right out of the oven—and you throw it out on the sidewalk at 105 and leave it there for a couple of weeks, guess what it's going to be? It's not going to be recognizable. It's going to be hard. It's going to be dry. It's going to be tasteless. It's not palatable at all! Because the moisture is gone out and we know that moisture—water—is a symbol of God's holy spirit. And once God's spirit leaves, what you have left is something that's tasteless, useless, hard, bitter. And you can break a tooth on something like that.

Let's go to 1 Timothy 4 and see the first two verses. If leaven or sin is unchecked and is allowed to spread, this is the result. 1 Timothy 4 verses 1 and 2, this is referring to us today, the times we live in today. Couldn't be any more clear! 1 Timothy 4 verse 1:

1 Timothy 4:1. Now the Spirit [speaks] expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of [demons]; (KJV)

That has happened—will continue to happen! Verse 2:

1 Timothy 4:2. Speaking lies in hypocrisy; (KJV)

And boy if you allow that to continue, notice what happens.

1 Timothy 4:2b. having their conscience seared with a hot iron; (KJV)

And if you've ever had your hand or touch something hot and then that thing scabs over and you can take a pin and poke it and you don't feel a thing! All the feeling is gone out because that flesh is dead. It's absolutely dead!

The Greek word for *seared* is Strong's 2743. And it's the Greek word where we get the English word *cauterize*. And the Greek word is *kauteriazō* (*kow-tay-ree-ad'-zo*); and the English word is *cauterize*.

They don't do it often today, but a hundred years ago they would. If somebody got a horrible wound out in the field—a farmer or something like that—they would take a hot iron and they would cauterize that wound and just seal it over, melt the flesh.

And the Greek word means *to brand*—literally to brand as we would a cow—or by implication *to render insensitive*. Because once you've had burned flesh, it kills all the nerve endings and you don't feel a thing. And so what he's saying here to us is their conscience is seared with a hot iron. That means the conscience doesn't feel a thing anymore. The conscience is gone! It is absolutely gone.

Let's jump to Ephesians chapter 4 and read verses 17 through 20. Paul understood this and he was warning the Brethren in Ephesus not to go there. Not to let it to get to that point! Ephesians 4 verse 17 through 20, Paul says:

Ephesians 4:17. This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that [you] henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, (KJV)

Which they did before as we've all done.

Ephesians 4:17b. in the vanity of their mind, (KJV)

Which we have done and don't want to do today! Verse 18:

Ephesians 4:18. Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: (KJV)

We talked about that earlier. Verse 19, notice this!

Ephesians 4:19. Who being past feeling (KJV)

Cauterized! Seared with a hot iron!

Ephesians 4:19. Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, (KJV)

That's just wanton lust.

Ephesians 4:19b. to work all uncleanness with greediness. 20) [He says,] But [you] have not so learned [in Jesus] Christ; (KJV)

So let's understand that after God's spirit leaves—because God's spirit is not cultivated, paid attention to, grown—if we focus on the sin and the leaven and allow the leaven to

spread and then finally it goes through, all the moisture gets out of that product, meaning God's spirit gets out of that bread or whatever it, then you've got nothing left! It is hard and unfeeling. And one of the worst things in counseling with people who are going astray, boy if you see them getting hard and unfeeling, their chances are slim and none. Once you get to that point, once you trip that trigger, once you go across that vale, so to speak, or through the vale, man it is almost impossible to get them back once they become hard and bitter!

If we don't break the captivity of sin, notice what happens. Let's go to Matthew 7, some of the first words out of Christ's mouth. Matthew 7, we'll read verses 21, 22 and 23 talking about breaking the captivity of sin or those who don't break the captivity of sin.

And unfortunately, it never dawned on me. But when I was—I don't know, been in the Church less than ten years. A man that I greatly admired, a minister that I admired greatly, we were talking about this one time and he says:

"Rick, remember. Not everybody is going to make the Kingdom of God. Not everybody is going to make the Kingdom of God."

And sometimes we think just because we're converted, just because we're here today, just because we're keeping this Holy Day that we're going to be in the Kingdom of God. But there are going to be people who fail! There are going to be people who go into the Lake of Fire. And we just don't want it to be us. So look at Matthew 7 verse 21, Christ says:

Matthew 7:21. Not every one that [says] unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that [does] the will of my Father which is in heaven. 22) Many will say in that day, (KJV)

It doesn't say "A few." It's interesting. It says:

Matthew 7:22. Many will say in that day, Lord, [haven't] we prophesied in [your] name? [Haven't we even] cast out [demons in your name]? and done wonderful [things in your name]? [Haven't we done that?]) (KJV)

And apparently they did! But then Christ will say:

Matthew 7:23b. I never knew you: depart from me, [you] that work iniquity. (KJV)

So you could do, in this case, some kind of work or some kind of good deeds or whatever it might be and it buys you nothing if it's not done through the mind and the spirit and the love of God. And if it's done through wrong motives, through desire to exalt the self, desire to attain a position, desire to have people look and say, "How wonderful the person is," if that's the motive, Christ said, "I never knew you. I don't recognize you. I don't understand you. You haven't taken the lowest seat. You've taken the highest seat!"

And so when a person does this, when the moisture goes away—God's spirit goes away—and they begin to be captivated by the lust or the sin or the leaven, that person then is changed from light to darkness. Not only do they go from light to darkness, they are changed into darkness. We don't want to do that!

And that is the danger of letting leaven go unchecked! That is the danger of not controlling our mind and stopping it in the very beginning. That is the danger of our young people to go off down a wrong path. We have to be careful about that.

So what have we seen today? We've seen five reasons why God used leaven as sin. And there are many others. I can think of three or four others. But these are just five that I've thought about. You can think of many more.

But the fact is that leaven starts small. Let's remember that. Sin starts in the mind—one thought!

Leaven spreads by itself. So sin will spread by itself if we don't stop it! If we don't check it, it will spread!

And then leaven assimilates everything that it comes in contact with and changes the nature of what it comes in contact with. Sin does the same thing. Sin will take a pure mind and a pure heart and assimilate that and change it into a dark mind and a dark heart and a corrupted mind and a corrupted heart.

Leaven puffs up! It leads to vanity, pride, arrogance.

And then after it's all done and the moisture goes away, you have something hard, tasteless, and useless. God doesn't recognize it. Christ doesn't want to marry that!

And God has chosen leaven to represent sin because it's the most fitting symbol to represent the power and the energy and the ultimate result of sin. It's the most fitting symbol. And we need to recognize that particularly these Days.

Those taken captive by sin who will not return and do not repent, death is the only solution.

And we started early on in James 1 and verse 15. Let's finish that last part of the verse. We said:

James 1:15. Then when lust [has] conceived, it bringeth forth sin: (KJV)

Look at the last part of James 1 and verse 15. It says:

James 1:15b. and sin, when it is finished, [brings] forth death. (KJV)

So if we don't stop leaven in its tracks, the only result ultimately is death. It could take months, years, decades. But the end is the same. It's death! And we can't let leaven take over our lives.

Remember leaven is killed by heat. You mix the leaven in the dough and you allow it to do whatever it does. Then you put it in the oven and then the heat stops it in its tracks. It doesn't go any further.

Leaven is going to be killed by heat in the Lake of Fire. Sin is going to be killed by heat in the Lake of Fire. There will be no more sin. Just like the heat of the oven kills leaven, the heat of the Lake of Fire is going to kill sin.

We want that day to come. We don't want people to be thrown in there. We don't want to be thrown in there. We don't want mates or children or relatives to be thrown in there. But that's going to happen as Christ said, "Not every one that says to me to me, Lord, Lord, is going to be in the Kingdom of God."

Therefore, we have to be careful—all caps—CAREFUL about what comes into our mind from the outside, Satan's broadcasting. What we put into our mind through our eyes and ears, we have to be very CAREFUL.

And then whatever comes into our mind by whatever source, how do we deal with it? Do we do a "Korah" and just let it explode and grow and grow and grow? Or do we exercise character and stop it?

Let's close with one Scripture that should take us forward in a positive way as we spend this week putting sin out of our lives. Let's go to 1 Corinthians 5 and verse 8. And this was written at a time during these very Days not quite two thousand years ago, but they are so true. 1 Corinthians 5 and verse 8, referring to the Days of Unleavened Bread, these very times:

1 Corinthians 5:8. Therefore [Paul says,] let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; [but as we have unleavened bread now this week] but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. (KJV)

Sincerity is a motive. Sincerity is something that propels us and we need to be just sincere. No agendas, no thoughts of aggrandizing the self, just sincerely trying to serve God's people and to serve God and just being a child that obeys God and obeys Jesus Christ and with the truth. The truth is the truth. And we need to obey the truth.

So let's keep these Days with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth and let's focus on our minds and make sure that we do not let leaven enter in and begin to grow in our minds and in our thoughts and in our deeds.