

# De-Leavening Our Choices

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Recorded on April 13, 2012

Many years ago, my dad told me this story. It's a pretty good story. I can't really verify it for accuracy but anyhow. And I may have used it before but I'll use it again. That's one of the perks of old age. You get to repeat yourself often. But anyhow the story he told me was: Down in the country where we moved to in the Tri-city area, this was back in the late forties, early fifties. No one had much money. A lot of construction workers would seem to be with Hamper that was the main employment there. But anyhow because no one had a lot of money, everybody dug their own wells. Especially we lived kind of out of town a little way. One of the things in digging your own well, what they would actually do is they would take these concrete pieces that you normally use for a septic tank about four feet in diameter made out of four-inch concrete and they would just set it on top of the ground, get inside of it and dig it out. You could undermine it until it slipped. Then when it got down level with the ground, they would stick another one on top of it. And that's the way you dug your well in those days.

Well, what happened was in our particular part of the country when you get down about ten to fifteen feet, there was a layer of stuff just like concrete—stuff that was deposited by the glaciers—those things that were here before global warming. They call it hardpan and it was just like concrete. So the only way they could get through that was they would kind of pick a hole in it and they would put a stick of dynamite in there and light it and crawl back out of the hole, whoever was down in the hole. Well, in this particular case they had this great big guy down in the hole and he had a piece of dynamite and he lights it and his two buddies grab him. What happens is they can't lift him out of the hole. So, he's yelling and screaming, "Let go! Let go!" so he can pull the fuse out. And, of course, they want to get him out of there so he doesn't get killed by that blast.

The point is: They had to make some really quick choices. They were in a lot of trouble. Actually, they let him go. He pulled the fuse and he survived. At least that's the story my dad tells me.

There is a little bit of humor there, but sometimes we have to make right choices and we have to make them quickly. We get into all kinds of choices in our lives. And, obviously, that's what I'm going to be talking about today. We do some things instinctively. We have to make a choice when we're out driving to turn right or left, avoid someone else trying to kill us, all those kinds of things. We have to make choices whether we're going to have a chocolate or vanilla milkshake or not have one at all, which would probably be the best choice.

But daily choices affect our lives in so many ways. Sometimes we make good choices in our lives. Sometimes we make bad ones. Sometimes it's just, "Boy, I wish I would have thought of that a lot harder before I did that," because it wasn't a good choice. Hopefully, we don't look back in our lives and we have a whole back trail of bad choices

that have affected our lives. But we probably make at least a thousand choices a day if we think about that.

What about the really important ones, the ones that affect our eternal life? That's what I'm going to talk about today because we can look at these things and can term them "eternal effecting" because they are the things that will impact our lives not only now, but in the future.

We know we can look at Scripture and we know there are some choices people can make that will absolutely guarantee that they will not be in God's Kingdom. If we happen to be fornicators or idolaters or murderers, we know from Scripture that those choices will not get us into God's Kingdom. That's for sure.

But again, the whole point here is that sometimes, and more often than not, we need to take stock of the choices that we do make. If you want a title, what I titled this is:

### De-Leavening Our Choices

I actually only have a few points, three or four points, whatever I can get through here. This list isn't all-inclusive. And this isn't a "How to make right choices." That's a different topic—making decisions, doing that in kind of a systematic way. But these are the conscious choices that we make as Christians.

Number one is:

#### **1. How we use our time.**

We may not think about that too much. Sometimes we just get up. We hit the floor running and we just use up the day and before we know it, it's gone. I think Marie and I can attest that the older we get the faster that time goes by. It just seems to fly by.

This is one of those things where I'm going to—and I know people are thinking, "Oh, no. Here we go. He's going to tell us that we need to pray and study at least an hour a day or we'll never be in God's Kingdom." We used to hear that pretty often. But we do have Scriptures that we need to make wise choices. We need to set our priorities in our Christian walk. So, it is important how we use our time.

And the sub-point of this number one here is:

#### **1. Redeeming the time.**

And I'd like to turn over to the Book of Ephesians chapter 5. Over in Ephesians 5, Paul is dealing with the Church here and he's saying in verse 1 (and this is from the Amplified). Your version should read very close to this, but they add a little bit, trying to bring out. Ephesians 5 beginning in verse 1:

***Ephesians 5:1. Therefore be imitators of God... (AMP)***

And that just means to copy, to follow Jesus Christ. One time I did a sermon and just in the four gospels I came up with at least seventy different places where it says specifically, "Follow Me." Christ said, "Follow Me." Someone else did a more extensive study of that and they gave me a paper one time where there were well over two hundred citations in the New Testament where it talked about following Jesus Christ very specifically.

But let's jump down to verse 14 of Ephesians 5, still in the Amplified here.

***Ephesians 5:14. Therefore He says, Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, (AMP)***

That sounds like Marie whenever I fall asleep watching TV (ha-ha.) Let me back up here.

***Ephesians 5:14. Therefore He says, Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall shine (make day dawn) upon you and give you light. 15) Look carefully then how you walk! (AMP)***

Or how you live; we know that word *walk* means how we live.

***Ephesians 5:15b. Live purposefully and worthily and accurately, not as the unwise and witless, but as wise... (AMP)***

In other words, sensible and intelligent Christians is what he's telling the folks there in Ephesus.

Verse 16:

***Ephesians 5:16. Making the very most of the time... (AMP)***

They add there:

***Ephesians 5:16b. [buying up each opportunity], (AMP)***

Because if we think about that if don't prioritize, if we don't have any control or any plan in our lives at all, we will; we'll just burn up the time. We'll just use it up.

It goes on there to say in verse 16:

***Ephesians 5:16 continued. ... because the days are evil. (AMP)***

Which means: We only have so much time and we only have so many opportunities in these evil days.

Verse 17:

***Ephesians 5:17.*** *Therefore do not be vague and thoughtless and foolish, but understanding and firmly grasping what the will of the Lord is. (AMP)*

And the implication there is clearly to make correct choices in our walk and the way we use our time.

And "b", this will be 1) b) in using our time and it comes into the context here of what we're talking about. But b) is:

## **2. Neglecting salvation.**

We're familiar with that Scripture over in Hebrews, if you want to turn there, in Hebrews chapter 2 beginning in verse 1 (verses 1 through 3). This is from the New King James.

***Hebrews 2:1.*** *Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away.*

*2) For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward,*

*3) how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, (NKJ)*

If just let it drift past us is what the Greek implies there. It's just gone forever if it drifts past us.

***Hebrews 2:3b.*** *...which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, (NKJ)*

Sometimes we just don't make choices. I think we've all kind of fallen into that every once in a while. Here's a quote—in fact, if you google "making choices," you're going to be about a gazillion hits in quotes and here's one. It says:

We can try to avoid making choices by doing nothing, but even that is a decision.

As, my wife will tell you, one of the most important parts of the daily newspaper is the funnies, the comic section. Maybe it kind of fits my personality (joke there). Anyhow, I'm a big fan of Dilbert and Garfield. I like Garfield. One of Garfield's comics recently.... In fact, I brought it with me. I just happened to bring that with me and it kind of goes along with making choices by doing nothing.

One thing you have to keep in mind when you read Garfield is—and I've studied these things in great depth (ha-ha)—John and Garfield have no life—none whatsoever. And the creator of Garfield, Jim Davis, he draws humor and depicts it through the cat. So, if you understand those things, you kind of get what he's talking about.

Anyhow, John is looking down on Garfield. He's lying on his back like he usually is. He's either on his back or slumped down completely like a noodle in his big armchair watching TV, watching some crazy thing on TV. Anyhow, John looks down at Garfield and he says, "We should do something." And Garfield is laying there. He's still lying on his back looking up and he says, "Yes, we should." And these daily strips are only three little panels and the last one says: John looks at him again. He says, "Did I mention we should be doing something, right?" And Garfield says, "That's doing something. That count for doing something."

So the point here is that we can't excuse ourselves by doing nothing. Time will slip away from us. We have a lot of very serious Scriptures. We have The Ten Virgins, the Parable of the Ten Virgins and other parables actually that show us that we can just use up the time. We can basically, what I'm trying to say here is that one of the things we need to de-leaven if we think about our choices seriously and take stock of them once in a while—and we are in the final Day of Unleavened Bread here. We need to de-leaven that choice if we do nothing because it's the sin of neglect.

Well, let's go on here in Ephesians 5. And he tells us, Paul goes on to say what our lives and times should be absorbed in. Again, this is going on in Ephesians 5 and verse 2 from the Amplified. It says:

***Ephesians 5:2. And walk in love, (AMP)***

It goes on to say:

***Ephesians 5:2b. ...[esteeming and delighting in one another] as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us, a slain offering and sacrifice to God [for you, so that it became] a sweet fragrance. (AMP)***

And we are just observing that in these Days of Unleavened Bread and the Passover. Verse 3:

***Ephesians 5:3. But immorality (sexual vice)... (AMP)***

And that's all around us. We see so much of it. We see the *sexualization*, the *pornification* of our society. It just permeates everything. And if we don't choose to avoid that in every way that we can, it will affect us. It will affect our minds.

But it goes on to say here in verse 3:

***Ephesians 5:3b. ...and all impurity... (AMP)***

That just means wasteful living. That means wasting our lives

***Ephesians 5:3 continued. ... or greediness must not even be named among you, as is fitting and proper among saints; (AMP)***

And the Amplified recognized that saints are God's people. Verse 4:

**Ephesians 5:4.** *Let there be no filthiness, (obscenity, indecency) nor foolish and sinful (... corrupt) talk, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, which are not fitting or becoming; but instead voice your thankfulness [to God].*  
5) *For be sure of this: that no person practicing sexual vice... (AMP)*

This means someone choosing to do that.

**Ephesians 5:5b.** *...or impurity in thought or in life, or one who is covetous... (AMP)*

This means someone who desires things that don't belong to him.

**Ephesians 5:5 continued.** *...for he [in effect] is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. (AMP)*

And all those bad choices that I just talked about have no inheritance in the Kingdom of God. Verse 6:

**Ephesians 5:6.** *Let no one delude and deceive you with empty excuses and groundless arguments [for these sins], (AMP)*

They believe that or can.

**Ephesians 5:6b.** *...for through these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of rebellion and disobedience.*  
7) *So do not associate or be sharers with them. (AMP)*

And if we choose to, we can share in those things, obviously, either in a mental way or in a more direct way. Verse 8:

**Ephesians 5:8.** *For once you were darkness, (AMP)*

Paul is reminding them where they came from.

**Ephesians 5:8b.** *...but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of Light [lead the lives of those ... born to the Light]. (AMP)*

And actually from that point when we repented, we were baptized, had hands laid on us, God gave us His spirit, from that point we were in that Light. So, that's what Paul just tells them here—to walk that way, live that way. Verse 9:

**Ephesians 5:9.** *For the fruit (the effect, the product) of the Light or the Spirit consists in every form of kindly goodness, uprightness of heart, and trueness of life, (AMP)*

That kind of implies making all the right choices in our lives. Sometimes we fall short of that, but that's what he's saying here. That's what he's teaching. That's where they should be.

***Ephesians 5:10.*** *And try to learn [in your experience {in your life}] what is pleasing to the Lord. (AMP)*

I'd say it's a progressive thing. It's like growing, overcoming, making correct choices throughout our lives, following Jesus Christ.

Continuing there, let's go to verse 11.

***Ephesians 5:11.*** *Take no part in and have no fellowship with the fruitless deeds and enterprises of darkness, but instead [let your lives be so in contrast as to] expose and reprove and convict them.*

*12) For it is a shame even to speak of or mention things that [such people] practice in secret. (AMP)*

And sometimes we can make our choices secretly. Can't we? We keep them to ourselves, but God know the heart. He knows the choices we're making and our thought processes. Verse 13:

***Ephesians 5:13.*** *But when anything is exposed and reprovved by the light, it is made visible and clear; and where everything is visible and clear, there is light. (AMP)*

And eventually we know everything will come to light in the judgment. But from now until then, there is a huge area for each every one of us in choices we make—making the correct ones, living our lives the way we should be living, living wisely.

Okay, the Second Point is in trials.

## **2. Making choices in trials.**

We probably don't think about this one too much but all of us have had trials. I don't know anyone that gets through scot-free. It's not easy for anybody. Sometimes time and chance happen to us. They just happen. We fall into a trial. It's not really the result of anything we've done, but it could be the result of an unwise choice. I think we can all kind attest to that. We've done that.

Here's another quote:

Nobody ever did or ever will escape the consequences of his or her choices.

That's very true. We have a virtual portrait gallery of characters in the Bible who made bad choices.

You don't need to turn there, but Genesis chapters 25 and 27 talk about Esau. He had the right of the firstborn, being born before Jacob, but, if you think about that, that consequence has followed him down through history, through his people. He could have had the blessings and everything of Israel, but he chose, he gave it all away. He made a bad choice for a bowl of stew or whatever it was. It must have been stew. It was red something.

And then we have Haman. We know of his hatred for Mordecai and the Jews. Look where that choice got him. It got him strung up. And to this day, the Jews celebrate that. Don't they? It's the Feast of Purim. They used to, before it became a political thing, they used to hang an effigy of Haman. The Jews did on the Feast of Purim. Actually, it kind of looked like a cross and they got in conflict with the Christians. So, they stopped doing that.

And here's a real famous choice: David and Bathsheba. There are two people who made some really bad choices there. David was up on the rooftop, balcony or whatever, and he's looking down on another rooftop a little way away. Here's Bathsheba; she's soaking up some Vitamin D *a la natural*. He could have done something. And you sometimes can put yourself in their place, some of the characters of the Bible. This actually caused some problems for David, but I can see myself there. To me, especially at my age, I'd been looking for a defibrillator (laughter). (Marie says, "He can't help it.")

But again, when we get back and look at the consequences of that entire incident—and we've studied that account at different times—the consequences are nothing but tragic. We have the death of a child and the agony, the aftermath of that; death of a husband, Bathsheba's husband. They had to live with that for the rest of their lives. So, these are some of the consequences that can happen because of bad choices.

But the point here is whenever we find ourselves in a trial, maybe it gives us time. We can pause and look at the consequences of our choice. We can think about things like bad health. Good health is a lot more than just clean/unclean meats, following those kinds of things. By lack of exercise and all of that, we could through bad choices have bad health in our lives and that's going to become a health trial for us. We could have a credit rating of "0" (zero) because we've made some bad choices financially. But those are physical things.

On the spiritual side we can look at this and say, "If we have no Bible study, if we have no prayer life, no interaction with God and Jesus Christ, there are going to be dire consequences from that. It's going to lead to all kinds of problems in our lives. It's going to affect every part of our lives.

Here are a couple more quotes.

There are always two choices, two paths to take. One is easy and it's only reward is that it's easy. Anonymous



Here's another one from Eleanor Roosevelt who, as we know, wrote a bunch of quotes. Here's one from her. It says:

In the long run we shape our lives and we shape ourselves. The process never ends until we die. And the choices we make are ultimately our own responsibility.

And we know that as God's people, as Christians, it's our responsibility.

The Third Point:

### 3. **How we treat one another**

We make choices here. This is a biggie.

Our society generally treats people badly. For some reason we're enamored with this Bad Boy/Bad Girl image and we just run into that all the time.

Recently I pulled into a Starbucks, a local Starbucks, grab a coffee. And as I came up to the parking spot, there was just one spot right in front of Starbucks.

And there was a lady sitting, actually two ladies sitting in a car on the opposite side of the street and I thought maybe they wanted to turn in there. I kind of motioned "Do you want this parking place?" And she didn't even look at me. And I thought maybe someone ran in the store wanting a coffee and would be right back out. So, I pulled in there. When I got out of my pick up, I looked back at the lady and she flipped me off. (You know in a lot of places that will get you killed.) And I go "What?"

She actually parked about thirty feet away, had to walk a little bit farther and I waited there on the sidewalk. I was going to offer and say, "If you want that parking place, I'll be glad to move." I said, "I tried to signal you, to motion you, to find out if you wanted it. I would have been happy to let you have it," I said, "It doesn't matter to me."

Actually, it was a very nice car. It was a BMW, a white BMW. That was kind of a low-class gesture for high-class car. And I was going to tell her that, but.... Just kind of shame her a little bit. But they didn't get out the car. They wouldn't come over and talk to me.

But the point I'm trying to make there is: **In treating one another, we can choose how we respond to almost anything.** Outside the Church, inside the Church, we're talking about people.

I was reading a commentary recently and I know we have a tendency to look down on other religions, on people with different beliefs, but we really don't have a corner on perception. Sometimes we learn things from other people. This writer, this commentator stated a fact. He said, "We don't have a choice in who God calls. Our only obligation is to "Owe no man anything and to love one another, to bear one another's burdens."

That's from Scripture, right out of Scripture. And this is from someone outside of the Church of God. Sometimes we wonder if we're forgetting that within the Church of God.

But we get into all kinds of problems, within the Church. treating each other whenever we start respecting persons, judging others, harboring grudges. We have all kinds of Scriptures on that. We have Scriptures that tell us that there is going to be persecution from within the Church. There are going to be offenses. People's love is going to wax cold.

Let's go back to—well, if we're still in Ephesians here, let's go to chapter 4. Paul, obviously, dealt many, many times with problems, internal problems within the Church amongst God's people. And human nature does not change. We don't change. In Ephesians 4 beginning in verse 1; this is again from the New King James.

***Ephesians 4:1.*** *I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called,  
2) with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love,  
3) endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (NKJ)*

It looks like to me there are a whole bunch of choices right there. There are choices that we should be making. But let's continue here. Let's go down to verse 4.

***Ephesians 4:4.*** *There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling;  
5) one Lord, one faith, one baptism;  
6) one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.  
7) But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. (NKJ)*

We all start from the same point. We all have that same starting point, but let's jump down to verse 11 where it teaches how Christ takes care of the Church.

***Ephesians 4:11.*** *And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, (NKJ)*

Not for some kind of an overbearing governmental system. Verse 12:

***Ephesians 4:12.*** *for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,  
13) till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; (NKJ)*

And we can't get there from here by making bad choices. We just can't do it. Verse 14:

**Ephesians 4:14.** *that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, (NKJ)*

And isn't it funny how all those things cause problems within the Church? All those things just mentioned right there in that verse. Verse 15:

**Ephesians 4:15.** *but, speaking the truth in love, (NKJ)*

[Love] which tends to negate those things in the previous verse.

**Ephesians 4:15b.** *...may grow up in all things into Him who is the head— Christ—  
16) from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. (NKJ)*

I have a book at home that everything in it is based on the metaphors that Paul uses and this one of them here. He uses *the body* to describe the function of the Church. Verse 17:

**Ephesians 4:17.** *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,  
18) 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; (NKJ)*

The world in general doesn't have the understanding, doesn't have the knowledge to choose between making a good choice and making a bad choice. They don't have the understanding to do that. Verse 19:

**Ephesians 4:19.** *who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.  
20) But you have not so learned Christ,  
21) if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus:  
22) that you put off, concerning your former conduct, (NKJ)*

"With all of it's bad choices," we might add.

**Ephesians 4:22b.** *...the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts,  
23) and be renewed in the spirit of your mind,  
24) and that you put on the new man... (NKJ)*

Making good choices, we hope.

**Ephesians 4:24b.** *...which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.  
25) Therefore, putting away lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his*

*neighbor," for we are members of one another.*  
26) *"Be angry, and do not sin": (NKJ)*

What's that got to do with the Church? Lots.

***Ephesians 4:26.*** *"Be angry, and do not sin": do not let the sun go down on your wrath, (NKJ)*

This ought to be more so within the Church because hurt feelings, the grudges, the things that go on and on a lot of these are based in anger. Verse 27 tells us where that comes from.

***Ephesians 4:27.*** *nor give place to the devil. (NKJ)*

**Satan is anger.** It's his entire makeup. Verse 28:

***Ephesians 4:28.*** *Let him who stole steal no [more], but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.*  
29) *Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. (NKJ)*

And that's all about choices in our personal conduct, in our interaction and relations to one another and, actually, with everyone. Verse 30:

***Ephesians 4:30.*** *And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. (NKJ)*

We can drive God's spirit away. You grieve something because you've lost it. We grieve when we lose someone we love. And we can do that by making a bunch of bad choices and God's spirit won't remain with us. That's one way to look at the word *grieve* there. There are other ways too. Verse 31:

***Ephesians 4:31.*** *Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. (KJV)*

That's talking within the Body of Christ.

***Ephesians 4:32.*** *And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, [even] as God in Christ forgave you. (NKJ)*

We just pictured that in the Passover. Did we not, when we kept that? And the forgiveness part there is very important. Let's turn over to Matthew 6. And we're still talking about how we treat one another. Over in Matthew 6 verses 14 and 15, you should know where I'm going here. And again, from the New King James, Matthew 6 verse 14:

**Matthew 6:14.** *"For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.*

15) *"But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. (NKJ)*

The context here, if we look at, before and after this is talking about the hypocrisy and it doesn't mention them directly, but the religious leaders of that day. We have The Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican, the tax collector. If we study that parable, the whole point there is attitude. Jesus Christ just gave an outline for prayer before He said these comments that we have recorded for us in verses 14 and 15—"If you don't forgive men, God won't forgive you." It says that if we don't have that forgiveness, if it's not working in our lives, our prayer won't work. It will be nothing but a hypocrite's prayer. That's what He says.

And look how simple this is. I heard one say one time, "The simplicity of what is required of us as Christians and followers of Christ, you have to have help to misunderstand that because those words are pretty plain." If you read that again, and I know we've all read it many, many times, but do you see any equivocation? Do you see any ambiguity there? There isn't. It's very straightforward. It's very plain. We need that forgiveness. Evidently there is no Aramaic for "Yeah, but," or "Maybe." It's not there. It's very plain.

In talking about it, we have guidelines for dealing with offenses if someone has kicked us in the shins, stepped on our toes, so to speak. Matthew 5 tells us we should do it. We have some guidelines in Matthew 18 that tell us how to do it, but the point is that we all have a responsibility in that. And we've all been involved at one point or another to one degree or another in those kinds of situations. And God will help us, but He'll let us get into those situations. Sometimes He tests us to see what we will choose, to see if we're going to remain angry and upset or whether we're going to choose not to do that. We can choose to ride that burr under our saddle right to the end of the trail. We just need to make right choices to get over that.

Here's another quote. It says:

There's always someone to put you down no matter what you do. So, ultimately, you have to base your choices on your own experience and belief as to how you respond to that.

That's another good quote.

We have in Matthew 5. if you go back there, there is another thing that Christ taught and certainly commanded us. We should do it that way. In Matthew 5 verse 9:

**Matthew 5:9.** *Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. (NKJ)*

What He's telling us there is that we should strive to make peace in times of strife. This is totally opposed to the way man gets peace. The way man gets peace or his view of

peace is that he goes to war and he kills everybody or enough people that he gets his version of peace. That's the way we operate.

I ran across another interesting commentary. In Matthew 21 and John 12, you don't need to turn there, but we have the account of Christ as He comes into Jerusalem and He is riding a donkey. To us, to our western mind that's kind of a ridiculous picture. Here is Christ riding on a donkey. And then, everybody is celebrating but what they're doing.... They're yelling "Hosanna! Hosanna!" which means *save us*. That's Hebrew for *save us*. And they're laying down boughs and all that, but they're welcoming Him and celebrating Him as a conquering king. The interesting thing there is, again, going back to that picture of Christ on a donkey, in that ancient eastern culture if a king came to a city or another country riding a horse, he was bent on war. But if he came on a donkey, he was bent on peace. And one of Christ's titles is Prince of Peace. He came riding on a donkey the first time.

Now, we know in Revelation 19 that He's going to come eventually the second time on a white horse with the armies from heaven on a white horse—time to clean house. But that was not His purpose the first time.

So, again we have a choice how we respond.

The Fourth and the Last One that I have here is:

**4. Our ultimate choice is not to give up, not to quit in this walk, not to quit in what we've been called to.**

Christ told us right up front to count the cost. And we're counseled with that before baptism, to count the cost. We need to do that. It's a very serious undertaking and we know if we get to the point of baptism that it's not a John 3:16 thing. We have to follow through on it once we make that step.

We have the Parable of the Sower and it talks about different circumstances. People get discouraged. They won't continue. They won't finish what they've done.

(I'm going to skip over some things here because the warden is telling me that...)

Let's go to 1 Corinthians 10. In 1 Corinthians 10 in verses 12 and 13, we know the context there. We know it talks about Israel being tempted in the wilderness. We just reviewed some of those things. They committed idolatry, sexual immorality. They murmured. They complained about the manna. They did all kinds of things. "Oh, the discomfort! And woe is me! Boohoo hoo." But in verse 11 of 1 Corinthians 10:

***1 Corinthians 10:11. Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, on whom the ends of the ages have come. (NKJ)***

This is more for us. It's much, much more than enduring in a physical way like ancient Israel did. This is a spiritual way that we have to endure. Verse 12 says:

**1 Corinthians 10:12.** *Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. (NKJ)*

It can happen. We do have a choice in that. Let's go to verse 13:

**1 Corinthians 10:13.** *No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, (NKJ)*

There's an important term.

**1 Corinthians 10:13b.** *...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. (NKJ)*

Or hold up under duress. And again, this is in the context of enduring, of remaining faithful.

Let's go down to Ephesians 5. No, I'm sorry. Let's go to 2 Timothy. (The guillotine is about ready to fall.) 2 Timothy—there are some very important things that I'm skipping over here, but maybe I can pick them up some other time. I was going to talk about some of the problems that are discouraging. There are all kinds of things. There are trials. There are marriage problems. There are all kinds of things that will discourage us.

It's very interesting as we study into that. The context of a good part of what is talked about in Ephesians about husbands loving their wives and wives respecting their husbands, that all contributes to unity. And the important thing to pick up there is that unity begins in the home and then, it also is transferred into the Church. If there is disunity in one place, there is going to be disunity in other places. That's just the way it works. And here, again, our only choice is to hang on, to remain faithful.

In 2 Timothy and remember Paul is encouraging Timothy here, but we're all in the same boat. Down in verse 4 of 2 Timothy 2:

**2 Timothy 2:4.** *No one engaged in warfare... (NKJ)*

And we're engaged in that every day. Aren't we? We have a spiritual battle we have to choose to fight every day. And if we don't do that, we're going to lose that battle that day. Hopefully, that won't be day after day after day. We can't do that.

**2 Timothy 2:4b.** *...entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier. (NKJ)*

Verse 13, jumping down here:

**2 Timothy 2:13.** *If we are faithless, he remains faithful; he cannot deny Himself. (NKJ)*

Christ can't possibly deny His perfect, holy righteous character and be something else. And the point should be clear to us too. We shouldn't deny ourselves either and the path that we've taken, the path that we've chosen to follow Jesus Christ to the end of our lives. We need to remain faithful. We need to endure to the end.

But the whole point here that I've been trying to make in these few points in the short time that I've had is:

**We have some volition in our choices.**

We can choose how we use our time. We can choose how we treat one another, how we respond to offenses. We can choose to be faithful to the end.

As we observe these Days of Unleavened Bread, it should teach us that we need to clean up our lives in a lot of different ways. One way to do that is reflect on the choices that we make and to de-leaven those choices, the bad ones, as inappropriate.